

2017 NATIONAL SPECIALTY JUDGE'S CRITIQUE

JUDGE KATHRYN HAMILTON

Overall I found the entry to be very good. There is always room for improvement, but that remains the challenge of breeding and the relentless desire to get the next "great one" in a litter. Dogs and bitches were masculine and feminine respectively, though the occasional specimen was not strong in their sex characteristics, a trait not to be admired. For the most part the entry was well trained for the job at hand, handled well, and shown in good fitness, although there was more than a few that need more exercise than they were receiving. I saw only a few bad bites, and, on the subject of teeth, too many were lacking care and attention to cleaning. In the classes, I felt the dogs had a little more depth than the bitches this year.

Best of Breed #905: A very well-conditioned blue dog of spot-on proportions, a broad, strong head, and level topline both standing and on the move. He had flexible pasterns, and well let down hocks on strong, straight legs to carry him around the ring with purpose and ease. He had a strong neck that blended well into his shoulders and a smooth continuous line that went all the way to the end of his tail. This very well-handled dog was quite businesslike in demeanor and looked every bit the showman whenever I glanced in his direction. In excellent competition, he was not to be overtaken and I was honored to award him Best of Breed.

Best of Winners and Winners Dog #313: From the Bred-By Exhibitor class, this handsome red dog captured my eye as he walked into the ring. A dog with a masculine head and body to match, every inch a male. He had excellent proportions, parallel legs and strongly arched feet that sent him smoothly around the ring. He had a firm, strong topline, sloping croup and excellent tail set. He was expertly handled throughout the competition, very showy, and made me keep looking at him. I learned during photos that his name is Travelin Man, which I felt very appropriate as I think this guy has places to go.





Best of Opposite Sex winner #938: A beautiful red bitch who took the lead for her sex early on and was not to be outdone. She had a lovely head that was feminine but retained the necessary strength for a working dog. She had a well-conditioned body of excellent proportions, which was supported by strong, parallel legs that had her gobbling up the ground as she went around the ring. She had the overall impression of a girl who could go all day to perform her allotted task.



Winners Bitch #310: From the Bred-By Exhibitor class, this was a lovely girl with a pleasing, strong head, dark, expressive eyes and a well-proportioned body. She had strong legs viewed from the front and the rear that took her easily around the ring. She was a very pretty blue color, on a smooth, straight coat. She seemed to enjoy her job and got showier as the classes went on.



Select Dog #917: A very handsome clear red dog, with a strong head that fit well onto his strong body. He had beautiful eye size, color and shape, as well as ears of correct size, set and shape. He was a masculine dog with a strong neck blending well into his body. He had a deep chest, correct proportions and strong straight legs atop well-arched feet, all to get the job done. Color is icing on the cake, and he really was a pretty color.

Select Bitch #952: A lovely rich red, feminine girl who was symmetrically built which showed in her effortless movement. She had a very pleasing head in harmonious proportion to her body. When she came into the ring, she caught my eye and I was more impressed as the class went on and she really stayed in the game. She was clean coming and going, as well as going around the ring, and always held her topline firm.



Award of Merit #901: A substantial dog with a color that really said, "blue" to me. He had good proportions, and his head fit his body well. He had well sprung ribs, a deep chest and was broad down his entire back. He showed a lot of power moving around the ring on strong, parallel legs. He looked like he could work all day long and as some dogs were letting down as the competition went on, he stayed alert and continued to show well.



Award of Merit #703: From the 7-10 Year Dog class, this gent was no stranger to me. I had the pleasure of awarding him Best of Winners in 2010 and was very pleased to see that he remains confident, strong, sound and a good showman. He was shown in good muscular condition. His head fits his body well, his topline remains firm and strong and his legs had him cruising around the ring with ease. I have long admired this dog and was happy to find him in the ring again.





Award of Merit #942: A pretty blue girl with rich, symmetrical markings on a very nicely made, strong head. She had correct proportions and strong legs atop well arched feet and moved with great purpose around the ring. She had a level topline with a sloping croup and a tail that flowed nicely off her back. She was strong in appearance without giving up an inch of her feminine characteristics.



Award of Merit #923: A dark blue dog that was an excellent mover. A textbook could be written about the size, shape, color, expression and intelligence in this dog's eyes. I loved the way he returned my gaze and made me laugh thinking about what he must be thinking in return. He is a moderately made dog of good proportions, with a strong, deep chest, sound, straight legs, strong feet and moves tirelessly. He was masculine, well presented and continued to make me look at him.



Award of Merit #928: A blue girl with a strong head that remained feminine in that feature. She had very dark, alert eyes that were of nice size and shape. She was a moderate size, compactly built and well coupled. Her legs were parallel, and she moved well coming and going, as well as going around the ring. Her neck blended nicely into her body, and her topline remained firm and strong, both standing and on the move.

Award of Merit #802: From the 10 Years and Over Bitch class, she was a nicely balanced red girl with a look in her eye that told me to get on with it! In writing this, I looked up her birth date, and she was more fit and sound than many of the dogs half her age. She is symmetrical in shape, very balanced in movement, strong in body, and sailed around the ring with ease. She had a beautiful, clear red coat of proper length, and texture. She was very well handled and seemed to enjoy her opportunity to shine.



Award of Merit #931: A red dog of moderate size with big side gait. He had a strong head, intelligent, nicely shaped eyes and well-set ears of good size and shape. He has a deep chest, compact in body and strong coupling. He had a level, firm topline and a sloping croup with a tail that came nicely off his back. He looked every bit the showman as he cruised around the ring.



Reserve Winners Dog #051 from the 12 Months, Under 15 Months class he was a blue dog with richly colored markings that was strong and compact and appeared powerful in body. He had good strength in his head with a broad backskull and deep underjaw. He had a firm topline, both standing and on the move. He had strong, round bone in his legs that got him around the ring with ease. This dog had the look of dogs from earlier times, and it was nice to see his type in the ring.





Reserve Winners Bitch #302: from the Bred-By Exhibitor class. A well-proportioned girl of rich, red color. She had good strength in head and body without sacrificing her femininity. She had a deep chest, well-sprung ribs and good coupling. She moved with purpose and ease around the ring on strong legs and well arched feet. She seemed quite pleased with herself and showed a lot of personality in the ring.



Best Junior Showman #J601: from the Open Senior class, this young man and his dog made quite the team. His dog responded to his every request of her with the smoothness necessary at this level of competition. They gaited at proper speed on a loose lead and moved purposefully around the ring. When presented standing, the handler exhibited good economy of motion giving the dog an opportunity to look her best. This young man has the ability to compete with all ages.

Reserve Best Junior Showman #J602: from the Open Senior class, this young lady had great skills presenting her dog both stacking on the line, as well as moving around the ring. Her dog was very attentive to her and they showed very good teamwork with a minimum of motion to present him at his best. This young lady is competitive in any class.

The Purina Farms facility is the best facility I have had the privilege of judging in (and showing in), and their attention to every detail made the experience so pleasurable. The sportsmanship shown to me was kind, the sportsmanship shown to other exhibitors was a pleasure to watch, and I appreciated both very much. The hardest part of judging is running out of ribbons, which happened more than once, when I felt I had quality that could have been easily acknowledged in more placements. Cutting the last group of dogs in the Best of Breed ring was especially hard, as they had all made it through multiple cuts in great competition. But alas, the number of awards is set at only a few.

It was an immeasurable honor to judge my third National Specialty for a breed that owns my heart. My husband owned this breed when I met him, and his encouragement to me to pursue this breed has been a very rewarding hobby. A big part of my life revolves around our breed, and your confidence in selecting me once again to judge the National Specialty will forever be a sense of pride for me. The privilege and honor of judging your dogs will remain one of the highlights of my life. With you, the Australian Cattle Dog is in very good hands and for that I am grateful.

Sincerely, Kathryn Hamilton

INTERVIEW - 2017 NATIONAL SPECIALTY SWEEPSTAKES JUDGE SERENITY LITTLEFIELD



What did you think of the overall quality of the Australian Cattle dogs presented to you?

I was happy with the overall quality and had some very nice dogs presented to me. Although, I think the breed has improved over the past several years, I would still like to see better consistency and breed type.

What qualities stood out to you in your final cut in Grand Sweeps?

I found these dogs to be very well balanced all around. Not overdone in size, bone or substance. Well set shoulders, great angles all around, effortless movement, great top lines, nice headsets, just beautiful structure all around. Nice and moderate.

What trait do you feel needs to most improve in our breed from a conformation standpoint?

Overall I think the breed just needs better consistency. Not so much a cookie cutter breed, but it's just that there are so many different looks. Tall and lean, short and stocky, long in body and if we really want to pick it apart we can. But in the end everyone has their opinion about the breed standard and not much can be done about that.

As a judge, you are faced with many difficult decisions when choosing the top animal in each class, what quality must the dog possess to initially grab your attention?

Breed type that is moderate in structure and sound in movement.

What aspects of the dog weigh heavier in your final assessment?

Again, structure and movement. With this breed you have to have structure in order to have movement and the ability to do what they were originally bred for.

What poor aspect of conformation is a total deal breaker?

Bad bites and over weight.

What did you enjoy most about judging this year?

I was really excited to have the opportunity to judge a large amount of dogs. Being able to see, put your hands on a dog, and find the closest one possible to the breed standard is a great experience when judging 80 plus dogs. Judging the Veterans classes is definitely a tear jerker for me. I just love the old guys. And to see them still enjoying and loving to show is just amazing. Now granted they would probably rather be curled up on the couch or laying out in the sun, they still have a love for showing. Puppies, the puppy classes are always fun. They will give you a good chuckle most of the time with all their puppy antics that they are still working on trying to grow out of. But most of what I enjoyed was seeing all the nice dogs and the nice representation by their handlers. Thank you to the ACDCA for the honor of judging at the 2017 National Specialty!

