

“More Oomph Please” – The Swedish Club Show July 2008

Thank you to the Swedish Flatcoated Retriever Club for inviting me to judge at the Club Show, which was part of the World Show Circuit – what a great honour. My grateful thanks to Carina “Moonstruck” and Godrun Brunnstrom for their excellent stewarding, making my day all the more enjoyable. Congratulations to all the exhibitors for presenting their dogs in gleaming condition. I was amazed how clean my hands were at the end of the day.

It had been 12 years since I last judged in Sweden, Tjoloholm in 1996, so I was eagerly awaiting the entry. I found the overall standard of the dogs to be fairly even, although I didn't find the depth of quality in the top dogs, which was there in the 1980s and 1990s. This I find worrying for the future of the breed. I think my secretary must have got bored with writing “plenty big enough for me”. Whilst the overall type of the dogs was acceptable, care has to be taken not to lose the true flatcoat type and end up with beautiful black or liver dogs. Some of the heads were rather different - with broad, sometimes rounded skulls, muzzles tending to be a little too short and eyes that were of a very light hazel colour. Eye colour is very important to me and I have commented on this in the past. I do like to see a clearly defined scissor bite and there were several that were incredibly close.

I had the pleasure of judging three classes; youngsters, intermediate and working. I was delighted with all the dogs that I short listed. The working class was my largest class of the day and was also the strongest in quality, which I find very heartening for the breed. I thought Walkups Soldier Blue, the winner of the intermediate class, was an outstanding dog and reminded me of the dogs I grew up with in the 1970s.

I then had the great honour of judging the BOB and I awarded this to DE&VDHCH INT&NORDUCH KBHV-02NLCH WW-02 Moonstruck Jelly Baby – a classical bitch who moved so accurately, especially for her grand age of 9 years and on such a hot day! She is a bitch I have long admired from a distance and it was wonderful to be able to judge and feel her quality. Interestingly, I gave her daughter Starworkers Daily News BOB in Germany in 2005. Commiserations have to go to INTUCH NORDUCH SVCH Almanza Billy the Kid, the best male, for coming up against such an outstanding bitch.

There seems to be a new fashion in Sweden to move the dogs incredibly slowly and this lack of speed did nothing for their movement, which was generally lacking drive. Many of the exhibitors heard me say “Try again with more oomph please”. “Oomph” means to put more feeling and energy into something.

I was then fortunate enough to be a “ring side judge” – yes a very dangerous occupation, at the World Show and Tvaaker the following week and my overall impression of the breed was fairly consistent for all three days. The depth of quality of the bitches is impressive, with their size and type and in particular their heads to be close to *my* interpretation of the breed standard. I wish I could say the same for the dogs, there are some outstanding dogs but not the quantity of high quality dogs to match the bitches. I consider the future of the breed to be exciting, but perhaps some breeders should revisit the breed standard and consider some innovative breeding using different lines. In my opinion, it is dangerous when the majority are doing much the same breeding programmes, obviously if one runs into health issues then this creates major problems for many. It was heartening to see that my 3 class winners and the BOB were all from different kennels which has to be exciting for the future of the breed. I wish you all luck and enjoyment with your dogs.

Sarah Whittaker
Kennel Bramatha
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