

## **Critique and Comments re June 8, 2024, ECSCC National Specialty, Caledonia, Ontario**

As I reflect on this National assignment that is somewhat final and yet so meaningful to me on many levels, I want to share not just the immediate comments on the entry of 47 drawn from both Canada and the USA but also thoughts on the direction of the breed in our country.

I am excited to see new, young breeders exhibiting the English Cocker. Our breed needs to see growth in numbers and that takes breeders. There is a demand for dogs to exhibit, have as breeding stock and join in all the myriad of performance events this breed excels at. Then these same Cockers come home to do what they do best – to be an adored family companion.

I want to encourage breeders and fanciers to read THE STANDARD, carefully and frequently. Form a clear picture of ideal and correct conformation. Obtain a copy of the ECSCA Illustrated Guide to the English Cocker which can be purchased from their website. It is an exceptional document to help you form a picture in your mind of correct shape and balance. Beware exaggerations, strive for soundness on the legs, spring of rib, bone, tight feet, soft curves, short loin on a good length of rib, width through the hindquarter, firm top line, tail off the back never cocked up, flat silky jacket that is never excessive, sufficient leg to always be in balance, and finally a beautiful head piece with softly rounded curves, tight dark eye, gentle curve of lip and enough width over the muzzle to support a functional bird dog. Essentials are moderate, functional for purpose, beautiful to behold and above all merry. Never compromise on the essentials of the breed.

Overall the entry gave quality on the day with youngsters offering promise for the future and some amazing veterans who shone in their glory.

### **Winners Dog**

#### **Thistle Whitfield Lighten Up**

A very pleasing orange roan, balanced and sound on the go. He had a well sprung rib and firm topline with a tail correctly carried off the end of the back. Beautiful coat and condition. Excellent bone and overall substance. A shade more loose

skin in throat and head than is ideal, those of you with oranges know this can be an issue sometimes associated with the breed.

*Best of Winners and Best Bred By Exhibitor*

*Reserve Winners Dog*

**Bluestem Buzzer Beater**

A promising 12-18 youngster that will improve with his maturity. A well marked black and white with ribspring, bone and flat jacket of correct texture. Good use of his legs. I would like him to break a little more in stop. One I would be proud to have bred.

*Veteran Dog*

**G Ch Malysse Lancelot**

A very handsome man of maturity, substance and style. He still uses his legs well and is good to the hand.

*Winners Bitch*

**Golden Gait's Dancing Queen**

Again from the Bred By Class, where all the best examples of the breed should be found, this gold bitch excelled in her overall type and balance. She was good on the move with a firm topline and the breed essentials. Good spring of rib, pleasing in head expression, correct bone and a flat silky jacket. Totally feminine in eye and expression. A shade full of her own importance she played up somewhat for her handler – fitting for her age and not to be faulted, just a bit distracting.

***Best Puppy - the Winner's bitch was Best Puppy***

### **Reserve Winners Bitch**

#### **Danby Pond Whitfield The Hive Queen**

An orange roan that pleased for her movement and firm, hard side gait. I found her a little narrower in the ribcage than her competition. Correct carriage of tail. Good condition of jacket. A very pleasing outline and in balance.

### **Veteran Bitch**

#### **Golden Gait's Tiny Dancer**

Such a beautiful bitch full of determination and superb driving rear movement that gives her the push and propulsion to achieve her goal. She is wonderful to go over with spring of rib, firm hard topline and a pleasing headpiece with soft eye and expression. Such a charmer. All the essence of Cocker. Just a few rolls of skin over the withers befitting her age perhaps?

### **Veterans 12 plus**

#### **G CH Malysse Hot Summer**

This grand old lady proved she was all heart getting herself around the ring with much style and enthusiasm. Slightly off her game on a front leg, she nevertheless set her mind to giving us her best performance. She brought a tear to my eye.

### **Best of Breed**

The Specials class was in full attendance and certainly demanded close attention to ensure a fair and accurate judging. There were all colours represented in this colourful breed and some variations in style and grooming that made for a varied look.

**G CHB Winfree It's A Bug's Life** was a classic black and white male that stood well over the ground, moderate angles, sufficient bone, firm topline, tail set on correctly, with a ribspring, depth of body and strong hind quarters. His head was all Cocker and had the soft expression I desire. Condition was good with a moderate jacket. Sound on the down and back he met one of my essential requirements that what I see and feel on the table must be reflected in the movement portion of the examination. He was a Cocker that was a 'whole' package.

### **Best of Opposite**

**Ashbrook Hot Tamale** moved up from the classes having finished her title earlier in the weekend, she pressed hard against the breed winner. She is such a correct package to go over with all the angles and detail as you would wish it to be. A black, white and tan she is hard in topline, with correct tail carriage. Well up on leg which is balanced to her length of rib. She is moderate and correct in all her parts.

Soft expression of head with pleasing planes of skull to muzzle.

### **Select Dog**

#### **G Ch Carnaby One And Done**

A powerful light blue with a definite mind of his own, this is a strong Cocker with a merry, engaging attitude. Deep in body, good length of rib and bone. I would make him a little shorter in loin. In impeccable condition.

### **Select Bitch**

#### **Golden Gait's Tiny Dancer**

The gold Veteran bitch was a worthy winner of Select and complemented the deep quality of the Breed, Opposite and Select dog winners. She stood out for her carriage and drive on the move and pushed hard for the final.

### **AOM**

The two Award of merit winners were strong representatives in a quality entry

**GCh Julio's Can't Stop at One** – a lovely one piece package bitch that held her shape beautifully on the move. In total balance with everything in moderation.

**G CH Twinsmade Hotshot** – a beautifully groomed and conditioned red dog in hard muscle. Lovely flow of neck into shoulder which is hard to find in our breed.

**I cannot begin** to thank the Committee, Exhibitors, Fanciers, Friends and the ECSCC for their kindness, gifts, and thoughtful care on my final adjudication of the breed. I was truly overwhelmed by the tributes. Many tears were shed. None of this would have happened without the hardworking committee and those breeders and owners who brought the exceptional entry to Ontario.

**Now the other part** – I want to encourage you as breeders/exhibitors to pay close attention to correct shoulder angles, soundness on the move, firm topline, and rears that drive off short strong hocks. This breed has a moderate forechest which cannot be achieved if the upper arm is too short and the legs are not set well under the body to support the weight of the rib cage. Too many were lacking in forechest as a result of upright shoulders and short upper arms. Bone is essential and there were a number with fine bone. In the heads I saw several with a narrowness over the bridge of the muzzle that creates a narrow and tapered muzzle that is not efficient for a bird dog with a carrying requirement.

There was one undershot mouth. The standard is specific about scissors with level acceptable.

Good feet – this is a rounded, deep foot with bone and cushions. I saw a strange anomaly in grooming the feet into a pointed, tapered foot not unlike a hare foot with hair! Why? It is not desirable. The foot is round!

Soundness. It is time to watch your dogs on the move both around and down and back. There should be a push from the rear that propels, and a reach forward that extends low to the ground. The Cocker has a two column support reach, at speed there will be some degree of convergence but because of the required rib spring it is not a breed that singletracks. Equally, going away the hocks have some degree of separation as they thrust that powerful hindquarter. They should move parallel and somewhat apart. On the side watch for rolling, loose skin which is a sign of imbalance front and rear. Look to see where the front leg reaches out under the muzzle and observe if there is excessive degree of lift in front which is wasted energy. I think that lack of soundness was probably the main concern I was aware of in my judging.

Confirm the set on of tail and carriage that is never cocked up, Terrier-like.

Temperament was generally excellent with little evidence of apprehension or stress. Many of the tails were working overtime!

I look forward to seeing the next generation in the ring!!

I trust my comments will be accepted in the spirit with which they are meant.

Thank you,

Virginia Lyne