

An English view of the Springers in America

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meant it was more than an adequate meal.

The main show started at 8 am the following morning with sweepstakes which are similar to ours, being done by a different judge of repute, Kathy Lorentzen in this case.

I was quite amused by the thought of a "hospitality" breakfast — free to all. As most judging starts at 8 am I think it's a must and every morning I was met by the ever cheerful Frances Nelson (responsible for the production of Francie) and got used to the idea of coffee and sticky buns for breakfast.

I was rapidly changing my opinions of the Americans and their Springers, helped by meeting Tekla Viker who said she was a comparative newcomer to Springers, had only had them for about nine years — how come we have experts who "know it all" after less? Another big difference, to reserve your seat you left your camera, handbag or catalogue on it!

Temperament

At 5.30 pm (no, not a late start, this was scheduled), Mrs James Edward Clark started the dog puppies, veterans and FT classes. The puppies, when on a loose lead, looked very similar to ours, but the shape is altered by stance.

Lasagne buffet laid on at the show centre (personal friend so they got it cheap at \$10,000, and we knock the "scout hut"), then a meeting of the club where I was allowed to sit in. A lot was the same as ours, only with more noughts at the end of their sums, the talking point of the night being the presentation of a paper on temperament.

Everyone said throughout that they have a big temperament problem and I quote from the FT regulations: "If a dog while being judged attacks another dog without reason it must not receive a qualifying score" and if that's in the rules what does it say for

temperament? But I can honestly say I saw 353 dogs which were entered at this show, and I didn't see even one fight, bite or raised lip. They could have fooled me.

Surely this had to be the right way — talk about it, then do something. If you accept you have a problem then you're a long way down the road to solving it — another misconception on my part — they are honest about their problems.

The English ESSC made a presentation of the cold cast bronze of Ch Moorcliff Dougal of Truelindale, and a professionally-done video of the field trial championships to the America club, which were received with warm thanks.

Friday — field trial, and a re-run for the video people (professionals to film all the sections) of the tracking tests which took place on the Tuesday, but are impossible to film without interfering with scenting conditions. I have ordered a film and hopefully it will be on show next year at the ESSC ch show, maybe even the open show if we get it in time.

Fascinating to find their field trial dogs as ours are, only the opposite way; in fact more like working English Setters, but as they both evolved from the same taproot maybe this is not surprising. As their game is not as plentiful as ours the dogs must cover more ground, speed being the essence; they are lighter with longer legs. Missing game (rabbits not classed as game, re Setters) is not a fault — disqualification here, and line following is a virtue.

The most important person at a trial is the 'Bird man' who goes in front placing the birds. He seems to get all the aggro and very little of the thanks from what I can see — thankless job — hope they pay him well!

Buses had been laid on in case any of the show people wished to see a trial. 70 turned out in weather that wouldn't have disgraced Olde England, 71 (plus me) returned at lunchtime for the rest of the dog classes.

I was introduced to the professional handling team of Bob and

Delores Steng who took me to the grooming area, and were quite happy to give me one or two tips on their superb presentation. I was very interested to find that most handlers will stay predominantly in one breed, and that most Springers, having completed their championship, return home and live as pets, borne out by everyone I spoke to having two or three 'oldies' at home.

Shoulders

Friday night was a hallowe'en party, cobwebs hung authentically in catching spots, battery operated 'screams' jiggling from the ceiling, bats to stick anywhere and everywhere, dogs wearing Alice bands with flashing lights on, all off the lead with the children doing "line dancing", in and out, and they reckon they've got a temperament problem!

8 am start on Saturday and I mean start — everything was run to a strict timetable. The judges' training seminar, quietly and efficiently run by Don and Carol Callahan, who arranged for different people to speak on different points, most with canine models, went very smoothly — they all said the right things.

Paddy explained about shoulders and how a straight shoulder or forearm makes for fast, choppy but spectacular movement — odd when you think that we took out of the American Cocker Standard, which they put there, "Animation should not be confused with good movement," which I personally think should be written into every Standard.

It was explained (by Kathy) that the new Standard gave different measuring points for length to give a longer dog, and that a Springer is a double coated dog (even though the field dogs are trimmed with a fine blade before the season, as speed is the essence) and should be styled (her words, not mine) and when they are dripping in coat that is not an ESS, and she would send a barber one out of the ring.

All the words came out right —

it just left me wondering how they show what they do — excuse me, my brain hurts — maybe it's the American saying "If a little is good, too much is better." Prospective judges and onlooker (me) go to watch the show.

Today is main show day, a day never to be forgotten, one of the great days that as a friend said "it's like being a member of a very exclusive club that operates all over the world — dogs."

Obedience classes, a mixture of our obedience and working tests; with an entry of 80 the standard was high and competition keen, but the one who brought the house down was team fancy dress, dogs and handlers (another idea gone — Yanks have no sense of humour) I was quite hurt when my pick team (the clowns) didn't win.

At lunchtime, I met Julie Gasow of Sallilyn's fame; whether you approve or not, this is the lady who had virtually made the American Springer, as to win this is the kennel you have to get past. I don't know what I expected — but it certainly wasn't the smart, bright charming person she is; she might be 93 but she left me for dead (who said "that's not hard"?).

She said she was worried Robert (Ch Sallilyn Condor, BIS Westminster) had been with Mark (Threlfall — his handler) so long he would have forgotten home, so she was delighted when he walked in, went around the chairs and said "this is mine."

We also had a good laugh about her entry into field trials — bought the hat, waxed jacket and wellies and all the "poser gear" — all set for a big entry, mated Ft Ch Ludlovian Scamp of Greenfair to Ch Sallilyn's Good Omen and got a litter of (yes — even I accept this now, after dreaming of it for years) mediocre show and mediocre workers! And who wants those? A great lady indeed, in spite of our differences of opinion.

Best of breed, 57 dogs in the ring — all the same sizing, facing the same way, marked the same, presented to perfection — you could have heard a pin drop; the judge, Annie Clark, went on the

initial assessment looking at each one. As she checked the last one, she turned to the tensed exhibitors, spread her hands and said "I give up," broke the ice, relaxed the dogs and exhibitors, that's what I call style.

Although the dogs look all the same, structure was as varied as ours as regards shoulders, top-lines, quarters and tailsets which showed as soon as the handler came to move the dog. As they were shortlisted, and further shortlisted, excitement grew, all Americans give little high pitched "Oowch" to signify approval. Even the dogs do it, which I found quite unnerving to start with, until finally the greatest accolade was presented, with much ring-side approval to Ch Goodwill Genuwin Remarque owned by John and Diane Ostenberg.

Impressed

Back to the hotel to change as the awards are made at the banquet, complete with concise, informative speeches from all sections of the club, tracking, hunting, field trial, obedience and show — how great that they all get together — lesson to be learned! Clocks went back an hour, especially for me I think — they knew I needed it.

Sunday — anti-climax maybe you think — wrong — Twin Cities show today and tomorrow. I was asked by Mark if I would like to go over Condor and see him move; you bet, that dog has charisma, plus the intangible presence and style, truly a dog to remember. I'll use my new American expression which is so descriptive, "that dog's got Attitood."

Also had the time to meet so many nice people, including Karen Miller (handler and breeder) who was kind enough to let me go over all the dogs she had with her, and we were both completely honest about them, although she could not understand what I meant about heads. I took a book of photos with me — unfortunately by this time I had lent it to Stewart, who will return it to the secretary for the reference of the club.

SUMMARY OF ODDMENTS

★ After asking numerous people, of whom only one said they owned one, the rest only know of one, have come to the conclusion that the word 'roaring' in the Standard just means to them heavily ticked, as theirs are all 'cookie cutter' solid and white.

★ The difference between working and show is only the same as the difference between me and Miss World!

★ No-one said to me "this is right," most wanted to change in the right direction, but were worried that they might not win if they did not conform: "Too frightened of being wrong to ever be right" (not an original quotation, I pinched it from somewhere).

★ Everyone loved the head studies I took over, but how can we expect them to breed some, if they haven't got any? (Sorry Daisy, I forgot your fabulous-headed English import).

★ At the club meeting, same troubles as us, puppy farmers, someone breeding a bitch too young, and at the judges' training day explaining the KC wouldn't let them describe the eye as triangular, so they had to settle for oval — small world, same dogs, same type committee, same thinking KCs — remember exactly the same conversation, we were allowed to settle for almond!

★ I could go on for ever, but this is the report I have given to the ESSC — I WAS IMPRESSED — not by the dogs, but by the people, and their obvious love and dedication to the breed.

★ I feel the dogs are so far down the road of division that if they don't try to bring them back now, they never will — and would remind them that if you keep changing something it eventually ceases to be the thing which appealed to you in the first place. I also feel closer, less aggressive, more inclined to listen to what they have to say, admire what they have done and hope that we can continue to exchange views.