

## **SWEEPSTAKES JUDGE, DAWN HITCHCOCK -**

PVBMDC Club Members: First I want to thank all of you for allowing me this opportunity. It is not only a privilege but an honor as well. It is my intention to apply for my judges' license at the end of 2016 or beginning of 2017 and this will go a long way in helping me to fulfill that goal. I was also honored to judge the first sweeps for this club back in 1998 and have exhibited at this show as well. It is always well organized and in a wonderful location. Always one of my favorites if I'm attending specialties. I do hope that at the end it was obvious to everyone what it was I was looking for.

For my final lineup in puppy sweeps I had five dogs out of eight who I would have been quite happy to put in the back of my van for the trip home and all of them for different reasons. All five of these dogs possessed correct breed type, with sturdy bone, and good coming and going. I had my final contenders to stand in the middle of the ring without handlers touching them... for me, this is where I was able to cut the mustard, so to speak, since a dog can manually be put together but standing on their own, some will shine and others will reveal the weaknesses you might have suspected since talented handlers can hide these faults either through grooming or through presentation. And it all came down to splitting hairs, I liked all of these that much. I later learned that two dogs standing in the final lineup were littermates. Although I had already guessed that, since they were very similar.

The dog I ultimately chose for my Best Puppy in Sweeps came from the 6-9 puppy dog class at eight months old. Might I add, the puppy I gave second to in this class was also an extremely nice puppy at just under seven months old. I could have easily given the second place puppy the class as well and been happy with that decision, but I went with the more mature puppy in the class. The second place puppy has a very bright and promising future. The ultimate winner carried a very level topline at all times, moving, standing, and free baiting. He also moved with his tail properly carried and he moved with power off his rear. I would have preferred a little better head piece on him and a darker eye. But from the 6-9 class I forgave him this as I don't expect puppies at this age to have adult heads. But he had everything else I look for and no dog is perfect. In the regular classes the judge reversed these two, giving my second place first and Reserve winners dog and my first place dog second. My Best of Opposite Sex to Best Puppy In Sweeps was from the 9-12 bitch class. Another beautiful puppy, dripping in lovely type. Just nine months old. She was wonderfully bubbly in her temperament and she made me smile and even laugh from time to time. She carried a beautiful dense coat, head, dark eyes, bone, but she appeared to not carry such a great topline on the move which ruined her outline on the go around. When standing on her own free stacked in the center of the ring, I was able to detect what I suspected. An age thing, of that I hope for her future. This is otherwise an outstanding bitch. I'm sure she will go on to do wonderful things. The other two bitches I had in the ring at the end, also for different reasons, were lovely. They just didn't stand steady to my attention which is something the standard also calls for. I have no doubt these two will also make their way and had they been more steady would have given my BOS bitch more of a run for her money. I was glad to see the 15-18 bitch who won her class in sweeps, decide to behave herself in the regular classes and was awarded Winners Bitch. My Best of Opposite puppy went Reserve to her in the regular classes. General observations: On the whole temperaments were pretty good. Even with some novice handlers, dogs that were on the shy side never gave me concern that I

might have been bitten. I was actually pleasantly surprised that shoulders were overall pretty good. I found a few forward shoulders but for the most part they were pretty good. One dog, in particular, had really great shoulders. I saw only a few light eyes and missing molars on only one young dog. For the most part coming and going was good on most entries but top lines were poor on many of the entries. Tails were also a concern as was lack of bone.

The most difficult class for me to judge was the 6-9 month bitches. And I hope no one that was entered in this class takes offense to this as it is simply constructive criticism, and I even commented in the ring before handing out placements that there is really no excuse for bringing untrained puppies into the ring for exhibition. While no one expects puppies to stand perfectly still, it is near impossible to judge dogs who are not leash trained. Even simply taking puppies out for a walk gives them ample opportunity to become accustomed to walking at your side without pulling, galloping and leaping. I'm sure the puppies were lovely, but it was very difficult to see, so my placements were like feeling around in the dark. Onto my wonderful veterans. Most of these dogs were in wonderful condition for their ages. I was so pleased. Again, I hope I made it clear from ringside why I ended up doing what I did. I truly loved them all. A few had some missing front teeth, but none were penalized for that since I'm sure it was due to their advanced ages. Only one was undershot. Most continued to carry the good toplines of their youth which I was very pleased to see. After all, in our standard it states "Powerful drive from the rear is transmitted through a level back."

My Best Veteran in Sweeps was from the 9-11 bitch class and at 9.5 years old defied her years as she floated around the ring and free stacked never placing a foot wrong, always holding a level back and correct tail carriage and still full dentition. I think it is a tribute to a bitch if she can still carry a level back (certainly not knowing if this bitch has ever carried a litter but it is probably safe to assume so) after carrying litters of puppies. And it is said that a breeding program is never better than its bitches. And this bitch was still holding together for her age. If memory serves, I believe she was awarded an AOM in regular judging. My Best Of Opposite Sex to Best In Veteran Sweeps came from the 7-9 dog class. It would be foolish for me to not admit that I knew who this dog was. You can't be around for as long as some of us have been and not know who some of these old timers are. After all, he was being specialied at the same time I was specialing a dog of my own. I have always admired this dog and have a great respect for him and his pedigree, his breeder and his owner. He still moved around the ring quite effortlessly, carrying a good back and good tail. Still quite the show dog. The deciding factor is that his bite had shifted some due to his age, and I know this can happen as I've seen it in some of my own dogs over the years. But make no mistake, this dog is still a contender in any ring. And he too, I believe, received an AOM in regular judging.

Thank you to everyone for bringing me your dogs. I enjoyed the sportsmanship and the hospitality shown to me and my husband and I hope that one day I will be invited to judge regular classes at your beautiful specialty.

Dawn Hitchcock