

Critique of the 10th Collie National - by the Judge – Jasna Kovacevic (CRO)

First of all I would like to thank from the bottom of my heart to all exhibitors who took the trouble to come to this show with their wonderful dogs and who thus gave me the opportunity to enjoy the sight of two hundred absolutely wonderful collies for two days. It was an opportunity I have never dreamt of or expected to get a chance to experience. My huge THANK YOU goes to the organizers of this show who invited me and who made my staying in Sidney so memorable.

Thank you Ms Pauline Worthington who suggested me as a judge for his show, thank you Mr Jim Carver who took care of me all the way, thank you Ms Lynda Brandt who gave me all information I needed and wrote a pile of e-mails during the time of preparations, thank you Ms Val Morrow whose warm welcome, advice and friendship means a lot to me, thank you Ms Robin Hopkins, my ring steward, for all her help.

Classes were huge and of incredibly high quality. This is not said out of courtesy. I did not have one single dog entered that could not fit into the standard – and there were 254 there! Very often the decision about placements depended on tiny details and impressions of the moment, since dogs were really equal in quality. Very often I wished I could place first more than one dog. Many times it was just the enthusiasm an exhibit was showing on the day that decided on the placement. Therefore I wish to stress out and put in **bold – the critique you are about to read is a meticulous analysis of each and every dog, not only because I am trying to explain the placements, but also because I am trying to help identifying the potential weak points and red alerts for the future breeding.** You will notice that several things related to anatomy are repeated almost all the time. There were numerous questions about this, not just after the show but on the conference day as well. I am so picky in my critiques only because I would hate to see you making mistakes we in Europe (including UK, naturally) are making. Paying attention to the standard is the most important issue in breeding. I shall say that again, at the show I did not see one single dog that could not fit in the standard, (whether AKC, FCI, KC – whatever general opinion may be, to me it does not make so much difference providing dogs are in standard, mind you, not **all** American collies are in AKC standard as well!).

I would like to see some improvements, though. What I consider to be the most important issue here is medium **light bones**, and both AKC and KC ask for that.

Quote AKC: ...*fair (not excessive or extreme, average, mediocre) amount of bone considering the size...*

Quote AKC: ... *when considered in proportion to the size the head is inclined to lightness and never appears massive. A heavy headed dog lacks the necessary bright, alert, full-of-sense look that contributes so greatly to expression.*

Quote AKC: ...the collie is a *lithe (definition: gracefully slender, slim, refined)*, strong, responsive, active dog...

Quote KC: ...*forelegs straight and muscular, neither in nor out at elbows, with a moderate amount of bone*

Therefore, in my opinion, an attempt must be made by all of us to keep our breeding out of extremes. There should be nothing extreme about a collie; key words of collie standard are: **moderate, harmony, balance.** It is not the question of two degrees less or more in angulations, it is the overall impression of dignity, elegance, balance, gracefulness, alertness, and smooth, effortless gait capable of changing directions in an instant (important for a sheepdog, impossible for a big, heavy dog). Since we should all know that, for example, collies of older times were of considerable size, 60 cm and more, and still were **NOT heavy and coarse**, it is obvious that it is not the size that should be of our greatest concern here, but anatomy. This is where the corrections must be made, also in American breeding, since AKC standard asks for the same qualities. We, in Europe have the opposite problem, our collies are too small and have a lot more problems, but I shall leave it here, for now.

The improvement in bones should automatically bring improvement in heads, since the major fault of a coarse head is its heaviness that comes from too much bone all in all. Consequently, the skeleton and the amount of bone should be the start point for us breeders, with this respect.

The second alarm concerns front angulations. Fortunately, there were not many dogs with serious problems in this part, but still the majority could use a slight improvement, meaning - **things should not be allowed to get worse in future.** It is a possible danger and that is why I was so particular concerning front angulations and movement in most of the dogs exhibited, which you will find in critiques as well.

What I really like is tail set, carriage and length in great majority of dogs. In fact, I really envy you on that. We, in Europe, have a great problem with this, also coat texture and colour, the richness of sable

and blackness of tricolour pigment. I a lot of beautiful blues in roughs, but smooths could improve the quality of their blue colour a bit, it should be clearer, bright blue colour.

I noticed a few tricolour exhibits with very light eyes, which was quite strange to me and a rather unpleasant surprise.

It also came as a surprise to me to see that there are dogs bred out of rough and smooth parents, since we have not been allowed to do that any more for quite a long time now.

I would also like to say something about the imports from Europe I had the opportunity to see at the show. Most of them did not have their best day, unfortunately. What I really like is the fact that these dogs produced a number of good, sound, nice quality dogs. In general, I think they contribute significantly to the excellence of your breeding. It is extremely important to find a balance when using imports from both continents. What I find exciting and wonderful is that you use both, and I support strongly all ideas that try for that. You in Australia have a genuine chance and opportunity to find the right formula and to produce a collie that shall fit in all standards, a collie that shall prove there is and should be just one standard for both, smooth and rough collie – the most beautiful of all dog breeds. I can say that because, from what I have seen, a lot of your collies are already very close to this ideal. Congratulations to all breeders and exhibitors, and thank you once again for an incredible pleasure and extraordinary experience during those two days at Collie National 2009.

BEST IN SHOW, BEST INTERMEDIATE BITCH

1. CH BURDEKIN BOSSY BOOTS

I remember when I looked at her I said to myself - this is the one, and my obviously expression told the same to everyone in the tent, since I heard them saying – *she really likes this one!* Absolute truth. After the first day of the show it was my impression that if she could show like this the following day she would be hardly beaten by anyone. And there it was, BIS, it was absolutely her weekend. Correct from every point, feminine, balanced, dignified, dreamy, mysterious...name it - you have it. A real pleasure to look at whether standing or moving. Exquisite!

RUNNER-UP BIS, BEST OPEN IN SHOW

1. ROBGAI SIERRA SUNRISE

Lovely, feminine, elegant bitch, stands with dignity, correct angulations, a bit more laid back shoulder, and a bit longer reach would make her gait perfect, nice head and expression, well set and carried ears and tail. Quality coat that follows her body outline and rich sable colour. A real pleasure to look at, the name fits her well.

BEST PUPPY IN SHOW

1. COLLEGIATE COLONEL BLIMP

What a beautiful puppy! I liked everything about him. Well constructed, moving beautifully, lovely head and expression, beautiful character, delightful puppy! Congratulations to the breeder and owner!

BEST MINOR PUPPY IN SHOW

1. VEDAMEA WALKIN ON HEIR

I loved this tri immediately, I loved the overall balance and outline of this dog who did not disappoint me in his movement either, very good coat and colour. As far as his head is concerned I would prefer the stop more defined, ears are slightly too close, yet nice dark eyes.

BEST PUPPY IN SHOW

1. JENCOL THRILLS NOT FRILLS

Lovely sable dog, lovely head and expression. Correctly constructed, moving well. Rather light in body, yet with well developed muscles. It will certainly be thrills not frills when he matures.

BEST JUNIOR IN SHOW

1. ROBGAI WHISPA SWEET NOTHINGS

Lovely, lovely blue merle, excellent colour, lovely head and expression, good body, good angulations, good tail, moving well.

BEST AUSTRALIAN BRED IN SHOW

1. CH CATHKIN DIAMOND EYE

This is the dog that made a strong and lasting impression on me. I like everything about him and especially his flowing, effortless gait, typical, school example of what a collie should look like when

moving. I liked his head and expression just as much, and immediately as I saw him I knew he would most certainly be in the race for CC. It is only an impression, but I missed the genuine diamond in the eye, he most certainly must have had in his previous shows, it was the only reason for the rCC in otherwise completely tie situation.

BEST VETERAN (7-10)

1. CRAEBURN CRYSTAL IMAGE

Lovely sable bitch, feminine head, gentle expression, slightly broad skull, well proportioned to the body which is nicely shaped, good angulations and tail carriage, moving well, her age does not show.

BEST VETERAN IN SHOW (10 yrs and over)

1. CH CHEROD BLU UP A STORM

This dog charmed me completely by his exceptional balance all over, elegant, smooth and flowing gait, head carriage showing dignity and expression with sparkling excitement in his eyes, bravely leading the line of outstanding, excellent and, not to be forgotten, much younger dogs, not showing the weight of his eleven years on his shoulders. Well done, and absolutely deserved CC in the dead run with his exceptional rival CH CATHKIN DIAMOND EYE.

BEST NEUTER IN SHOW

1. CH JEDFORD MILITARY MISS

Lovely sable, well constructed, well proportioned, moving smoothly with drive, excellent show condition.