

Canadian National 2012

A once-in-a-lifetime experience and an exciting day. Thank you to the exhibitors for bringing your dogs for my opinion. Judging is fascinating, and hopefully, educational. Having the privilege of going over other breeders' dogs, is always interesting. To my stewards for the day, Judy and Connie, a very big, Thank You, for keeping me on time and in some order.

I found judging the males to be complex. There was a very great variation in type in some of the classes, sometimes I was scratching my head.

Judging bitches was much more pleasurable experience, Type was still extremely varied, but in each class I found a few excellent specimens of wolfhounds. The veteran bitch class was a joy, it is a credit to both the breeders and the owners of these girls, that the class was so strong in both type and soundness. My lineups of class winners was also extremely pleasing.

As a blueprint for an Irish Wolfhound male, both my Best in Show and my Winners dog, was certainly two animals, of rather varying looks, to appreciate. Both of great size, with commanding appearance. Sound and ground covering movement. My Winners dog reminded me of elements of Eaglescrag Kennel from the UK. My BIS, A powerful, upstanding dog, with a long striding, balanced side gait. Extremely sound both coming and going. His head both typically sight hound and masculine, with long level planes, punishing, strong jaw, excellent bite, big teeth and a kind and well set eye and the most beautifully set and held, rosed ears. He has clean and well boned legs, correct, well padded feet. In excellent condition. He was well ribbed back, with the correct spring of rib, strong loins and hindquarters. Everything topped off with an harsh coat of the correct length. A very worthy BIS.

So much easier to find a depth of quality in our breed, in the females. My BOS, a strong sound, classy bitch. Not exaggerated in any manner, everything in balance and moving with easy and active gait. My RWB and all the female class winners, and then some, were all excellent representatives of the breed.

I promised a long preamble, so I'm going to write it, with comments, as the breed standard is written.

General Appearance

General Appearance, particularly in males was extremely varied. I understand that people breed to their own interpretation of the breed standard, but certain things are a given. Our breed is a sight hound and follows the rules of the Greyhound family. We certainly have no problem with height, I don't believe there was any hound that was under the breed standard. But, I did have hounds at both ends of the spectrum, in body mass. Both cloddish, with round bone, and fine boned, with a want of muscle. Our breed standard asks for our hounds to have power, to be strong but also to be gracefully built.

Most hounds had good length of leg, I found extremely few that lacked proportionate length of leg to body.

Commanding appearance was sadly lacking. Commanding appearance comes from a well-made, structurally sound hound, happy in its own skin. A dog that can stand four square and is made so it is comfortable, both standing and moving.

Before we can have a good IW, we must have a well made, structurally sound, healthy dog. A sound upstanding animal, has to be able to stand and move in a balanced, comfortable fashion. All the more important when we are breeding a giant running dog. Balance of body weight is very important for our breed. The centre of gravity for our hounds, should be around the middle of the dog, many of them have their centre of gravity, much further forward.

We have a responsibility in continuing the work of the great breeders, who dedicated their life's to the IW. Now we have few ways of testing the working ability of our hounds. This does not give us carte blanche to turn our breed into, just a show dog.

We must always keep the vision of the stockmen that wrote the breed standard in mind. The perfect IW has yet to be born, but, there are kennels with great strengths in their stock. I'm sure with the passionate breeders and the strong kennels I still see in the breed, the IW has a safe future.

Heads

Some beautiful heads in the bitch classes. All the class winning bitches, and many more, had that strong, powerful beauty of head, that instantly makes them recognizable as an Irish wolfhound.

Getting the correct combination of sight hound and masculinity, is extremely difficult. Male heads often end up coarse, with too much skull or looking too feminine. My favorite male head of the day, was in my lovely, but masculine BIS.

I had some quite atypical heads, rather overdone skulls, with too much stop, forward set eyes and large flat ears. To the other extreme, I had some extremely narrow skulls, barely wider than their muzzle, this often came with a domed skull.

Pigment was also a problem, pink around the eyes, and large patches of pink on the lips. Dark pigment is one of the finishing touches, we should always aim for.

Judging on a hot day, I was struck by the copious amounts of droll, caused primarily by the sloppy, loose lips on some of the hounds. Sight hounds have tight, dry lips. Droll is something that should never be seen in a healthy sight hound.

I made a point of taking good note of mouths, as there has been much comment on the state of the bites in North American IW's. I'm pleased to say I didn't find many problems, a few slipped underbites, one wavy mouth and a few dropped centre incisors.

Teeth, in general, were a good size. I remember, just a few years ago, the tiny teeth in some IW's. Under jaws seemed strong and wide, on most hounds.

Powerful jaws and correct dentition, with large teeth should be a conscious thought, whenever we are planning a breeding.

Necks and Forequarters

I classified these two together, as it is very difficult to have a correct neck without correct forequarters. I found every combination of forehead. I had to be extremely forgiving on otherwise excellent hounds.

Getting the shoulder/upper arm, not only the correct length, but the correct angle, and placement on the rib cage. is, probably, the most frustrating element of breeding dogs. No sooner have you got close to your goal in one generation, than you lose it in the next. The most difficult thing to acquire, the easiest to lose.

The length of both Scapula and Humerus, were, in general, correct. The main problem seemed to be the placement on the rib cage. Very much forward set, the lack of lay back, resulting in a narrow base to the neck, and a lack of forechest.

I was shocked by the number of hounds, that were upright in pastern, even some crooked pasterns and knuckling over. An upright pastern is sometimes seen on a young animal, going through a growth stage, but, I found the problem on all ages, and both sexes. This stems from the lack of correct angulation in shoulders and/or upper arm.

Most of the body weight of our hounds, is in their front half, Without correct support from well placed and angulated front assembly and slightly sloped pasterns, the dog is unbalanced and will break down.

Body

Ribcages were, in general, well ribbed back, with good depth of chests. Forechest, was in some cases lacking, also fill. I even found some flat bottoms to the brisket. Not many herring gutted underlines. Tuck ups were there in most hounds.

Top lines were mixed. The most prevalent problem was softness in the mid-section of the top line. This stems from the forward set front assembly, and the lack of support for the body.

Loins, for the most part, were of the correct length. Some had a lack of muscling, with a tent like, falling off on either side of the spine in the loin area. The muscles of the loin are of great importance in a running dog, This is not only achieved with exercise, but muscle must breed into the dog.

Hindquarters

Hindquarters in general, were well made, and functional. Certainly not as problematic as the forequarters. One particular kennel have some beautifully muscled bums, making for some of the broadest rears I've seen in many years.

We have a problem with an exaggerated length of second thigh, it looks spectacular, but when the dog is standing for any length of time, they start dropping into a kneeling position. I know the standard asks for, second thigh long, but only to the point of balance with the upper thigh. The second thigh must be strong and well muscled, the dog standing four square on it's legs, without sinking.

I like to see a vertical hock, broad and well boned.

Tails were surprising good in carriage, weight and length. Very few thin, short or ringed.

Coats

Coats are an integral part of breed type. The standard asks for a coat, Rough and hard. The ideal coat with a harsh topcoat, protecting a soft, warm, undercoat, able to repel the wet, damp weather of the British Isles, particularly Ireland where it can rain for weeks at a time. A working hound needs a functional coat, there was no one waiting with a slicker brush when the hounds got home from hunting. A long or soft coat, will also pick up vegetation impeding the animals movement.

I got the impression, that people were picking puppies with a lot of coat and furnishings, leading to an adult dogs, with soft, long coats.

Generally, the puppy with a flat, closed coat and little or no furnishings, will have the correct length and texture of coat, and the correct furnishings when they reach maturity, at the age of two or three.

Veteran Dog

1 Ch. Wolfkin Zydeco

Alone in his class. houndy, shapely and sound, moved around the ring like a youngster, belying his eight years. Rather soft coated. Beautiful, houndy head and an excellent mouth.

Veteran Bitch

This class was a joy to judge, 13 in the ring and all a credit to the breeders and owners.

1 Ch. Druid Rock Shellane's Skylark

I have seen this bitch at every stage in her show career, always beautiful. I think now at the age of seven, she is still quite lovely. Exquisite head, excellent ear carriage, and placement /shape of eye. Correct forechest, deep body, well ribbed back. In excellent condition. Sound in all directions. Award of Merit

2 Ch. Wolfhaven Don't go Breakn My Heart

Tall, rangy, eight year old. Very sound. Not the bone of the winner. Long well carried tail.

3 Rockhart Eclipse

Eight year old brindle, of lovely type. Excellent coat, fore chest .Showing her age in her movement and lack of tuck up.

4 Ch. Castlekeep's Livonia

Rangy eight year old, with lovely head. Large, but well held, ears. Scope to her body. Lacking in tuck up.

Junior Puppy Dog

1 Arah Akhenaten

Six month old . Beautiful head, reminded me of Eaglescrag. Perfect bite, with large teeth. Harsh coat of the correct length. Promising baby, uncoordinated, and finding it difficult to cope with his rear angulation at the moment. With his litter sisters, peas in a pod.

Senior Puppy Dog

All the young dogs in this class, were upright in pastern

1 Kuriann of First Avenue

Very shapely, well boned puppy. Carrying too much weight. Rather open coated. The best angulated front in the class, but this is a difficult age for young males.

2 Glenamadda Wolfholm J Hendrix

A ranger dog than the winner, a little flat in top line at the moment. Needs time to grow into his frame.

3 Pitlochry's Norton

Smaller framed boy, and a little front heavy at the moment.

4 Kalkinny Mcshane of Starkeeper

11 month old grey brindle. Outgrown himself, and needs time to drop into his frame.

12-15 Month Dog

1 Cugein Tyrian O'Tairisem

14 month, with a harsh, red brindle, coat. Well balanced for his age. In good condition. Excellent bite. Rather flat ears. Sound.

2 Kellamore Starkeeper Jake

Tall grey, rather out grown himself. Standing rather straight both ends. Another young boy that needs time to grow into his frame.

15-18 Month Dog

1 Rockhart Suspicion

Classy, strong, red brindle. Correct plains to the head, and well held ears. Well boned legs. High at the withers, making him look as if he is dropping in hindquarters. Correct return of upper arm. Ample fore chest. Looking a little square at the moment.

Canadian Bred Dog

1 Cugein Ortega of Castlekeep

Workman like, sound, 15 month, red brindle. Deep chested, with strong hindquarters and low set hocks. Very pleasing young dog, that could certainly, 'do the job'.

2 Kerry's Hitech Hoover

Surprised to find out that he was three years old, as he looks much younger. Still has a way to go, to reach maturity. Most definitely a hound, a long legged brindle. Harsh coat.

3 Blackwing's Starkeeper Tegann

Red sable, honest young dog. Looking a little square, as he has yet to let down at either end.

4 Glenamadda Starkeeper Dublin

Grey brindle with overdone rear angles, that he is finding it hard to manage. Wonderful dispersion. Excellent bite.

Bred by Exhibitor Dog

A most difficult class to judge. Very different looks, all with strengths. Movement was, in all cases, erratic. In the end I judged on power and strength.

1 Rockhart Penance

Rock hard, young dog, with a hard expression. Long legs. Harsh coat. Almost bordering on the Deerhound in type. Strong, and in wonderful condition. Slightly hackney front action. Could do the job.

2 Quint of Aerie

Shapley on the move. With a beautifully broad backside, giving wonderful curves his rear quarters. Not in the muscular condition of the winner. Slack in mid back. Coat was soft and silky. To my mind, the antithesis of what a IW coat should be.

3 Shellane Braniff

Shapley dog, Moving without any enthusiasm. Lacking power. A little overweight.

4 Blackwing's It's Himself

Workman like, Harsh coated Red. Balanced, but I would like to see a little more angletation at both ends. Honest dog.

Open Dog

1 Riverlawn Exit of Aerie

Upstanding, long legged hound. Looked very impressive on the move, keeping his curvy shape. Handsome head, carried well on a strong neck. Excellent, bone, size and muscle, As with all the dogs from this kennel, very broad, well muscled, hindquarters. Winners Dog

2 Keltairs Punisher

Heavily marked, brindled dog in excellent muscular condition. Hound like head, excellent rib cage, strong loins. He is not as purposeful on the move as the winner of the class. A good ,workmanlike, well-made hound. A little proud of his tail.

Reserve Winners Dog

3 Taliesin's Realtbuion

Interesting, 18 mth. old red brindle. Very sound with clean bone. Correct level plains to his head. Strong, curvaceous hindquarters. Will watch him grow up.

4 Shellane Dark Moon at Glenmoriston

Impressive, big male, that was finding the heat too much. Excellent bone. Would prefer a more hound like head, and tighter lip.

Winners Dog

Riverlawn Exit of Aerie

Reserve Winners Dog

Keltairs Punisher

Junior Puppy Bitch

1 Arahu's Great Queen Hatshepsut

Heavily marked red brindle litter sisters, and litter mates to the JPD. All with the same, very attractive, look. Typical heads, with level plains, well held ears. All had correct dentition, with large teeth. Excellent coats in the making. First had more bone and substance than her sister.

2 The Heretic Queen of Arahu

Lighter in bone than her sister. A little cut up in underlined. Not the curves of her litter mates.

Senior Puppy Bitch

1 Hound Hill Vale Of Aerie

Red bitch, with an excellent coat. Scope to her body. Well ribbed back. Long legs. Long, beautifully carried tail. Best shoulders in the class. Typical head, rather flat ears.

In hard condition. A very nice bitch in the making. Best Puppy.

2 Wolfhaven Josie of Aerie

Tall, rangy, leggy bitch. Has rather outgrown herself, at the moment. Steel grey, harsh coat. A little narrow in skull. Would like darker pigment.

3 Pitlochry's Nathalie

Red brindle. Shapely, sound with good return of upper arm. High in the rear at the moment. Little short on the leg.

4 Wolfholm Glenamadda Mata Hari.

Red bitch. Again, at a stage where she has out grown her curves.

12-15 Month Bitch

1 Kellamore Starkeeper Emma

I was very taken by this promising, strong, young grey brindle bitch. Standing well on clean boned, long legs, she held her shape on the move. Well ribbed body, strong, well muscled loins. Strong, well muscled and balanced hindquarters. Large but well held ears. A lovely bitch in the making.

2 Kellyscot Glenamadda Freya

Grey brindle, with well textured coat. At an age where she is standing rather straight at both ends, and needs time to drop into her curves.

15-18 Month Bitch

1 Nightwing's Controversy

Strong, sound bitch in rock hard condition. Level plains to the head, ears large, but well held. Correct forechest, and front assembly. Would like her a little higher on the leg. Strong, well angled hindquarters, low hock. Moved soundly, with purpose and balance

Canadian Bred Bitch

1 Wolfhaven Affair to Remember

Dark, houndy bitch. With good legs and feet. Looks very shapely on the move. Little dippy in the back. Would like to see more of her.

2 Glenamadda Starkeeper Clodagh

This bitch unfortunately, put her foot in a hole on the first go round, and was intermittently favoring her left forehand, but did enough to well-deserved her placing. Workmanlike, strong, balanced grey brindle.

3 Good Golly of Kerry

Tall, rangy, strong, three-year-old, still very immature. Houndy, with curves, more finished in rear than front. Rather too much head and skull my liking, but well held ears.

4 Cugein Caragln Omurchda Abryan

This bitch spent some of her time pacing, but when she got it together, she looked shapely and typical. Well made head, and rosed ears. Harsh coat.

Bred By Exhibitor Bitch

1 Nightwing's Breathless

My notes say 'cracking bitch'. Hard as rock, as with all the hounds from this kennel, grey brindle. In balance, front and rear, gentle rise to her top line, standing well, on strong legs. Sound balanced movement. To be critical, I'd like a little more tuck up and smaller, better held ears. Winners Bitch. B of W. BOS.

2 Wolfhaven Olympia

Taller and rangier than the first. With forechest, deep chest, good return of upper arm. Well ribbed back, with broad hindquarters. Kept her shape on the move. A little open coated. Head had too much stop and heavy ears.

3 Rockhart Paloma

Tall, leggy, red brindle, bitch. Lovely plains to her head, well carried ears. Rather level top line, and a little square in balance. Very strong.

4 Shellane Aspen Highlands

Another, very nice bitch, feeling the heat. Correct layback of shoulder and upper arm. Forechest and deep chest. A little heavy in the head.

.Open Bitch

1 Opal of Aerie

Tall and shapely, I find her a little masculine. Well laid shoulder and correct return of upper arm. Correct forechest. Strong loins. Great width, and muscling, over croup. Moving freely and in balance.

Reserve Winners Bitch

2 Keltairs Halo Legends

Well made, heavily marked brindle. Strong, sound and in excellent coat. Not the front reach of the winning bitch.

3 Rockhart Okelani

Smaller, more square, very strong bitch, with a harsh coat. Rather upright upper arm, and pastern.

4 Shellane's Eibhlin at Cugein

My notes say, 'Raw, old fashioned type of bitch'. That's a compliment. Houndy, substantial, sound.

Winners Bitch

Nightwing's Breathless

Reserve Winners Bitch

Opal of Aerie

Best of Breed

Mature, red male, with a pin wire coat, not the easiest thing to achieve with a red. He made me take notice as soon as he entered the ring.

Strong, houndy head, perfect bite, and strong under jaw. Level plains to his head, Beautifully, placed and held ears. The darkest pigmentation. His whole head giving a look of quality. He has beautiful quality of bone, long legs and well padded feet.

Correct forechest and fill. Correct length and return of upper arm. Powerful lions and hindquarters, with a well placed and carried tail.

He stands and moves with grace and power, having that all illusive, commanding appearance. I felt that if I took him, and my BOS, out for a days hunting, they could not only do the job, but, would return home sound.

Best of Opposite Sex Nightwings Breathless

Best Canadian Bred in Breed Starkeepers Glenamadda Kayte

Best of Winners Nightwings Breathless

Best Puppy in Breed Houndhill Vale of Aerie

Award of Merit Ch. Druid Rock Shellane's Skylark

Sexually Altered Male

1 Cugien Wolfhaven Axel

Very attractive, balanced, shapely, upstanding, young dog. Harsh coat, well held ears.

2 Tomahawke's Wolfkin Paxe

Sound moving, harshly coated, brindle hound with correct front construction. Little soft in top line. Shorter on the leg than the winner.

3 Starkeeper Glenamadda Keegan

Unfinished three year old, black hound. Large body, has yet to let down into his frame.

Sexually Altered Bitch

1 Tailstorm Karontara Helix

Long legged, grey brindle bitch. Kind expression, rather large but well carried ears. Harsh coat. A little high in the rear, at the moment, giving her too much top line.

2 Ch. Starkeeper California Ierne

Well made and sound, shorter on the leg than the winner.

3 Rockhart Jeressa

Well coated, brindle bitch. Strong, well angled hindquarters. Rather square. Lacking forechest.

4 Aragorn Cekia O'Tailstorm

Red Brindle, long legged bitch. In good condition. Soft top line. Flat ears.

Best Canadian Breed in Breed

Starkeepers Glenamadda Kayte

Strong, sound grey brindle. Well made and in excellent condition. This Kennel has a strong type, of which this bitch is typical.

Stud Dog and Get

Riverlawn Exit of Aerie

Quality get, including my best puppy in show. Good to know that winning dogs can also be producers of quality.

Brood Bitch and Progeny

Ch. Druid Rock Shellane's Skylark

Shades of their dam in progeny. Tall, well boned offspring. Again, Quality, breeding quality.

Brace Class

Ch.Glenamadda Starkeepers Chevonne/ Glenamadda Starkeepers Chevonne

Peas in a pod, Grey brindles. Well handled, and moving in unison.

Team Class

My Brace winners, joined by two kennel mates. Strong kennel type. well handled, and moving so well together.