

**Event: Irish Wolfhound Club of Canada
Quebec Regional Specialty Show**
Date: May 27, 2006
Judge: Dorothy Arn

Thank you for inviting me to judge the 4th Specialty Show of the Quebec Regional Irish Wolfhound Club. It is always an honor to be asked to judge, particularly when you feel as passionate about a breed as I do about ours. In addition, having the opportunity to pass judgment on a collection of good hounds is particularly interesting when the show is in an area where the hounds are largely unfamiliar. I wish to extend special thanks to Nancy, who kept me abreast at every turn and also to say how much I enjoyed the time I was able to spend with Guylaine and Lysane, both of whom were a great help and very good company indeed.

Finding dogs that are not only attractive and sound, but which at least look believable as wolf killers is important if the future of the Irish Wolfhound in its original majesty and grandeur is to be preserved. I was able to find that combination in all of my top winners, never making beauty alone a primary prerequisite. In some cases, the winners were indeed beautiful, in others, they were just good Irish Wolfhounds. We would like for them all to be beautiful, for how tempting is the "illusion that beauty is goodness." Should we degrade dog shows to the status of beauty contest, however, we would begin to aggrandize dogs lacking the essential attributes which set the Irish Wolfhound so distinctly apart from all other breeds, including his quite tremendous strength, athletic build and tractable temperament. Without those characteristics, the Irish Wolfhound would become a paltry substitute for the "real thing." At the end of the day, I was able to say that all of my top winners were the "genuine article."

It is so encouraging to see such improvement in the hounds in the past 30 years. We see far fewer cow hocks, straight stifles and twisted legs and feet. There were no truly unsound bites to speak of at this show and eye color overall was within an acceptable range. Feet were remarkably good throughout, and I saw only one hound with a seriously twisted foreleg.

This was my first trip to Montreal, which was every bit as beautiful as I had been told. The show site at the Sports complex proved to be a convenient venue, with easy access to parking and food services and a good, level ring in which to judge. As far as I could see, the football team, which was practicing in the field adjacent to the show, was of very little interest to the hounds, which is another example of the steady disposition so typical of our breed.

And now, to the critique:

JUNIOR PUPPY MALE

1. #6 Wolfkin's Aslan – A lovely male puppy, balanced and moving out well
2. #5 Excalibur Of Our Valley – Another nice youngster, but unable to top #6 today.

SENIOR PUPPY MALE

1. #8 Blackwing's Rising Sun Mango – Rangy, big boned youngster, moving out with gusto. A little loose in front just now. Lovely head, topping a long neck. A little soft in mid-back. Excellent muscling throughout. Very appealing.
2. #7 RoyelJokers Tiger On The Loose – Good, strong hindquarters on this young dog. Plenty of bone. His front is looking too straight, causing him to knuckle over. Otherwise, quite a lovely pup.
3. #9 Bailebrae Stampede To O'Lugh – Easy-moving pup, lacking bone and strength of the two who placed above him in the class. Still, lots to like about him.

CANADIAN BRED MALE

1. #10 Castlekeeps Viking Soul & Spirit – Tall, rangy hound with room to fill in at maturity. Proper head atop a long neck. Not quite enough bone fore or aft. Showing a bit of dip in topline. Excellent coat.
2. #12 Wolfkin Loki At Massapeag – Masculine dog carrying a bit too much weight today. Head somewhat short and broad. Moved out with strength and purpose. Coat could be more harsh. Balanced now, but with maturity his length of leg may become an issue.

3. #11 Starkeeper Quebec's Ciaran – Absent

BRED BY EXHIBITOR MALE

1. #14 Rockhart Anthem – Exhibiting masculinity in full measure, this gray-brindle dog left no doubt he could do the job for which the breed was intended. Typical head showing strength without coarseness. Possessed the sometimes elusive combination of substance and shape. Excellent front quarters and bone. Powerful neck. Although he sometimes sinks into an overdone look behind, his usual stance and gait reflect no extremes, whatsoever. Steady, typical IW temperament. Lazy ears.
2. #13 Redtop's Celtic Spirit - Absent

OPEN DOG

1. #16 Rockhart Elysee – Very beautiful young dark brindle dog, not yet finished developing. High quality overall, excellent head, expression, coat and gait. Shown in top condition. At this stage a little sharp in the croup and needing just a bit more length to give him balance. If he comes on as I expect, he has a bright future ahead of him.
2. #17 Wolfkin Odin – Big, rangy light gray brindle fellow with plenty of bone. Quite masculine. Could use a bit more drive. Good head and expression. Lovely feet, eyes and ears.
3. #15 Blair's Alloy O'Massapeag – Possessing both type and quality, but showing his age today. Soft in the backline. Not so good on the move, but certainly pleasing to the eye. Beautiful head.
4. #18 Taliesin's Lorcan – Although this older gentleman did everything that was asked of him, I am not sure he was having a good time. Showing his age a bit on the day. Great, harsh coat with dark points.

WINNERS DOG - #14 Rockhart Anthem – Shapely and strong, he is at the apex of maturity and development while in top condition. Sweet, steady temperament.

RESERVE WINNERS DOG - #16 Rockhart Elysee – Not yet fully mature. This young dog holds great promise.

JUNIOR PUPPY FEMALE

1. #19 Wolfkin's Arwen of Kiso – Well-balanced cream puppy, moving out freely and efficiently. Lovely head and expression. Could be a little stronger mid-back, but this may be attributable to her age.
2. #20 Wolfkin's Galena of Kiso – There was a great deal to like about this big, dark brindle youngster, not the least of which was her tremendous bone and strength. Her topline is not her fortune today and she is somewhat straight in shoulder, which adds to her lack of balance at this stage in her development. I will be anxious to see if she outgrows some of her peculiarities, as she otherwise has a great deal to offer.

SENIOR PUPPY FEMALE

1. #26 Castlekeep's Livonia – This puppy had a lovely head and expression, and moved out well. Too flat in loin. By the time the class was finished, she was having no more of it.
2. #24 Castlekeep's Cara – Shapely young bitch with a good side stride. Not so good coming and going. Round eyes. Ears could be better.
3. #23 Blackwing's Genius Einstein – Another shapely bitch, however, never got her act together on the move so it was difficult to assess her gait at any point. Perhaps she will come together with maturity.
4. #21 Castlekeep's Heartland – Sorry, I cannot read my notes very well here. It appears she needed more strength of muzzle, however, and a harsher coat.

12 – 18 FEMALE

1. #27 Aotearoa Emrys Mango – Pleasing red brindle bitch with a lovely head. A little short necked and moving a bit close behind today.
2. #29 O'Lugh's Literary Genius – A light brindle bitch that would have placed higher, had she been braver. She showed good balance and a great, sound stride.

3. #28 Calorien Arahu Divine Huntress – This dark brindle bitch possessed a good head and good feet. Her strength, however, did not lie in her movement, coming or going.

CANADIAN BRED FEMALE

1. #31 Laislinn Starkeeper Rayne – A sound, balanced, dark-brindle bitch of moderate size and shape. Good head and expression, with dark eyes. A bit proud of her tail on the move.
2. #32 Glenamadda Starkeeper Quaddryl – Typical, houndy head. This substantial bitch moved out freely, but was a bit close in the rear.
3. #34 Castlekeep's Heavenly Freesoul – Similar in some ways to those above, but less substantial. Lovely head and expression.
4. #33 Jadzia Freesoul of Castlekeep – Not quite as strong or substantial as top winners, but quite a respectable bitch.

BRED BY EXHIBITOR FEMALE

1. #38 Wolfhaven Don't Go Breakn My Heart – Lovely type and balance. A lot to like about her. A little stuffy in the neck.
2. #40 Stoneybrook Rockhart Rebecca – Good old-fashioned type. Typical and substantial, she had a lovely head and superior hindquarters. Too much weight detracted from an otherwise excellent shape and emphasized her wide front movement. Acting a bit lazy today.
3. #37 Calorien Deasco – Sound bitch. Moved out well. Hindquarters appeared too straight when standing, but she used them efficiently.
4. #42 Castlekeep's Soul of the Earth – A bit soft in back and full in tummy today, but a good bitch overall.

OPEN BITCH

1. #50 Knocknarea Tamsin – Excellent, old-fashioned typical bitch. Moved out well. Straight shoulders hurt her shape on the move. A lot to like about this one, not the least of which was great symmetry and balance.
2. #51 Rockhart Eclipse – Very high quality young bitch, not completely finished. She had so many important virtues and was a hair's breadth from winning the class. In top condition, she moved out with gusto. She had plenty of bone and substance and a harsh, dark coat. More length of back and less sharpness of croup would improve her outline and may come with maturity.
3. #44 Gabriels Starkeeper Jayde – Very sound bitch – somewhat long cast. Untidy ears and a soft coat were her primary faults, but she was not of equal quality to the two who placed above her.
4. #48 Taliesin's Aingeal Dana Bree – Not a big bitch, but big enough, she was showing her age on the day. This hard-bodied, cream colored bitch with black points and wiry hair moved out soundly.

VETERAN BITCH

1. #53 Ch Aotearoa Hihi Kata – Fit, gray-brindle bitch. Excellent head, ears, etc. Good stride. High in rear.
2. #55 Aotearoa Lily Deluna – Red-brindle bitch with lovely head, going along steadily for her age. Long and shapely. Outer coat completely stripped away, giving her the look of a smooth-coated breed.
3. #54 Am/Can Ch Kellcastle Starkeeper Vanilla – A light colored bitch with beautiful pigment and eyes. Showing her age more than numbers one and two.

WINNERS BITCH – #38 Wolfhaven Don't Go Breakn My Heart

RESERVE WINNERS BITCH - #40 Stoneybrook Rockhart Rebecca

BEST OF BREED - #66 Ch Curiann R Q Home To Wolfhaven – An excellent example of the breed in type, proportion and soundness. He is beautifully balanced in every way, and filled with shape, without exaggeration. His head and ears, neck, front, rear, bone, feet, substance, tail, coat, body shape and temperament fit the standard in full measure. He is a very good dog of which the breeders/owners deserve to feel quite proud.

BEST OF OPPOSITE - #68 Ch Starkeeper Glenamadda Realton – A rather long-cast, athletic looking bitch with all of the important breed prerequisites in place. Not beautiful, but a fine hound in so many ways.

BEST OF WINNERS - #14 Rockhart Anthem – A great big, good-looking, shapely, athletic dog, his combination of strength and type are essential components if our breed is to retain its believability as a wolf-killer. He demonstrates that wolfhounds can possess tremendous power and athleticism without coarseness.

BEST PUPPY - #19 Wolfkin's Arwen of Kiso – This was a close call as there was more than one puppy I liked a lot.

AWARD OF MERIT - #62 Ch Aotearoa Manuka 2nd – These were very fine, representative hounds, in so many ways.