

The Labrador Club of New Zealand 2024 Show Critique

Gundog Extravaganza Weekend 2024

Firstly, I would like to give my sincere appreciation for the invitation to return to New Zealand after many years to judge at what must be the Premier Gundog event in New Zealand.

The Hospitality and friendliness of the welcome was gratifying and humbling.

Secondly the quality of the dogs in general, but the Labradors in particular was pleasantly surprising.

I have thought long about how I should frame my "Report" and have decided that I should stray from a usual framework of giving a short critique on the winners of each class, but should instead focus on the positives and make some observations in general what I observed.

My background as you may be aware came from a strong period in Labradors in the 1970's to 2000's when kennels such as Sandylands, Poolstead, Bradking, Balrion, Cambrember, Charway, Fabracken, Follytower, Foxrush, Heatherborne, Jayncourt, Lawnwood, Mardas, Timspring, Rocheby, and many more were all showing stock of great quality and consistency. The order of the day was soundness and breed type in various forms., fashion was never a consideration. There were without doubt kennels that favoured colour in their breeding but in my opinion, there was never any prejudice. There were of course several popular stud dogs used by kennels and their satellites, but an import was a very, very rare occurrence. Maybe this is what led to the consistency in type, but of course relies heavily on soundness in stud dogs.

Well, this is all history and maybe seen as irrelevant, but as some would say, "there is no future without history"

How does all this relate to me judging at your show, well I am delighted to report that what I found had so much to be proud of in your breed in New Zealand. I found the vast majority of the dogs of true type, short coupled, strong yet active in build, broad and deep in rib, strong hindquarters and standing foursquare. I found no evidence of short legs or excessive heavy bodies. Temperaments were sound and movement for the most part true.

Let's deal with the negatives and get them out of the way. I found a number lacked breadth of skull and set and carriage of ear. Some muzzles lacked strength of underjaw, tight fitting lips and well-developed nostrils, all essential in the working labrador. This being said, these were in the minority.

I did find that some lacked hard condition, but coats generally were good and in a large number of exhibits tails were excellent, a rare sight these days to see a true "Otter" tail carried correctly.

Handling could be improved when on the stack and when moving particularly.

The day started with **Baby Puppy** Dog, Jancerie Watermelon Man who literally entered the stage and announced himself, a well grown puppy, confident and good carriage for one so young. Has a lovely dark eye and good eye shape giving a softness in expression. Good depth to chest, well sprung and good width in quarters. I am not used to judging puppies so young but would expect him to grow up on his legs. He scored over his sister for Best Baby Puppy on his movement on the day, being a little more outgoing than his slightly coy sister.

Puppy Dog Cornerstone Shine On Miracle, a little leggy at present but has a lovely head with good ear placement, would like a little better finish in muzzle, good deep chest, well down to elbow, will be better let down in rear with time. He moved out well using his hindquarters and true in front, which saw him take Best Puppy in Show over the lovely Puppy Bitch Charing Dancing Queen. She is well matured in body, short in loin, well ribbed back. Carrying a little too much weight over her shoulder today, but a very bright prospect.

Junior Dog was won by Croftsway Times Square the very impressive young yellow, good length to leg, well finished head, broad without any coarseness, strong neck set well into shoulder he has great balance overall and good width in quarters, which was the difference over Charing Literati' a black with a lovely balanced head and eye, a little deep in stop, stood on lovely legs and feet, just needs to develop a little in hindquarter. Croftsway Times Square had a change of handler for the challenge which did not benefit him as he was a strong contender for the Challenge Certificate. Junior Bitch was the super CH Moonlyte Come Over To Eventide So true in front, lovely return of upper arm, well sprung ribs, well back into short strong loin, wide well-muscled hindquarters, firm topline. She moved so soundly to beat Maktawae Good Golly, a young bitch who also had a good true front, but lost her topline a little and did not have quite the forward reach on the move.

Intermediate

Only Bitches were present, Blackboy Crakking Rosie At Charing who has good length to leg giving her an athletic appearance. Lovely feminine head with well shaped dark eye, she had good width in front, good width to hindquarters, her overall balance gave her the class over a well made CH Matawae Single Pringle. I would have liked a little more length of leg and a bit cleaner in throat, but she has a delightful head, super expression, good finish to muzzle, clean cut and good width to skull.

Limit

Again only Bitches in Limit classes headed by Charing Movie Script, at only just 14 months presented a balanced outline, just needing a slightly better set on of tail to complete the picture. She has a super front, elbows well in, ribs well sprung, strong in coupling and wide in hindquarters. She is well bodied but in great muscle condition and tone, she moved out well to take the class from Roughfield Moon Riva at Outnabout. A more immature bitch, a little loose in front and lacked the strength in loin of winner. She has wide well-developed hindquarters, good turn to stifle, short rear pastern and good feet.

NZ Bred

NZ bred dog was won by CH Mistybrook Matte Black Gucci overall has balance, head broad between well set ears, neck strong, front true. Charing Freelancer was close up, not quite keeping his topline on the move, deep through chest, well developed hindquarters, not as free on the move as winner. NZ bred bitch CH Blackhills Moonlight Sonata presented a very pleasing clean outline. She has the most delightful head, feminine without losing and strength in muzzle, lovely expression, no coarseness around her cheeks, her neck is strong, well set into fine shoulders. Good length to leg, firm topline, well set tail, hindquarters wide and well let down. sound on the move. CH Croftsway Show Time a slightly heavier showy bitch, sound all through true in front and standing square. Moved out with good reach and drive.

Veteran

Veteran Dog NZ CH Bradorla Counter Measure shown in good condition, well-muscled, strong on his legs, and maintained his topline, well animated which sadly was lacking in CH Jancerie Hot Chocolate, which was unfortunate as he exhibited many qualities, sound all over, good muscle tone, moved true for his handler.

Veteran Bitch Eventide Blanche Du Bois On her own in this class, has the sweetest of expressions, good front angulation, well ribbed back, never stopped showing.

Open

Open Dog CH Croftsway Show Off This boy was presented in super coat and condition and came out top of the males. He has good balance, length of leg, ribs well back and deep, strong in loin, good finish to croup and tail carriage. He moved out well, positive and true. Targun Fire On The Mountain had a good forehand with return of upper arm, good length to leg. Would liked to have seen a touch more turn of stifle and firmer topline.

Open Bitch Charing Henrietta fairly compact bitch of good balance, feminine head, well shaped eye of good colour, neck set on well. Would have liked more positive front action when moving. Kyeburn Little Gem close up in this class, sound all through, preferred the head of winning bitch.

The challenges for "In-Show" awards made for some tough decisions. I was looking for a labrador true in type, fit and true on the move. I found my winner in the delightful CH Blackhills Moonlight Sonata who completely filled my eye and would compete at any level in my opinion. She is strong, athletic and so sound on the move. Close up to her was the young Junior Bitch CH Moonlyte Come Over To Eventide who pushed so hard for the Bitch Challenge, slightly heavier all through but she moved out so soundly and at one with her handler. Two top quality bitches.

Studying the catalogue after returning home, it was interesting to see a quite diverse gene pool in the breeding and no dominant sires. This I think is healthy for the breed which comparatively is small in numbers, giving so many more options going forward in your breeding programmes. Once again thank you for showing your dogs and giving me such treasured memories.

David Bell

