

Weekend Wins



Susan Casey
Editor

Weekends. They happen every week, and there are usually 52 of them each year. For some people a weekend is two days away from work each week, days to sleep late, have a lazy breakfast, read the paper, work in the garden, go for a leisurely afternoon drive, join friends for a relaxed

dinner in the evening. For others weekends are spent working on home improvement projects, enjoying the satisfaction of doing the work themselves and saving money in the process

For a small segment of the population, weekends consist of getting up very early, often well before dawn, loading their cars with all manner of equipment, and driving long distances to their destination. Upon arriving at said location they will begin unloading all the equipment, setting it up and then preparing themselves and their charge for inspection. They will then display the fruits of their labors for approximately five minutes, after which their efforts will be evaluated, often by a complete stranger, and a winner declared. Only two can ever win, no matter how many compete. Then these people will undo everything they've done at that location, pack it all up and either drive to another location several hours away, or return home because the two days set aside for rest and relaxation are over and they must return to work.

Does this sound familiar? It should. It is what every conformation enthusiast has endured at one time or another and what a great number of them do on a regular or semi-regular basis. The routine is not limited to dog show people. Something similar goes on with feline fanciers, equine enthusiasts, and llama lovers. On any given weekend someone somewhere is putting themselves through the same routine.

Now I've learned that, depending on the chosen competition, there can be a subtle but significant difference in the outcome. In some competitions there can be :: drum roll :: more than two winners! In some activities anyone who achieves a certain score is a winner. You and your canine companion can, in fact, achieve numerous titles and honors in the same ring and on the same day as your friends. There is no limit to the number of dogs that can earn qualifying scores and come that much closer to a new title at any event - imagine that!

I admit that I never saw that subtle difference in exactly that light until I was talking with a friend recently who had been "in dogs" before and was now in a position to return. She confessed that she couldn't really get in to the whole conformation scene, that it was too expensive with not much return on investment. Whether there are 40 competitors or 400, only two will come away that much closer to their goal. But in performance events there can be one entry or a thousand and any one or all of those dogs can move up the ladder of success. And for my friend, there is the added bonus that performance events are much more likely to interest her children.

There are those of us who, while enjoying two or three of the performance events, still have conformation showing in our blood. A couple of years ago I realized just how "hooked" I am on conformation. I was looking around at other breeds, maybe not quite as big as ours, that might be a good fit in my senior years. I have always like the Standard Poodle and a black one could fit in well. But there is one very significant problem: I really dislike the Continental and English Saddle clips and you can't show a Poodle in a puppy clip in conformation past the age of 12 months.

I can hear you now asking why that should matter- just don't show in conformation. There are all kinds of other things to do with Poodles just as there are with our GSDs. And you'd be right, except it was then that I realized that, even if I didn't show, I don't want to own a dog that I can't take into the conformation ring if I want to. That's how bad the conformation bug bit me 35 or 40 years ago.

All that notwithstanding, I found a new thrill a couple of weekends ago when our little Posie (you just knew there had to be a Posie story coming sooner or later) was High In Trial with a score of 93.5 at the Colorado Divide Herding Trials. Just in case you missed the fact that this was not a German Shepherd Herding Trial, let me point out that Posie had to outscore several very talented dogs of other breeds!

Perhaps the most fun (well, next to watching Posie's awesome performance) was listening to the folks sitting in front of us commenting on how nicely "that little shepherd" was working and hearing another add that she is only two and was really great for such a young dog! It just makes a mother proud, you know?

See you in Utah!

CORRECTION

In the July 2010 issue, new ROM sire GV Sel. Ch. Trafalgar's Premium Blend was incorrectly identified as being Select Excellent.



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