

Judges' Critique
Dallas-Ft. Worth Labrador Retriever Club
March 22, 2002

Whenever anyone asks me about "dog people", I always reply that the best natured dog people are the Labrador people, maybe because they have the best natured dogs as well.

It was, indeed, an honor to have my comments reinforced during the weekend I was in Texas for the Dallas-Ft. Worth Labrador Retriever Club specialty held on March 22, 2002. As a club you are all to be commended on your wonderful hospitality and your great specialty. The trophy table was overflowing; I couldn't resist buying some tickets for the raffle, certain I would win something unwieldy for the trip home.

And your dogs!!.....The quality of the entry overall was wonderful, and in most classes there were several exhibits who could have traded places on any given day...a huge compliment to the breeders and owners who brought me these lovely dogs. This was the nicest Labrador Retriever entry I've judged in awhile, and you all should be proud of your dogs.

I have loved Labradors for over 30 years now, even though it took me quite a while to actually own one. A Labrador judging assignment is always a joy; the exhibits are always happy to see me, and the competitors almost always as pleasant as the dogs.

In transcribing my notes, I found that my notations started to seem redundant, but I guess I feel these qualities I try to reward are those that make the Labrador Retriever a functional retriever as well as a great companion....the theory sounds good, anyway, I tend to judge on the qualities of the dog, not the lack thereof, and that's how my notes were made, on the aspects of the placements that I found the best or outstanding.

So, here goes:

Puppy Dog, 6-9 Months

1. #9 – Yellow – A nice puppy of good bone and substance with a pleasing expression; nice angulation front and rear, free moving around the ring
2. #11 – Black – Again, a nicely balanced puppy with appealing head & expression with a good coat, tail and forechest; a bit more mature and "together" than the #3 & 4
3. #7 – Yellow – Also a nicely balanced puppy, better angles put him ahead of #4
4. #5 – Chocolate – Short coupled, but didn't want to move freely in the ring today

Puppy Dog, 9-12 Months

1. #29 – Black – a well balanced dog, compact body with good length of rib, nice coat, tail, head & expression, lovely strong rear with good width
2. #25 – Black – Another well balanced, easy going young dog with good tail and tail carriage, pushed the #1 placement but a bit less coat
3. #31 – Black – Good tail, coat, balanced, but not quite as free on the go around as the first two placements
4. #27 – Yellow – Pleasing expression, good coat, angulation & movement

Dogs, 12-18 Months

1. #47 – Black – Lovely dog with good head & coat, balanced rear & front, nice forechest. This youngster made a beautiful picture standing on his own.
2. #45 – Black – Great forequarters, coat and tail
3. #43 – Great outline, good balance, easy going but not quite as smooth moving as the first two, and a bit less in coat today
4. #33 – Yellow – Strong headed with good expression, coat and feet...nice side movement; though a bit longer in body and didn't hold topline as well on the go as the youngsters who placed above.

Novice Dogs

1. #57 – Black – balanced dog with happy attitude, good tail carriage
2. #55 – Yellow – Strong sturdy dog with good movement, coat & expression

Bred-by-Exhibitor Dog

1. #59 – Black - A handsome mature dog, has it all...balance, substance, head, coat, feet, carriage, short coupled **ALSO WINNERS DOG**
2. #61 – Black – Also a very nice dog, great front angulation with strong sound movement
3. #65 – Yellow – Nice expression, Good coat, front & tail
4. #63 – Yellow – Also a nice dog, the better substance in #3 placed him above

American Bred Dog

1. #69 – Black – Another very handsome dog, strongly built and short coupled, with good coat, short thick tail and sound movement RESERVE WINNERS DOG
2. #71 - Yellow – Good head, feet & coat
3. #67 – Black – A nicely balanced dog with many good qualities; however, he was not comfortable on this surface and a bit out of coat, but not at all a bad dog overall

Open Black Dog

This was a good class, and all the placements were very nice dogs

1. #83 – Lovely balanced dog with good head & expression, nice coat and tail, appreciated his muscle tone; The factors which put him above the next dog were his shoulders & head qualities and nice compact body
2. #87 – A very nice dog overall also, held his topline well
3. #75 – Sounds like more of the same.....another nicely balanced dog who was moving well both front and rear
4. #93 – I must apologize to this dog & handler as I can't decipher anything of my scribbled notes except that he had a "lovely tail" ..there was more written but, unfortunately, sometimes I can't read my own handwriting.

Open Chocolate Dogs

1. #95 – A Nice short coupled dog in excellent condition, a good coat (despite the hot spot on his neck that made him not comfortable with the lead), a sound mover who covered ground easily

Open Yellow Dogs

1. #113 – Nicely balanced dog with better tail and carriage than the next placement
2. #107 – Very nice substance for the size of dog
3. #111 – Nice head, coat and feet
4. #109 – Pretty head and expression, free mover from the side, though I would have preferred he have more forechest

Puppy Bitches, 6-9 Months

1. #24 – Chocolate – A short coupled young bitch with good front angles and forechest, a pleasing head & expression and nice ring presence and attitude
2. #22 – Black – Good substance in this puppy, who had a lovely outline in profile and held her topline whether moving or standing still
3. #14 – Yellow – Pretty expression and good moving bitch but a bit softer bodied than the two previous placements
4. #10 – Black – A bit longer in body and a bit thinner than the bitch who placed above her

Puppy Bitches, 9-12 Months

1. #30 – Black – A lovely young bitch with pretty head and pleasing expression, great front angles and forechest, nice bone & substance and lovely width of rear, tail, a good moving bitch who covered ground with ease RESERVE WINNERS BITCH
2. #36 – Black – Another short coupled, sound moving bitch with pleasing expression and good coat
3. # 38 – Black – Short coupled, also easy moving, and there was something else about her that caught my eye but I can't read the shorthand.
4. #28 – yellow – Showy bitch standing on her own with pretty head & expression, not too happy moving today but seems able to do so

Bitches, 12-18 Months

1. #40 – Black – This bitch possesses a pretty feminine head great angles front & rear resulting in good movement, nice coat texture though she seemed a bit out of coat
2. #52 – Black – Also a very nice bitch with good head, coat, front & shoulders, and feet
3. #50 – Chocolate – Pretty head & expression on a nice compact bitch...great tail
4. #58 – Black – Another very nice bitch , a bit more mature looking than some others in this class, with good coat, nice width of thighs though not quite as strong in rear movement as the first three placements

Novice Bitches

1. #70 – yellow – Pretty head, good bone and movement, a very nice bitch
2. #68 – Chocolate – Nice head and easy moving

Bred-by-Exhibitor Bitch

1. #80 – Black – Just dripping type, from her pretty head and expression to her tail, short loin, good coat, nice angles front and rear, especially nice width of rear end, and a sound mover as well
2. # 82 – Black – Another beautiful bitch, with many commendable qualities, just a bit behind the #1 in front angle and movement
3. #72 – black – Was first in line, caught my eye the first go 'round, a lovely bitch also
4. #78 – Yellow – A sturdy, sound bitch with good tail, forequarters, and coat, a little less width in rear than those who placed above.

All in all, a very nice class!

American Bred Bitch

Again, a class where all the placements were pleasing

1. #98 – Black – Very nice everywhere, smooth movement gave her the class over the next placement "kept herself together very nicely on the go" .. WINNERS BITCH
2. #100 – Black – Again, overall a very pleasing bitch
3. #102 – Black – Another nice bitch to put your hands on, as were the other two in the class

Open Black Bitch

Again, a nice class with little separating the placements

1. #120 – Again, she excelled on the go around, possessing a lovely head, coat, front and rear well balanced
2. #114 – a lovely compact bitch with good head, coat and tail
3. #108 – Outstanding features of this bitch were her great coat and strong rear
4. #110 – Another short coupled, thick set bitch with a great coat

Open Chocolate Bitch

1. #131 – A very nice, typey bitch with good coat, tail & movement, better angles & forechest
2. #138 – This short-coupled bitch also had a pleasing head and expression
3. #140 – Nice body and angles, good tail, coat and movement, but lack of attitude cost her today
4. #136 – Now, this bitch was all attitude, with sound side movement and a pleasing expression

Open Yellow Bitch

1. #158 – Feminine, with a pretty head and expression, well balanced with good angles, sound moving and a great attitude
2. #152 – Another lovely bitch, with more substance than the #1 bitch, lovely bend of stifle and front angles, great balanced side movement, overall another very nice bitch
3. #148 – This bitch's strong attributes were her pleasing expression, good coat and clean movement
4. #142 – Nice outline and once again the rest of the notes do not make any sense to me as I transcribe

I did not take specific notes beyond the regular bitch classes, but was thrilled to have the veterans and hunting classes. And, the specials class was wonderful. It didn't seem fair to single out a few, so no notes made as there were several exhibits who could have easily won Best of Breed, The Awards of Merit included both the lovely hunting dog and the hunting bitch class winners. It is exciting to judge on a day when there is one dog you feel is outstanding and really deserving the Best of Breed ribbon; to have several such quality animals from which to choose is truly a special day for any judge, and I thank each and every one of you for the honor.

Liz Muthard