

The following is an extract from one of my favourite dog books. Raymond Oppenheimer was a breeder, judge and exhibitor of the world-famous Bull Terrier Ormandy Kennels. He wrote several books and shared in some of them the wisdoms that underpinned his phenomenal success. His writing style is 'of the time' so for the term 'him' please include 'her' and forgive him the tone in places, as he was born into a different era, so was accustomed to giving instruction to those less well-healed. I marvel at how something written over 50 years ago is as relevant now as it was when he wrote it!

**Fiona King
(Hon) Secretary SBTC
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McGuffin & Co

A bull terrier history by R H Oppenheimer
(1964)

Judges and Judging (Chapter XVIII)

No breed can long continue to progress if it is consistently badly judged, because sooner or later a general air of confusion will grow so that neither the experienced breeder nor the novice knows what to do next. It is therefore of great importance that everybody connected with shows should understand clearly what the term 'a good judge' implies so that men and women who qualify for such a description shall be appointed to officiate on important occasions.

Here, then would be my definition of a good judge:

1. He must be honest.
2. He must be fearless.
3. He must have a complete knowledge of the anatomy and standard of his breed.
4. He must be possessed of calm enough temperament and of sound enough judgement to put into practice what he knows during the hurly burly of a big show.
5. He must have that flair which recognises quality, style, symmetry and balance at a glance, and finally,
6. He must conform to a certain technique of judging which enables him to reach the correct conclusions himself and to do so in such a way that the exhibitors and spectators can understand what he is doing.

Let us now see how the novice can try to acquire such gifts. The first, that of honesty, seems to me to be born in a man, though a certain strength of character may help those who are tempted towards dishonesty to resist. The next gift, that of fearlessness, also seems to be inborn to a great extent, but here strength of character can play a major part in hardening the judge's resolve, so that he

does what he knows is right even though his weaker side shrinks from it.

The third requirement is primarily a question of hard work, since any man of average intelligence can learn anatomy and the standard of his breed if he takes the trouble.

The fourth requirement is, in my opinion, chiefly a question of practice since even the very nervous should be able to overcome their stage fright enough to put up a reasonable show in time.

The fifth requirement is one that can never be learned unless the judge has an artistic sense, and it is the one which will always mark out the first-class judge from the second-class. If a man can see quality, style, symmetry and all-round balance, he has what it takes to make both a great breeder and a great judge. As a matter of fact, it will be found that history will confirm that judgement of those so gifted by the greater honours gained in the aggregate by the descendants of the dogs admired by their less gifted contemporaries.

Lastly, we come to requirement six, and on this I propose to say rather more since even a man possessing all the first five talents can, by pursuing a faulty technique, get himself and his helpers into such a tangle that the result is as bad as if he had no talents at all.

To begin with then, let the novice judge take his time and not rush at the nearest dog as soon as he gets into the ring, in fact, he will do well not to go to the dogs at all but to call them to him in turn so that he can examine each one free from the distraction of others on each side of it. But even more important than that is he shall not seek to reach a final judgement upon his classes without having had a good look at the dogs from a distance, It is quite impossible to assess the all-round balance and merit of an animal if one stands on top of it, and certain sign of a bad judge and of an impending muddle is if one sees a judge in the ring hemmed in by a hugger-mugger of dogs. It is necessary to go near the animals to examine certain individual features, but once these have been examined the good judge conducts his further operations from afar.

The next important point is that once a judge starts getting his class into some sort of order, he should do it in a manner which is intelligible to the exhibitors themselves and to the spectators. Both have paid to see the judge perform, and efficiency apart, it is courtesy to consider their feelings and not suddenly to produce the winner as from a hat. Spectators who want that kind of thing can easily obtain it, and other much greater marvels, from a conjuror!

To sum up then, let the judge examine each exhibit carefully and in detail; let him move them in turn; let him examine them from far enough away so that he can see the whole picture; and then let him place them in order, 1, 2, 3, 4, so that is quite obvious what he is doing. Then let him mark his judging book plainly and neatly and hand the slips to his steward. Let him take notes as are necessary to enable him to write a good and accurate report, and afterwards

let him be prepared to discuss politely with any exhibitors who wish it the merits or demerits of their dogs as he sees them.

Finally, let him always remember that in being appointed to judge he is placed in a position of great responsibility to the future welfare of the breed, and his judgement should always reflect a consciousness of that fact.

Now I began this chapter by saying that no breed can continue to progress if it is consistently badly judged. I want to explain why this is so and what I meant in my last sentence when I said that in being appointed to judge a man was placed in a position of great responsibility to the future welfare of the breed.

You will often hear a judge, defending something he has done, say "Oh! Well, that's my opinion and I'm as entitled to it as is the next man to his opinion". If, by this statement, he honestly means that in his view the animals he has put up are more likely to contribute to the progress of the breed than the ones he has put down, then certainly he has as much right to his opinion as the next man, but if, as is too often the case, he means "I put this dog up because I like him and to hell with the breed's progress; I am only concerned with today", then he is utterly wrong.

I presume that I do not have to prove the proposition that the bigger the winner the more likely he is to be used at the stud, since it appears self-evident. That being so, the more a dog wins the wider will be his influence upon the breed for good or ill. It follows therefore that no judge should ever form a judgement without thinking not only of today but also of tomorrow. Naturally it happens at times that the better dog is out of condition; then, of course, today is what matters, but this position can always be made clear in a report.

All things therefore being equal, as I have said, the basic consideration that should always be in a judge's mind is "which of these animals before me has most to offer the breed?" the good judge will get the answer right much more often than the bad ones, and history will make clear which were the good judges and which [were] the good decisions.

END of EXTRACT