

Class Distinction

National Specialties are exciting times, meeting new friends, reminiscing with old friends attending educational seminars, a social hour or two and watching the breed classes. For me there are two classes that I never miss and those are the bred by dog and bred by bitch. While the puppy classes are fun and show promise for tomorrow and the veteran classes draw on our heart strings the future of the breed should be evident in the bred by classes.

Over time looking back at the bred by class some of the great dogs and bitches have come from those classes. Maybe not the next great Special but some of the more influential stud dogs and brood bitches have been stand outs in their classes. I have watched this class as breeders show off what they think is the best of the dogs they have bred. Both in the quality and the lack of quality this should be a testament of what those breeders value most in their programs.

Some people go to a National just to see the Best of Breed judging but they miss the heart and soul of what to expect in the coming years. For me I have seen great dogs in the bred by class that were overlooked by judges who miss the essence of a breed. Sometimes the second or third place dog goes on to be a big winner and influential producer years later. Glancing at photos from the specialties before my time in the 60's you look down the line up of the bred by class and sure enough there were some of the greats getting red or yellow, or white ribbons not blue.

As a showcase for your breeding program, the bred by class should be examples of the best you have in your kennel. Often I grab my catalog to check the pedigree and then rush ahead to see if the sire or dam is entered as a Special. I'll start marking all the dogs I want to see just based on how well I like the entry in the Bred by class. Sometimes it is breed type, sometimes it can be movement, even better when both are exhibited in the same dog. Later in the Specials ring it is like getting a second look but using the sire or dam to verify what I noted in the earlier class.

Eventually there is only one Winner Dog or Bitch, One Best of Breed and One Best of Opposite at any National but hidden in the bred by classes are gems. Some proving to be eventual winners and others having bigger impacts through their progeny in the breed. While the stud dog and brood bitch classes are great it is not always the quantity but the quality of just one that can make a difference in the future of our breed. Distinction of type in a class of the best they can breed, breeders should use the bred by class to their advantage. You never know who is watching and sometimes the dog on the end of your lead can end up more of winner than the one in the front of the line.

Jon Steele