

Taking Borzoi Seriously

In the Group ring are Borzoi in contention or mostly overlooked? I have seen judges ignore the excellent quality Borzoi in favor of hounds that stop four square, or are perfect little robots that show expression on command. It is rare that a Borzoi shows either of these characteristics. It is the nature of this sighthound that they will often look away as a judge passes, rather than stare the judge down with a clever gaze. An almost haughty breed, the Borzoi will more likely look down the length of their nose at a judge then submit to the demeaning task of letting the judge touch them.

While this breed is a giant breed, it also has to have supple muscles and ligaments to do the job of chasing and overtaking their prey. The athleticism of the breed is not that of a weightlifter, but a runner and as such the structure is built for speed and agility, not for stopping four square in front of a judge. Considering that the Borzoi has very long legs means that the muscles need to control very long levers. This is significantly different than those of a more moderate height hound. As for the gaze, these dogs are looking out in the distance rather than what is right in front of their noses. A Borzoi may be looking 100 yards out in the field or maybe even in another ring where there is something much more interesting than a nicely dressed woman, or a man in a suit.

I have been in the Best in Show ring where the Group winners were asked to go in the middle of the ring and free-stack your dog. This is not fair to a Borzoi, just as it would not be fair to a Bulldog. Consider the nature of this hound when considering the Borzoi in the Group or Best in Show Ring. Most Borzoi are happy to do what their owners ask, once, not twice. From their perspective, I am sure they are saying I did it once, it is beneath me to do it again. To keep a Borzoi on point is a near impossibility. If you saw what you needed to see -- don't keep asking for more.

The other problem is that some judges do not realize that you should never stare down these dogs, as well as most sighthounds. They do look at the world differently, and their vision and temperament do not take kindly to a stranger staring them down. The longer you stare the more likely the Borzoi will get unnerved, and react accordingly to their nature.

Borzoi do place in the Group regularly, but it seems that there are many judges that just dismiss this breed without understanding the quality that may be right in front of them. Borzoi are supposed to be an aristocratic breed, which means we probably are doing something below their station by even entering them in a show. I know some of mine have let me know this in public. Their haughty and aloof attitude has resulted in the dog acting like they were never trained, and me looking like a novice. To the Borzoi, I am sure they are thinking "well I did this last week at home perfectly, it's not my fault that the show is on the wrong weekend."

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