

THE MALTA CANINE SOCIETY – 2005 ANNUAL CHAMPIONSHIP SHOW
JUDGE’S REPORT

My first visit to this beautiful island that has something to offer everyone. The Malta Canine Society kindly invited me to judge at their annual Championship Show on the weekend on the 12th and 13th November 2005.

On arriving at the airport at midnight Thursday 10th myself and my wife Carol were confronted with torrential rain and flash lightning, some introduction! However we were quickly taken to our hotel which was only a 15 minute drive away. Next morning however a total contrast in weather change, blue sky and sunshine, this gave us our first chance to explore. Just to our right was the Hilton Hotel with the impressive Portomaso Marina, such luxury in abundance, then a 5 minute walk to the left we found the delightful St George’s Bay with a small beach surrounded by cafés and bars. One to visit here is the magnificent “Paranga” restaurant which is built on stilts which allows you to dine over the ocean, in the evening it’s quite spectacular.

Saturday soon came and that was the start of my judging stint, a 2.30 p.m. start was appropriate having sampled the local ‘vino’ the night before. The task of ferrying us from the hotel to the venue was the duty of young committee member Ivan Calleja (Ivram Kennels) an enthusiastic Alaskan Malamute breeder, exhibitor who works in Malta but all his dogs are kennelled in Italy. On a weekend a 1,300 mile trip to show his dogs is common practice, now that’s dedication!

On arriving at the venue I was not prepared for what I was about to see, the most impressive Cottonera Sports Complex offers arenas for all sports and other activities. The auditorium which was used for the Dog Show was spectacular indeed, fully carpeted ring which was easily the size of any B.I.S. ring back in the UK, Malta’s unique picket fencing, banners and flowers all around truly made you feel special and its clearly evident Mr Frank Borg and his committee work very hard to make this a special occasion. Just to the right of me was a most impressive display of trophies and the biggest Best in Show Trophy I have ever seen.

The scene was set with Charmaine Aquilina on the tannoy and Ivan as my ring steward. With a courteous glance to the crowd there to my surprise sitting ringside was Mr & Mrs Fred and Meriel Hathaway who happen to be on holiday and decided to drop in to cast an eye on the days proceedings!

Judging on day one began with Junior Handling, Toys and Gundogs. Junior handling is taken very seriously in Malta, their record in the finals at Crufts speaks for itself. Today I felt Stacy Vella handled impeccably, no fuss, no fancy stuff just got on the with the task of handling a Nevedith bred Whippet. Good luck to you at Crufts in 2006. Toy Group followed and pugs had the biggest entry 14 in total, with Marbelton and Afterglow breeding here being dominant, however a local bred bitch took Best of Breed Mr & Mrs Scerri, Clodenics Zolluwa Maltese Beauty, such an appropriate name, cobby, well ribbed, good balance and a super mover, eventually topping the Toy Group.

Runner up was the charismatic s/c Chihuahua Mr & Mrs Young’s Ch Widogi Rocket Man, excellent head, level topline, good tail carriage and again boy could he move, close between himself and the pug.

Gundogs followed and pointers gave the best entry in numbers, Crookrise, Pipeway and Peakdale dominated. Pipeway Monty headed the breed for Best of Breed owned by Mr Galea, Sh Ch Canyonn Classic Dream at Framwood was Best of Breed in Cockers, very typey, well balanced head, strong neck short back, moved soundly. Topping the group went to a young GSP despite his owner, I think with respect, does not understand what a quality dog he has, poor handling, and a preference to go shooting; made it difficult to assess but with no coat to hide, you could see this dog’s virtues and when settled on the move produced a stunning profile, gave him the group when he

returned on Sunday with a “pro” handling, he took Reserve Best Puppy in Show, and guess what, after judging was complete I asked about his breeding “Barleyarch” was the reply!! The pointer took runner up in the Group.

Day two commenced at 9.00 am, a shock to the system! It was the turn of Hounds and Working, in Malta this is still one group. I also judged a special junior handling class, they all had to be under 10 years old, you would not think so, they were as good as their older competitors, this class should not be judged by anybody who has less than nerves of steel! Trust me you will need them these young handlers are so competitive.

Hound Group Best of Breed went to Basenji, Jaswyn Corinth owned by Mr Camilleri, Irish Wolfhound. Best of Breed Cinders of Nutsdown owned by Mr Casha, Beagle Best of Breed was Rossmaithe Pirouette at Framod, very good bitch indeed owned by Mr Borg went runner up in the Group. Whippets were represented by Faracre, Hillsdown, Dumbrition and Nevedith. The combination of Dumbrition and Hillsdown won the day Ch Aurora Ruby Tuesday at Chebec could not be denied Best of Breed owned by the Mercieca family. Best of Breed in Bassets went to Sherman Bassjoy Moravia Bray owned by Mr & Mrs J S Mifsud, he won the Hound Group, Puppy, Group, Best in Show and Best Puppy in Show, more about him later. Runner up in the Hound Group was the Beagle.

Utility Group next, Boston's were represented by Wildax, Copper Gold Kennels Best of Breed went to the charming Wildax Wild Card owned by Mr & Mrs Sciberras, full of quality, type and very sound, won the group with a bit in hand!! Bulldog Best of Breed went to My Style Ozzie owned by Ms C Delia handsome chap, well developed head piece, plenty of jaw, deserved runner up spot.

Next on the agenda was a two and a half hour lunch break, I am not joking! Taken off to a local restaurant accompanied by Ivan and Society Treasurer Mr Lino Hilo we were treated to some local cuisine. Surprisingly the time seemed to fly by, having discussed local culture and everything about canine activities in Malta.

On my return to the venue it was time for the Working Group, this was to prove my heaviest task! In Malta this group is not split! Its now 3 pm Rottweilers and GSDs' dominate in numbers, followed by Alaskan Malamutes. Rotts were topped by a young male owned by Mr Sciberras, Richjoa Neptune, he was sired by the open dog winner Ch Fantasa Sky Rocket at De Niro, “Neptunes” overall balanced I preferred.

German Shepherds as usual attracted ring side support, Derickeys Meike came out best, owned by Mr Cacciatore much too rapturous celebrations ringside, and I must admit it sent a sense of satisfaction through me having created this response! Hemlake breeding was evident in Danes but it was a local fawn bitch that went Best of Breed, Mr J Joyce owned and bred Ch Tal-Beta Primrose at Jasa, Samoyed Best of Breed was Ch Roybridge Silva Nemesis owned by Mr V Gatt, felt enough of him to award him the group and eventually Reserve Best in Show. Runner up was the classy Siberian Husky owned by Mr D Zahra Italian bred Ankalyn Northern Dancer. Both these exhibits were super sound, and put down to the minute.

Finally the Terrier Group. Only Bull Terriers to chose from, but my Best of Breed owned by Messrs R & L Mize Ch Aesir the Sky God could hold his own anywhere. Super white masculine and sound and presented impeccably.

At this point 7.30 pm I thought at last Best in Show, no yet another surprise and a 30 minute break whilst we sat back and enjoyed a display of agility and obedience by the Malta Rottweiler Club. Taking part was four Rotts and 2 GSD's not a wrong word was spoken and the crowd showed their appreciation in true Maltese style.

Finally time for Best in Show, my six finalists looked superb lined up on the red carpet strip, but a choice had to be made and there was a dog that just screamed look at me! Yes the Basset, Sherman Bassjoy Moravia Bray owned by the Mifsud family, simply could not be denied, I was conscious of the fact that this young chap was only 11 months old, we always say every dog has its faults, but I could not find anything to put me off! He possesses super star quality, on close inspection he has a head to die for, strong neck, well developed front, very good rib cage, correct topline and underline, superb angulated quarters, very good hocks, bang on tail set, he stands on super bone and excellent feet. On the up and down he is gun barrel true with excellent rear drive, in profile he carries himself so dignified it was an emotional win for all concerned, but one that I felt privileged to be part of, congratulations and all the best for the future. After that Best Puppy in Show was academic, but runner up went to the by now professionally handled GSP. Last port of call was to see the Great Harbour of Malta such a magnificent sight and a place of historical importance, it certainly brought home what life is all about!

A big thank you to “Big Ray” and his hospitality who kept us all entertained with local characters especially “Alfred”. Finally a special thank you to Mr Frank Borg and all his hardworking committee who truly do all pull together to make the Malta Canine Society such an honour to judge, once more many thanks to you all and may you continue to go from strength to strength.

Judge: Martin Sanders