

“Theatre of the Canine”

Notes for the owner-handler part IV

If you are showing Chihuahuas, there are two ring situations that, while rare at all-breed shows, are often encountered at specialties.

Two dogs on the table-

The judge is allowed to send two exhibits to the table for comparison, and in a specialty, will often use this technique. This necessitates one of the dogs being stacked from the off side, and is the reason that I stress training the dog to work comfortably from both sides. It is a major source of amusement to watch two handlers almost break into a run for the table, both of them trying to get to the right side because they did not practice this in their training regimen.

If you have prepared for this contingency, you can take your time going to the table and calmly stack from the off side. Most handlers will quickly snatch up their dogs and rush the table, in the process causing the dogs to lose composure through their own nervousness. When a judge sends two dogs to the table, it is not just a comparison of confirmation, but also a temperament test, for the dog and the handler.

Weighing a dog-

The CCA recommends that a judge call for scales if there is any doubt about a dog's weight. Although this practice is currently a rare occurrence, you may be seeing more of it in the future. The dogs in the bloodlines that I have worked with always weigh heavier than they look, so over the years, I have been acutely aware of weight. If I have any question, I will weigh the dog well in advance of the show. It is no problem to drop an ounce or two, given the fact that a dog most of us consider in show weight is generally a little heavier than it needs to be. For the serious exhibitor, an accurate scale is a must, and if you have a dog that is close to the six pound limit, regular weighing is called for. Scales always feel unstable to dogs, so practice is needed to develop their trust in you when placed on the scale. If you are asked to weigh your dog, you can do so confidently, knowing that the dog is used to the process, and has weighed in at home.

Some closing notes-

In discussing working on the table, I neglected to mention that it is a courtesy to the judge to stack your dog on the judge's side of the table. Many judges appreciate this gesture.

Some of you may remember Thelma Sloan, who was a Texan, a Chihuahua lover, and a professional handler, in that order. Several years ago, I asked Thelma what I could do to improve my handling, she grinned at me and said “Smile, baby, that's all you need to do.” You see, she knew that I really loved being in the ring with my dogs, and

she wanted me to show it. No matter how hectic and crazy things get at a dog show, I always try to take a smile into the ring.

This year the dates for the Chihuahua Club of America National Specialty are Oct. 27-29. For more information go to <http://www.chihuahuaclubofamerica.com>

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