

toys and exhibitors. It is perfectly allowable to have preferences, but it is not fair to say that either end of the allotted size/weights is “wrong.”

And just to complicate matters, the standard goes on to say, *these are ideal heights and weights, and slight variations are permissible*. How much variation is too much or too little?

In different regions of the U.S., we see a preponderance of larger or smaller Cavaliers in the ring. Perhaps it indicates that breeders in one area prefer one size or the other, but unfortunately it also means that if you want to exhibit a Cavalier outside of the “norm” for the region, judges may unfairly discriminate against your exhibit because they see a majority of Cavaliers in the ring all conforming to a certain size. Sad but true.

As a breeder, if you surround yourself with animals of one size, you may not keep for show and breeding a better specimen from your litter whom you think is either too large or too small. And heaven help the 13-inch bitch in the mix; she would surely be a Goliath in the eyes of many, but she is perfectly acceptable under the standard if she remains feminine in other characteristics of bone, expression, and so on.

No less a breeder than the late Molly Coaker lamented in 2004, “The thing missing for me is the ‘wow’ factor, so few have this now ... Over the years the lovely outline of the Cavaliers has changed, maybe to do with keeping the small ones in a litter. Size reduction has a lot to answer for ... the bigger dogs with those beautiful heads and outlines seem to be few and far between.”

So the next time a Goliath or a Tom Thumb appears before us, we would be well reminded that it is the overall dog and his conformation and temperament—within the standard’s recommended range—that merits our attention. And that sometimes, keeping one who is 11½ inches or 13½ inches is hardly a mortal sin. While we acknowledge that the Cavalier is a toy spaniel, he should be neither minute nor Springer-like. Moderation is all. And

while size matters, we should be delighted if that “wow” dog of our future appears as a larger or smaller package.

—Stephanie Abraham,  
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## Chihuahuas

This month’s column is by guest writer Kelley Trombley.

### Izzy and the Iron Dog Challenge

On September 29, 2013, I awoke to a cool summer day. I leaned over the bedside and called to my long coat Chihuahua, “Today is the day we have been training these past three months for ... Izzy, are you ready?”

She looked at me as if to say, “Are you kidding, mom? I’m ready for anything.”

When I first heard about the Green Mountain Iron Dog Challenge held in Vermont, I knew it was something I just had to do with Izzy. We love to show others that these little dogs can keep up with the biggest of them.

I knew it would be hard and very different from the training we have done for obedience. Iron Dog entails a timed, mile-and-a-half police-dog course, with wall climbing, crawling through tubes, shimmying under a house, and going over jumps, as well as a water challenge.

The first step was to enroll Izzy in an agility class. She had to learn to go through tubes, go over jumps, and climb an eight-foot A-frame. Chihuahuas are so smart and athletic, and when asked they will put their heart and soul into whatever you ask of them. I was counting on this “give it your all” attitude to get through the next phase of Izzy’s training.

Past Iron Dog challenges required the dogs to go into waist-deep water to retrieve a floating article, so Izzy needed to learn how to swim. I started taking her into small streams to get her used to walking in different levels of

water. I would throw treats that floated for her to retrieve. Once she had the hang of that, we moved on to a pond. I would walk out with her on a lead, luring her with the treat. First she would wade up to her tummy, but on the third day she swam out to me, and we had accomplished that goal. Lastly, we hiked every morning up mountain trails, and every afternoon we ran together, in order to build up stamina.

The day of the event was wild. There we were, Izzy and I, at an event dominated by German Shepherds, Malinois, Tervuren, and Dobermans. Izzy was the smallest dog and the *only* Chihuahua entered.

This year the swimming element was replaced by a mud pit that we had to run through. The mud was up to my shins and halfway up Izzy’s body. We also had to go through a “smoke house,” a room filled with smoke machines. We ran on a sandy beach, crawled under a house, and used a rope line to climb up a steep ravine. We ran through wooded areas, going over jumps along the way, shimmying through plastic pipes, and climbing over barriers and walls. Izzy never wavered, and we finished the one-and-a-half-mile race with a time of 24 minutes, finishing eighth in our age group.

As we crossed the finish line, I yelled out, “Chihuahuas can do anything!” and the crowd went wild! —K.T.

*Bravo*, Kelley and Izzy! Little-dog owners everywhere are proud of you both.

—Virginia (Jenny) Hauber, *wynjynchis@yahoo.com*

Chihuahua Club of America website: *chihuahuaclubofamerica.com*

## Chinese Cresteds

### Placement of the Crest

Breed standards are written so as to be subject to interpretation. They are the framework or the skeleton upon which a judge and breeder build a mental picture of what the breed should look like and how it should move. Words like *slightly*, *moderate*, and even *rectangular* will mean something a