

Is He a Champion, or a Special, or a Stud Dog?

My humble opinion tells me there is a vast difference between a dog who holds a championship certificate, and one who is truly a special or a worthy stud dog. Having made this statement, the obvious question is, what is the difference?

We all know that dogs compete for championship points with other dogs or bitches of their breed. We know further that exhibitors know which judges might forgive a specific departure from the breed standard. There is also the "created" major, when dogs of much lesser quality are entered simply to make up the numbers necessary for a major win to be possible.

All of these variables (the list could easily be expanded) make it possible for dogs to accumulate the necessary points and major wins to hold a championship certificate. Many of these dogs who hold a championship certificate should never be considered specials.

A fair question is, what makes a dog a special? My first "kneejerk" answer to this inquiry would be that of charisma. Dogs who are truly of specials quality have an aura about themselves. They know they are damn good, and they are in the ring to prove it. They are much more than bold and/or self-confident. Many truly special animals tend to have the "walk on water" persona. These specials are usually expertly handled, but they appear only to need a small amount of coaching to win on a consistent basis in group competitions.

A Chihuahua who is of this quality is not constantly distracted by what is happening in the show ring. This tiny member of the canine family is not frustrated by a judge walking up and taking a very thorough look at his/her front assembly, topline, set of tail, and rear assembly. I have on several occasions had such an entry challenge me with a warning bark; I love this attitude. A truly worthy special for our breed does not slink away from the judge nor require the handler to have a death-grip on the entry.

When dogs are gaited again, this special Chihuahua has a "get out of my way" kind of attitude. This little canine exudes an attitude that says, "I only have a few seconds to show you my stuff, and I plan to do just that!" The group ring is often quite noisy with whistles, loud clapping, and so on. This special Chihuahua loves to hear all of this excitement.

I have been shown some dogs and bitches who have all of these qualities but also have significant departures from the animal described in our breed standard. A true special has all of the qualities described above, coupled with near-perfection as described in our breed standard. For my eye, this near-perfection includes balance (this includes matching front and rear angulations and proportions), condition, typical head with very expressive eyes and ears, correct bite, pleasing movement, and a correct tail that finishes the image.

When a stud dog who fits this description is being campaigned, there is a *huge* temptation to want to breed a bitch to him. This might be a very wise thing to consider; however, we all know that some dogs who are big winners do not prove themselves as sires. Careful and thoughtful breeding must be behind a stud dog for him to be a wise choice. If the stud dog being considered has no careful and thoughtful breeding behind him, and your bitch also lacks in careful and thoughtful breeding, considering breeding to this dog in my opinion is more like a crapshoot. When we do our research of lines of dogs that are consistently in the limelight, we very quickly see how wise the breeders of these dogs really

are. You will find an occasional outcross, but most often a stud dog who consistently reproduces himself is the product of careful line-breeding, often for generations.

In summary I hope my readers will have gained insight into my thoughts. A winning special of great quality can be a wise choice as a stud. However, I recommend that persons considering such a breeding would do careful study first and see several of his get from a variety of bitches. Many dogs hold a championship certificate; this does not make a canine a special or a top-producing stud dog.

—Richard Miller