

It was my privilege to judge the Swedish American Cocker National this year in your lovely country. While it was certainly a different judging experience compared to how things are done in the USA it didn't take me long to get in the rhythm. I was very pleased with the quality of the dogs brought to me. Out of an entry of 90 I only had one incorrect bite and a majority of them had nice sized teeth. I was extremely pleased with the temperaments on ALL the dogs. For me that is the most important trait a cocker can possess, "Above all the cocker must be merry".

In the Puppy Competition all the youngsters were nice and certainly set the stage for a bright future of up and coming cockers in Sweden. There were quite a few puppies that made my judging very easy and it was a pleasure to watch them learning the ring. The very handsome Speedwagons Cash N' Go was my choice for Best Puppy In Show. This Red and White youngster is everything I like to see in a puppy. Beautiful Cocker type and nicely proportioned body. The later is what allowed him to effortlessly cover ground which is a very important part of the Sporting dog's conformation. I was very pleased with the bone and substance on the youngsters I judged.

In the regular competition with few exceptions the quality was well above average. Bone and substance abounded in all three varieties. Coat quality was very nice as well. I will say these classes was where it became very apparent to me that in my humble opinion the Swedish fanciers need to be less shy of their grooming equipment. Most times there was way too much hair left on dogs. As a thirty six year veteran in cockers I more then understand the fear of taking too much hair but it is just hair and it will grow back. Leaving excessive coat just makes the cocker look unkept while trimming to the outline of the dog not only cleans them up but accentuates that beautiful outline. Please understand I am not talking about sculpting an incorrect dog into the appearance of a correct one but again accentuating the beauty of this compact smallest of the Sporting breeds. For me one of the most widely known and loved features on our cockers are their heads. It is what almost every person speaks of when they look at or talk about a cocker. Leaving excessive hair on their top knots only serves to ruin the appearance of that beautiful face and soft expression. The other thing that I found myself continually saying when directing a class was "slow down and move at a moderate pace". Let me assure the Swedish exhibitors they are not the only ones that have this problem. Somewhere along the line it became fashionable to move our cockers at a MUCH faster pace then they would ever move at in the field. We are breeding to a standard for a sporting dog required to cover ground for long periods of time. NO dog would cover much ground for very long moving hell bent for glory. It has been my experience that flashy does not mean correct it just means flashy.

My Parti color Best of Variety was a nice dog, Ch Speedwagon's True Colors. Well boned, nice coat and very free moving. He was an easy choice to make. In the ASCOB variety I had several dogs that were rather restricted in their front movement. They all possessed lovely type but once on the ground the lack of correct construction became apparent. From the Veteran class I selected my Best of Variety winner, the lovely bitch Ch Trouper's Hot Choice. She has wonderful type, correct coat along with very nice angles both front and back. Those angles became even more apparent once she was moving around the ring as she covered ground effortlessly. Then came the Black Variety, again I was faced with some very difficult decisions as the quality was very nice. Ultimately my choice for the Black Variety as well as Best In Show was from the champion class, Ch Trouper's Like It Hot. For me this bitch absolutely epitomizes our cocker standard. Wonderful angles, beautiful type, lovely coat and she was beautifully presented. I found it difficult to find any fault with her other than she wasn't in my kennel.

The Swedish exhibitors should be very proud of the work they have obviously done in concentrating on breeding correct cockers. The entry I had in Sweden would have been extremely competitive with the entry I had at the Cocker National last year in America. Let me close with job well done and thank you again for the honor of judging your wonderful cockers.

Tom Donwell