

How a Dog Show Works

A (wishful) DAY AT THE DOG SHOW

An AKC dog show works as a process of elimination, with many opportunities for winning or losing along the way. There are around 150 recognized breeds able to eligible to compete. There are usually between 300 and 2000 dogs entered at any given show here in the US, depending on the location. Only **ONE** dog at each show will be awarded the sought after "Best In Show" award. Many others will win their classes. Only two will win points by going "winners," Others will go on to win their breeds (BOB), and therefore win the opportunity to continue on to compete and win in their respective groups on the way to (hopefully) winning " Best in Show."

Let's say you have a 10-month-old Basset Hound bitch that you think is outstanding (in your opinion). The first step is to enter a dog show. Approx one - two months before the all-breed show, you should have received your Premium List from the Superintendent and/or Show Secretary (Now days you will most often have to pick premium lists up at the shows or view and print them online.

In the Premium List, you find the show date, location, judges' names, entry forms, entry fees, camping fees etc. You will notice that the closing date for entries (date at which entries can longer be accepted) is just three weeks away, so you begin to fill in your entry form.... what class do you enter her in? Good Question! (You can only enter ONE regular breed class) First you have to compete with other dogs of the same breed and sex in the classes. The regular classes that are offered are:

- Junior Puppy bitch 6 months to under 9 months ("6 to 9")
- Senior Puppy bitch 9 months to under 12 months ("9 to 12")
- 12 months to under 18 months ("12 to 18")(Specialties only)
- Novice bitch (for unpointed bitches)
- Bred By Exhibitor bitch (shown by the breeder/owner)
- American Bred bitch ("Am Bred" - bred and whelped in the United States of America)
- Open bitch (open to all at least 6 mos old, but usually fully mature)
- Best of Breed (for Champions and Winners Dog and Winners Bitch only)

These same classes above are available for Dogs (males)

Now you must decide on the right class to enter her. She is eligible for the puppy classes, but you have other choices and it's important to make sure that you enter her in the right class. Be absolutely sure she is the correct age on the day of the show for the class she is entered in. You could choose to enter in Novice, but the Novice class usually contains mostly dogs that are either not trained sufficiently yet, or perhaps not seriously competitive in terms of physical maturity. Since your dog was bred and whelped in the United States, the AmBred class is a possibility. Again - this class is more popular with breeds that have a high number of imported dogs, such as Rottweilers, German Shepherd Dogs, Golden Retrievers, etc or at Specialties. Since there aren't a lot of imports in your breed, you know you'd probably be the only one in your AmBred class, and you'd really like to get the practice and have the judge's opinion of your bitch compared to other exhibits. The Open class is certainly a possibility, but you've watched a few of these huge

classes with those fully mature, well muscled and conditioned bitches, and there's a fairly good chance that those bitches will make your puppy bitch look very immature instead of the lovely example of an puppy that she is (in your opinion). You should probably go with the 9-12 class, as in a months time when its show time she will be 11 months old and still eligible for this class, where there will be a good entry and she'll be compared against others her own age. You finish your entry form, write out the approx. \$25 entry fee check, and get it mailed right away so it will be delivered well before the closing date. You know how slow the mail is!

The weeks have passed quickly and you've been working, conditioning, grooming, going to handling classes, practicing, and cooking bait until your kitchen smells strongly of liver and garlic. You're both READY. Friday morning before work, you pack your van with your grooming table, tack box, dog food, water, camping chairs, first-aid kit, show clothes, etc - everything you need to take to a show. After work at 5:00 PM you race home, throw everything in the car and take off down the highway. You drive 6 hours to the show city, arriving very early and flop into bed for a quick few hours of sleep before the show.

You dream of winning with your Basset Hound.

The alarm sounds at 5:00 am. As usual, there's a large entry of Basset Hounds. The judging schedule which the superintendent/secretary sent you shows that Basset Hounds are in ring 3 at 8:00 AM - which means you'll leave the motel at 5:30 to get to the show site by 6:00 in order to get space to set up and start grooming. Forget breakfast - you won't want to eat till it is all over.

After paying your \$5 parking fee and driving around the show building four times looking for the unloading zone. You finally find a good space and it is not too far from the rings. After many trips back and forth hauling your equipment and dog into the building, you park your van. You return to get ready. About a half hour or so before your ring time, you should go and pick up your lucky (you hope) armband from the ring steward. You spend 20 minutes or so watching and learning how the judge is running her ring, and what kind of dogs she is putting up. You know that there are four bitches in the class ahead of you, and you know that a judge is only allowed approx. two minutes per dog, you should go get your dog at this point and stand by ringside so you are in plenty of time for your class.

BASSET HOUND BREED COMPETITION BEGINS

The judge finishes with all of the male class dogs and winners and begins with the females. She places the 6-9 bitches in the order that she judges them and their respective merits, and awards a 1st through 4th place winner in the class. The first and second place winners should wait outside near the ring. This is explained later. Now, just before you enter the ring you should check your lead and collar take a deep breath. Now, think about the next steps. Relax and do your best. Your dog needs to feel your confidence.

Next the ring Steward calls in your 9 -12 class by saying " 9 -12 month Basset Hound Bitches in the ring in catalog order please" Since you have the second lowest number, you gait in second as she calls out your number. Don't just walk in and look around. Make sure you know what the judge is doing by watching them for a bit prior to the judging of your breed. Make sure that your girl looks super as your enter the ring at the

proper gait. Many judge's first opinions are formed at this time. You make sure that your armband is visible to the Judge and Steward on your way into the ring. They must check off who has shown up for this class. Once in the ring, at the proper place, you stack your dog where you watched the previous class line up. You are very nervous, but you try to remain calm, cool and collected - stacking your girl, quickly and smoothly, as your handling class instructor has had you do a hundred times before. The judge begins going down the line-up, getting a first impression of the dogs. She goes over your dog, examining its headpiece, expression, bite (dentition), and overall structure from head to tail. She asks you to have your dog do a triangle pattern. She explains the pattern. You gait your bitch in a smooth, straight line away, across, and back to the judge on the diagonal, so she can see how well your dog moves going away and coming in. Make sure you stop at least 2 feet away so you don't run into the judge. Free-bait your bitch to show animation and expression, and to give the judge the best view possible of all your dog's qualities. Your puppy girl behaves beautifully, and stops in an absolutely beautiful pose. She baits nicely her tail wagging. The judge smiles slightly as she asks you to take your dog around to the end. Both you and your dog are working well today, nerves under control. You play with your dog to relax her and your self as the judge goes over the other dogs and puts them through their movement exercises. All the while she is examining the others and you are playing with your girl, you continue to keep an eye on the judge, making sure that your girl always looks good even during play time. Some judges will sneak a peek back at the one they have previously looked at while looking over the others. Now, you notice that she is moving the dogs order around, but all are still behind you as she asks you all to take your dogs around together for a last comparison. Your heart leaps out of your chest as she points to YOUR DOG and says "First..." You're sure she told the other's what their placements were, but you didn't hear a THING after "First." You line up in front of the placement numbers as the judge hands you your blue ribbon. You and the 2nd place 9 -12 winner should watch and wait ringside as the other classes are judged.

As soon as the Open Bitch class is finished, you prepare to go back in the ring with the other first place winners from the Basset Hound Bitch classes, and compete for WINNERS BITCH.

The first place winners from each of the bitch classes in that breed that day compete for Winners Bitch.

This would be the 1st place Junior Puppy Bitch, the 1st place Senior Puppy Bitch, the 1st place 12-18 Bitch (if class was available at this show), the 1st place Novice Bitch, the 1st Place Bred-by Bitch, the 1st place Am-Bred Bitch, and the 1st place Open Bitch. After the Winners Bitch is selected, the bitch who took 2nd place to the bitch that went winners in the class that the Winners bitch came from is asked to come in and compete with the remaining bitches for "Reserve winners Bitch." There are no points awarded for Reserve. Reserve is like a "runner-up" and is only awarded points if, for some reason down the road, the Winners Bitch is disqualified for some reason and her winners award is disallowed. Many of us call Reserve winners 'best of the losers'.

For the Winners Class you should gait into the ring in reverse class order, with the Open Bitch in first and the junior puppy bitch coming into the ring last. The judge checks a few points on each dog, moves them individually, and then gaits them together. You hold

your breath. She points to YOUR dog and announces "Winners Bitch!" At this point you will probably jump and holler with the sheer joy of winning points on your puppy. Now go to the placement numbers and show the judge your armband number again as she gives you the WB ribbon and records the number in her judge's book. The other 1st place winners stay in the ring, and the bitch that took 2nd place to you in your Senior Puppy (9 - 12) class comes and takes your place in the line-up to compete for Reserve Winners Bitch.

Next comes the Specials Class. The finished Basset Hound Champions of both sexes line up and are ready to enter the ring for the Best of Breed competition. Usually the male "Specials" are put in the front of the line, the bitch Specials behind them, then the Winners Dog followed by the Winners Bitch coming in behind. Again, you gait in and line up, stacking your dog as quickly and professionally as possible. Each dog is examined and moved. The judge can then select either a male or female from any of this group to be "Best of Breed." She will then pick a dog of the opposite sex to the one she chose as BOB to be awarded "Best of Opposite Sex." In addition to these two awards, she will select from between the Winners Dog and the Winners Bitch for the "Best of Winners" award. Around the ring you go, ending where you began to line up in a free stack. The judge pulls you out and asks you to stack your dog "over there."

Dumbfounded, you do as you're told. She pulls out a beautiful male special and stacks him behind you. "Around together!" the judge commands and you take off barely touching the floor, with the special in hot pursuit. Your bitch is reaching and driving effortlessly and moves as well as the beautiful male special. You can hardly believe it but you think, she is considering your girl for the breed. Then the judge reverses you and the Males Special asking you to go around again. She then points to points to the male special as Best Of Breed and then points to your bitch and say "BEST of Opposite Sex!" It was so close; you nearly had Best of Breed. Your breeder is standing ringside; she jumps and hollers with joy. She points to the winners dog and says Best of Winners. Fortunately the winners dog was not a puppy so you will still get to come back into the ring and compete for Best Puppy in Breed.

You try to compose yourself as you thank the judge, trying not to cry with the joy of it all. You must now remain in the ring, as you have to compete with the rest of the as yet undefeated puppies for Best Puppy in Breed. This will be for both male and female puppies. This is usually done fairly quickly. The judge points to you. Your girl has just won Best Puppy in Breed, and must remain until the end of the day to compete in Best Puppy In Show competition, which follows the Best in Show judging.

You check with the show superintendent/secretary or the judging schedule to see when the group will be judged and find that your group; Hound, will go in first. You will need to be ready to compete as soon as the Adult Hound group has been done. While you are waiting for Group time, you get your chair and take it to ringside and watch as the other breeds complete their breed competition. You pay special attention to that Whippet judge over there that is going to judge the Hound Group. You notice that he is placing dogs that move well with free effortless ground covering movement, and are very well balanced.

GROUP COMPETITION

You will want to watch the Male Basset Hound Special who won Best of Breed in the Group judging. He is a Basset Hound so you will want to cheer for him. All of the BOB

winners from the breeds in the Hound Group enter the ring. The top winning Beagle, a very strong Elkhound, then there's that great handler with his beautiful Afghan, they are all here. The Hound Group is usually very strong, and one of the largest groups. Once again, each breed is examined and moved as the judge compares each dog to its own written standard of the ideal specimen of that breed. After some juggling around, moving a couple of dogs together, the judge pulls the Basset Hound out in first place. He then makes his other 3 placements. The adult dogs leave the ring with their ribbons. Now, since the Basset Hound has won the Group you don't think you have a chance at Best Puppy In Group. None of the other Group placers are puppies so all the puppies that have won Best puppy in their respective breeds must come into the ring to compete. You gait into the ring proudly with your bitch and try to get into a position at the beginning of the line so that when everyone is asked to move around your girl with be able to move out and show off her wonderful effortless movement. After examining and moving each of the puppies in contention, the judge goes up and down the line up trying to decide on the Best Puppy in the Group. You have your girl on her toes showing very well, but don't think he will choose a Basset Hound because the Basset Hound has won the Adult group. He asks everyone to move around one more time. The judge points and says.... the Basset Hound.

You are ecstatic. You have won Best Puppy in the Hound Group. Your breeder literally carries you back to your setup as you rest up for what's to come. As the winner of Best Puppy in the Hound Group, you will represent all Hound Dogs in the Best Puppy In Show ring at the end of the day, following the Best in Show Competition. Now is a good time for you to exercise your bitch. Then you can return to the Group rings to watch the remaining dogs compete in their respective groups.

- 1.Sporting (dogs used for hunting waterfowl and upland game birds; i.e. retrievers, pointers, setters, spaniels)
- 2.Hound (dogs who track by sight or scent)
- 3.Working (guard, pulling and/or rescue dogs)
- 4.Terrier (dogs who were bred to kill vermin)
- 5.Toy (dogs who were bred strictly as small companions to people)
- 6.Non-Sporting (dogs whose original job no longer exists, or who no longer are used for their original function)
- 7.Herding (Dogs bred to gather and move livestock - formerly part of the Working Group)

Watching other breeds is an excellent way to learn and develop what the old times call "an eye for a good dog"!!

BEST IN SHOW COMPETITION

As the last group enters the ring, you exercise your bitch again and put her on the grooming table to groom her once again. This is probably more for your benefit than hers. It will give you something to do while you are waiting to compete. After all, how dirty can a Basset Hound bitch get in such a short time? This is THE BIG ONE, and everything needs to be perfect. You check your tack, make sure that YOU are as well

groomed as your dog, do a quick breath check, stuff your pockets with bait, run to the washroom just ONE more time, then head over to the BIS ring to watch the Group I winners from all the groups compete for BEST IN SHOW. They all file in each trying to get into the best possible position for their particular dog. The judge goes over each of them again, and moves them individually, and together. Back and forth he goes. At this stage of a dog show there are some excellent quality dogs in the ring and the BIS ribbon could go to any one of them. The judge pulls the Basset Hound out and moves him once again. He then pulls out the gorgeous Irish Setter and moves him down and back and around. Out comes the Bouvier and he moves again. The judge is obviously having trouble making up his mind. Finally, after much walking up and down the lineup, he goes over to the table and marks his book. He returns, asks everyone to stand and moves everyone around the ring together. Around they go...they all look so gorgeous.

The judge points and says...THE BASSET HOUND IS BEST!!!!

Your heart sinks!!! You are happy for the Basset Hound, but just know that now you have no chance at winning Best Puppy in Show because most judges won't put the same breed up for both wins. You now take a very deep breath and as the Ring steward calls your number, you enter the ring at exactly the proper gaiting speed for your bitch. That German Shepherd Dog's handler ahead of you is looking your girl over very carefully. He is in for a surprise, as your girl will have no trouble keeping up with him the way she can move. You quickly get your bitch in the line-up and stack her perfectly, showing her lovely outline and classic headpiece. You look up to see where the judge is and notice that he is looking at your girl. You take another deep breath. Your heart is beating a thousand times a minute, you take time to play with your dog as you wait for the others to be judged, but as the last dog is moved, you begin to stack your bitch in preparation for the final judging. The judge pulls out the German Shepherd Dog puppy and moves him. Your heart sinks. He sends him back to his place ahead of you. Then you hear him say, "May I see the Basset Hound move again please?" You start to shake. Take another deep breath and around you go to the applause of the crowd as she flies by them. The judge signals you to return to your position. He walks slowly back to the Steward's table and marks something in his book. Time is standing absolutely still...you are sweating bullets and looking towards your friends for additional strength as he and the steward walk back to the center of the ring, with the huge pale blue rosette ribbon and a trophy in their hands. He asks for everyone to go around one more time, and the crowd goes wild as she points to YOUR DOG and says the words you will NEVER forget; " THE BASSET HOUND IS BEST PUPPY IN SHOW!"

Of course we all realize that this is a dream case scenario. Don't we just wish that our first show could happen like this!! There will be much heartbreak along the way. The report that you build with your dog makes it all worth it.