

English Springer Spaniel Association of NSW, INC.

April 20, 2003

Judges Critique by Kathy Lorentzen

It was a great honor to be invited to judge the 62nd Championship show for the ESSA of NSW. The breed in Australia has fascinated me since I sent a bitch down nearly ten years ago, and this trip was a "full circle" culmination for me.

I wish to sincerely thank the exhibitors for your graciousness in accepting my decisions. I also am so appreciative to Mr. Kerry-Andrew Jones, my exemplary (and fun) steward, and to Shannon Lancaster for the lovely surprise of finding my favored old dog, Am. Ch. Winacko's Classic Replay, on the cover of the catalogue. It is a wonderful keepsake. And of course a special thank you to my good friend, Jennifer Lawrence, for housing me for ten days and doing her best to assure that I got to see not only a lot of dogs but a lot of Australian wildlife as well.

If the sixty or so dogs that I saw in my entry at the Specialty are indicative of the quality of the breed throughout the country, then the English Springer Spaniel in Australia is in fine shape. Your breeders have done a wonderful job of retaining type characteristics and basic soundness that has been lost, in great part, to the breed in some other areas of the world.

I was thrilled to find that excellent front assemblies, with long, sloping shoulder blades and the proper corresponding upper arm, were apparent in much of the entry. This sort of correct front of course allowed for the wonderful balance and correct outlines that were evident in so many of the dogs, and created the lovely sound, coordinated, ground-covering gait that is so important for a sporting spaniel. (And which has been lost, to some degree, to the breed in America). I was also happy to find good size, with excellent bone and substance, on the majority of the entry, as well as proper length of leg and overall height to length proportion. You do not appear to have a problem with "long and low", which was excellent to see.

Coat quality and condition overall were very good, and temperaments were outstanding. The dogs appeared to be friendly, cheerful, agreeable and extremely social, and I found temperaments to be just that way as well when I visited with some dogs in other settings following the show.

On the not-so-positive side, I was disturbed by a number of very light eyes, which to my mind destroy the beautiful, soft spaniel expression so characteristic of our breed, lending a rather harsh, staring look instead. I must say that I found it very interesting that many of the dogs with light eyes had lovely dark pigment around their eyes. This is just the opposite of what we find in America. We have, for the most part, good eye color, but have lost the pigment in the eye rims and noses, and the pink eye rims we are now plagued with give our dogs a round-eyed, vapid, "goosed" expression that I find extremely objectionable. Apparently, eye color and skin pigment color are inherited separately. This is an area where both countries could greatly benefit from some co-mingling of bloodlines, I would think.

As to the individual dogs, I found many, many of them to be extremely worthy, which made for some close decisions. Those that rose to the top had both the general outline, balance and soundness that I was looking for, plus some hard sought type characteristics that contribute to making our breed unique.



Figure 1 Dog CC and Runner Up

First place Open Dog, CC and Runner-Up Best In Show. **Ch. Azucroft On The Prowl**. This dog caught my eye immediately in the class with his upstanding, compact outline, wonderful balance and moderation. On closer examination, he was brimming with exquisite type characteristics. A head that, to me, is the standard come to life; long, lean and delicately chiseled, flat skull, perfect parallel planes, wonderful shape and color of eye, so correctly set under beautiful brows. All this combined to make his expression kindly, soft and

intelligent. He had the most spectacular bone, which continued without taper right down to his perfect feet. Wonderful reach of neck blending very nicely into long, clean sloping shoulders, short hard back. Very good in motion from all angles.

Reserve CC Dog to the Junior Dog, **Wongan Flying High**. Another dog with wonderful upstanding proportion, clean outline and excellent balance, so correct to my eye. Lovely length of leg, a beautifully made front assembly, and excellent in motion, carried his profile wonderfully and used his legs with great ease. He gave to the CC dog in make and shape of head.

First place Open Bitch, CC and Best In Show. **Gr. Ch. Fraelighte For Play**. This bitch won an outstanding Open class. She was substantial yet feminine, gorgeous in outline and balance, clean cut and chiseled in head, excellent on her legs, had outstanding presence and was in wonderful condition. In my opinion, she could be a top winner anywhere in the world. Even at that, she did not win

the class easily, as both 2nd and 3rd behind her were bitches of beautiful type and character. Seeing this depth of quality in bitches was thrilling to me as it speaks so well for the breeds' future.

Reserve CC Bitch to the Junior Bitch, **Fairisky Perfect Murder**. Everyone who knows me, knows I favor black and white, and I could have cheerfully put this young, open marked black bitch in my suitcase and brought her home! She had the loveliest of heads, long, clean, with parallel planes and the darkest of eyes and a beautiful soft, willing expression. Lovely bone and substance, leg length and balance, very moderate in all things, and on the go she had, to my eye, that distinct "strictly his own" Springer side gait discussed in the standard. I loved her.



Figure 2 Bitch CC and Runner Up

Again, thank you for the opportunity to come and see your wonderful Springers, and my congratulations on the excellent job you are doing in maintaining the quality of the breed.