

Potomac Valley Irish Wolfhound Club Conformation Specialty
April 4, 2021

Critique of Placements by judge Stephen LeVan

This adventure was the first time out of COVID prison for Karen and I – not just our first dog show but first time out for anything but groceries. Being vaccinated, we felt comfortable going but still wore our masks. The last dog show we were at was the Garden State show in 2019. The only drawback to this trip was not being able to chat with all our IW friends – got to follow the dog show protocol for judges. Thank you to the PVIWC members for inviting me. I appreciate your trust and a big thank you to Jodie Jeweler for helping wade through all our emails.

I hope exhibitors won't think I have been harsh in my comments. Even my magnificent Best of Breed and Best of Opposite Sex to Best of Breed are not perfect specimens. It is unfair to regale you with how wonderful your hound is and yet not place it at the top of its class. I feel you are better served to hear what strengths I found and the weakness I recognized.

6-9 Dog

- 1 #12 *Riversong Ode To Soul*. Attractive shape on this pup. He also has all four feet going the right direction which sometimes doesn't happen this young. Plenty of breadth across the body. A nice top line particularly for such a young hound. Moves well.
- 2 #14 *Noble Shenanigans of Avondale*. Another quality puppy but not quite the shape of the competition – a little flatter and a bit straighter. Not very sure of himself.

9-12 Dog

- 1 #118 *Coleraine's Zenith of Taliesin*. A big strong pup – all male with nice details of ears, pigment, bite and bone. His outline is correct with a good upper arm but can use some muscling up in the hind quarters.
- 2 #20 *Stormborn's Easier Said Than Done*. Good front structure with plenty of fill between the front legs. Moved well and has a very balanced structure but I wish there was more to him. Pushed the winner though.
- 3 #22 *Hops-N-Hounds Tig Glaurung*. This pup would look different to me every time he moved or simply adjusted his stance – he really wouldn't settle. Plenty to him and he has curves but the front turning out is a problem both standing and moving.

12-15 Dog

- 1 #26 *Hallowed Crazy Horse*. Wonderful fore chest, balanced by broad hind quarters with good width across the top of the thigh. His neck is too short particularly when coupled with his long well ribbed chest. On the move his front overpowers his rear, not the usual problem at this age.

15-18 Dog

- 1 #28 *Hearthound's Twix*. This young male is straight front and rear and did not want to be here. He is also lacking in substance for a male this age. He was much more at ease when moving around the ring with his handler and not near me.

Novice Dog

- 1 #36 *Lonnkyle Pinin for the Fjords*. Very comfortable, confident young male with everything in correct proportion. He moves correctly. He needs everything amplified 10% or so to be more of a stallion hound. Potential but not there as he is right now.
- 2 #38 *Hallowed Taboo*. A hound that is different once you get your hands on him. He has strong, thick bone and breadth in the right places. He squats, making what could be a nice top line and croup slope down and away. The squatting shifts his weight and causes his front pasterns to appear knuckled over. He has moderate coat on his body but way too much ruff around his neck – it makes his neck appear short which it is not; it is long enough and strong.

Amateur Owner Handler Dog

- 1 #40 *Mordu Cu Mor*. Dog and handler worked well together. He has sufficient size and strength but needs more power from his hindquarters. He has excellent front structure but not enough muscle mass in his second thighs. His structure and musculature limited the efficiency and effectiveness of his gait.
- 2 #42 *Hops-N-Hounds Stormageddon's Failinis*. There is plenty to this hound, and from the side he presents an attractive shape. He has an east/west front and is cow-hocked. Something is amiss in all his pastern joints. It is very apparent standing and hampers him significantly on the move.

Bred by Exhibitor Dog

- 1 #46 *R Noble Nasch*. Strength and balance – he can catch the wolf and he can dispatch it. The curves are in the right places and plenty of length and width without being overdone. He moves with power and grace which is so difficult to achieve. The details of rosed ears, ideal bite, dark pigment, sloped pasterns, arched muscular loins, withers set directly over the elbows, harsh coat, moderately large, round feet with arched toes – it is all there. He will just get better.
- 2 #44 *Gladstone's Can't Wait To Be King*. Another wonderful dog – look out wolves. A balanced dog with a proper shape but doesn't use the curves on the move, not having the fluid extension of the class's winner. He could be a bit wider from the tip of his nose to the end of his tail. A narrow lower jaw but his canines fit properly. More width at the top of the thigh would propel him around the ring with more power. He has a long strong neck with some arch.
- 3 #48 *Taliesin Blaze's Buachaill of Wideview*. Yet another fantastic dog in a fantastic class. This dog moves like a dream – it is effortless and shows great extension. I would like to have seen better return of upper arm and fill in the front structure. All three are exceptionally worthy hounds.

American Bred Dog

- 1 #56 *Brimstone Connemara Remedy*. A rangy young hound. Perfectly balanced though more curve in both the front and rear would better complete the picture – perhaps with time? Neck, back and legs are all long and strong. The dog uses its structure well and moves with power and ease around the ring.
- 2 #54 *Hallowed Helltopay*. A balanced happy dog who still gave his handler fits. I would like to see more air underneath the hound but this male is compact and carries good width throughout. He either needs more strength in his hind quarters or he needs to gait so he uses his thighs to his advantage.
- 3 #52 *Coleraine's Cathbhadh Incubator Jones*. A comfortable dog with balanced curves front and rear. The picture of this nice hound was compromised by a short neck. The scapula and humerus are all well placed with balanced length and the neck isn't disguising itself with extra hair; but the neck looks very out of place compared to the proper length of back and moderately sloped croup.

Open Dog

- 1 #66 *R Noble's Beyond the Horizon*. An impressive dog. Structurally this dog is tough to criticize - though it seems he would rather be on the sofa and not at a dog show. His flawless outline is generated by proper front structure including the elusive well set return of upper arm. He has a long, strong well arched neck, a broad rib cage going way back nearly to his thighs, strong thighs and second thighs, a top line that flows down that neck to a proper croup. And he is broad and strong as a wolf killer must be. He could be more focused when gaitting – he and his handler were dueling as to where they were going to go.
- 2 #60 *Pennybright Silas*. Strong and curvy, this dog was shown with his coat only halfway in; it was crisp and suits him well. I found tremendous quality in this male yet there were a few issues that troubled me. Hind quarters are superb – well muscled and the width across the thigh leads to strong second thighs. I would prefer a bit more arch over the loin but his back is strong and flexible which is what really counts. As his scapula slopes forward to the point of shoulder (intersection of scapula and humerus), the amount of layback may be too great placing the point of shoulder far up his front. His front legs must move wide to get around his strong muscular fore chest. His front pasterns are nearly vertical and too tight. He was very animated and showed in top condition.
- 3 #64 *Carrickaneena Oglivy Mochroi*. He is a big strong dog but he is missing the curves and the angles underneath those curves. A very pleasing top and under line with great depth of chest, but he did not have the breadth of body to go with that depth. The upper arm is particularly straight, just a few degrees off the vertical. This limits his reach and shortens his stride.

Winners Dog - #46

Reserve Winners Dog - #66

6-9 Bitch *the future looks bright*

- 1 #13 *O'Lugh's Martini*. This puppy has her act together. Top and under line, both spot on. Very balanced with power in both the front and rear and correct length

and breadth. Nice head and a happy puppy expression. She moves well though she is very loose as you might expect with a pup.

2 #121 *Carnasserie R Noble Zenyatta*. Another beautiful bitch puppy who has all the right stuff though at this stage of development she stands with her butt up in the air. Muscles in the back and hind quarters can take time to develop.

3 #11 *Riversong Lit My Soul On Fire*. We really worked on getting this one to let me check her out. She has a beautiful shape and moves true with vigor and drive. She needs to learn that judges are nice kind folks who have soft hands.

9-12 Bitch

1 #15 *Shancarrick's Tempestuous Taillte*. Plenty of spirit in this one but in between the hi-jinks, I was able to get my hands on this wonderful young bitch. There is plenty to her and a nice return of upper arm balanced by a good bend at the stifle joint. Bite, coat and pigment all in good order. Needs more experience out and about.

2 #51 *Hops-N-Hounds Destroyer of Worlds*. A happy young bitch with good size and a beautiful neck. She has lost her curves both front and rear. Her movement is true, but being straight, particularly her hind quarters, robs her of extension and thrust.

12-15 Bitch

1 #21 *O'Lugh's Blackwater Tanguray*. Strong bitch with balance and great length. Her correct structure supports a top line that flows down the long strong neck, over the arched loins to a properly set croup. Where her ribs stop on the way back towards her thighs is at the limit of how long the loin section should be. She has a hunter's expression yet a feminine head.

2 #29 *Hallowed Doll Face*. A young bitch with correct breadth and lovely curves. She gave her handler fits. Balance was difficult to determine as she wanted to place herself and move differently than her handler wished. All that strength in the front structure could easily cause interference with the rear legs when gaiting but the hind quarters kept up and she moved well.

3 #27 *Gemini's Big Girls Need Big Diamonds*. Long strong legs on this bitch. She has great depth of body. Her hind quarters need to muscle up as she stands and moves a little hocky and her upper arm could slant more underneath giving more front extension and getting the front legs out of the way of the rear. She needs more time to mature.

4 #25 *Gemini Diamonds R A Girls Best Friend*. It seemed to depend on which time I looked at this youngster – not just ears rosed or flat, a different shape every time for everything about her. Her return of upper arm and lovely top and under line were outstanding qualities. She needs to muscle up her hind quarters. She has correct rear angulation, and needs to strengthen as she often stands and moves somewhat cow-hocked. Just being sure of herself will help.

15-18 Bitch

1 #103 *Dreamcatcher's Bellona To Wolfhouse*. Eye catching young bitch. Good details except for ears. She was crouching when set up and looked her best on the move. She is long in the back and the section over her loin a bit too long –

too much space between her last rib and her thighs. Good bone and muscle. Moves with purpose and efficiency.

- 2 #31 *Wolfhouse Galathea*. Strong girl with good bone and a correct structure. The details are good though her coat was in and out. She needs to adjust to the robust body she is developing when she is moving. It takes her a moment to get started and to stop.
- 3 #105 *Crannna Beatha's Arwyn of Skywalker*. Less mature looking than the two preceding her in the class. Her legs are at a really long stage waiting for her body to catch up. Attractive head. A short upper arm throws the rest of the picture off: limited fore chest and a flatter top line. Her movement suffers from limited reach in the front.
- 4 #107 *Franjo Penchattan Ka Po Nui Lani*. Another bitch where maturity is holding her back. The side view of her gait is pleasing but her down and back shows crossing over and weaving. She is narrow. The narrow head and particularly narrow under-jaw cause bite problems. The narrow chest and hips make foot timing difficult.

Novice Bitch

- 1 #115 *Taliesin's Be'rin*. A big strong hound who looks ready for whatever is coming her way – children to lick or wolves to fight. Plenty of body, correct shape and correct details; details: those little things that may compromise the picture of a good hound. She is at her peak. I found the tremendous fore chest and thighs are solid wolfhound, not grooming technique. She does like to play a bit when going around the ring.
- 2 #41 *Hallowed Bitches Brew*. Impressive dark curvy bitch. I now know she is quite young and will have plenty of opportunity to gain confidence in the ring. She has tremendous curves in the front and rear without having too much of either. Her coat was doing the spring thing, but the other issues like ears, bite and tail were quite good. This is the one I really want to see back in a year.
- 3 #43 *Gladstone's Faerie Kiss On Broadway*. Lots of leg on the bitch with strong bones and muscles. She may have a bit more power in the hind quarters than the front. I would prefer to see a more gradual blending of neck to shoulder and a more arched loin. Could be a wider hound nose to tail including a wider lower jaw. She moves smoothly.
- 4 #35 *Shancarrick's Tenacious Teleri*. Another nice bitch in a strong class. Tall enough and long enough, there just was not as much substance to this bitch. A narrow bite also hurt her chances.

Bred By Exhibitor Bitch

- 1 #113 *Taliesin's Sa'ile*. I found the bitch's head very pleasing as was the rest of her. Her hind quarters are her fortune – large hard thighs and second thighs. Her top line flows over nicely arched loins. She could use more fill between those front legs and more angled return of upper arm.
- 2 #53 *New Girl In Town At R Noble*. An attractive dark bitch who is correct in shape but less of her than several others. Wonderful details and the pigment was very black if black can be "very." Her expression is soft and warm. She enjoyed being

in the show ring. Angulation and the resulting curves were there and she uses them well.

3 #49 *O'Lugh's Godiva of Aerie*. A tall upright bitch who needs a greater return of upper arm. She has most everything else nailed down.

4 #57 *Hallowed Witchcraft*. Dark bitch with front legs way, way back underneath her. Her scapula is too upright and does not balance with the upper arm just below it. Her body shape is beautiful with the top line descending over her shoulders and rising over the arched loins She has strength and breadth which she used to propel her handler around the ring.

American Bred Bitch

1 #67 *Dun Myrica R Noble Nuala of Eagle*. Correct match of amount of leg and amount of body. She has good bone and a balance between front and rear structures. She projects a very comfortable and confident appearance. When she stops moving, she frequently sets herself up showing her good structure at work. Her details are meticulous and add to what is already a beautiful picture.

2 #117 *Taliesin's Brice*. A taller more upright bitch with nice details and a very sound gait. She could use more bend in the stifle joint and a touch more breadth across the body.

3 #109 *Carrickaneena Heart of the Banshee*. A moderate bitch who was somewhat square in shape needing more length of body. She was comfortable standing for examination and going around the ring.

Open Bitch

1 #111 *Taliesin's Druid Duinn Eostar*. A mature bitch in her prime. She moved well and had a pleasant shape. Those details of ears, pigment, bite, feet, coat were all in good order. She moved around the ring in a comfortable manner.

2 #101 *R Noble Carnasserie Nevada*. A younger bitch, she has a striking appearance. She has balanced structure and was beaten in the class by another fine more mature bitch.

3 #71 *Furlongs Saskia*. An even more striking looking bitch. Shown in very hard muscular shape, her appearance from the side is different than that coming and going. She needs to have more breadth of body: at the shoulder, the spring of ribs and across the pelvis. Dark pigment and almost greyhound-like rosed ears complement her look.

4 #81 *R Noble Nainsi*. A shapely black bitch with good proportions and substance. Again, a very nice bitch with good details but something was amiss with front movement today.

Winners Bitch - #115

Reserve Winners Bitch - #67

Veteran Bitch

1 #83 *Inishkeens Caiomhe*. Exceptionally sound, shapely and in wonderful condition for a veteran. She is the real thing but you must get your hand on her because she was carrying plenty of coat – good coat at that. I found her scapula

and humerus of the same length and set at the same angle putting her withers right over her elbows - super. Her well bent stifle is just that and she uses that curve to advantage when moving. My only wish is to have had more of her.

2 #87 *Crannna Beatha's Hawthorn Skywalker*. Not showing signs of age, what holds her back is balance. The details are good but more curve in the hind quarters would have changed her entire outline and given her more push when moving.

3 #85 *Laislinn Starkeeper Mistletoe*. Another youthful senior, she was in hard condition. She needs more power from the back legs – she has good musculature but that strength would be more effective with more bend of stifle. She also needs more breadth all the way along her body.

Brood Bitch

1 #67 *Dun Myrica R Noble Nuala of Eagle*. The Brood Bitch win photo will be something to cherish and to study. There is just so much quality here it oozes out of the image.

2 #57 *Hallowed Witchcraft*. A tough act to follow but the second place family did themselves proud. The dam's genetic influence on her get was obvious and positive.

Brace 1 #107 *Franjo Penchattan Ka Po Nui Lani*. Well matched and well handled.
#109 *Carrickaneena Heart of the Banshee*

Bred by Exhibitor Dog First, Winners Dog, Best of Winners, Best Bred By Exhibitor and **Best of Breed - #46, R Noble Nasch**.

Novice Bitch First, Winners Bitch and **Best of Opposite Sex - #115, Taliesin's Be'rin**.

Select Dog - #70, CH R Noble Carnasserie Nazar

Select Bitch – #89, CH Gladstone's Call Me Kelt

First Veterans Bitch, **Best Veteran and Award of Merit - #83, Inisheens Caiomhe**

First 6-9 Bitch, **Best Puppy - #13, O'Lugh's Martini**

Irish Wolfhounds, and nearly everything about them, seem to be a contradiction in many ways. And from our standard “very muscular, strong though gracefully built.” What else is strong, very muscular and yet gracefully built: ballet dancers and NFL running backs come to mind. That combination of strength and grace is required to catch and take down a wolf. My Best of Breed choice exemplifies those qualities.

After the judging, I was informed that I had met my BOS choice before with a very different result. It all makes sense now – a fantastic bitch hiding away in the Novice

class. I discover she has always been a pistol and part of the revolt I watched as I judged the 2018 Northstar specialty – a 6-9 bitch class that was huge and all totally out of control. I picked four that would actually stand up and put them in what I felt was the proper order. My BOS today went without a ribbon that day. It seems she has been a handful to show and is just now getting her act together. What I saw was a bitch of tremendous quality and a great deal of energy.

Overall comments: There was abundant quality. I thank you exhibitors for bringing your wonderful hounds to me. I am hardly a stranger to the Potomac Valley club and we have enjoyed many of your shows. If our plans for a move are not derailed, we can become more involved with the club soon. While there were some beautiful mature champions here, what thrilled me were the class hounds – obvious with my BOB/BOW and BOS coming from the classes but also with the depth of the classes and the promising puppies.

The new FIWC standard for our breed comes down hard on bites. You need to pay attention because the bite problem exists here, too – lower canines poking into the upper jaw. I saw far too many. Breeders, fix it.

Please do not use the new fad calling for moderation to become an excuse for hounds with straight front and rear structure. There are just a few items in our standard identified as moderate or alluded to in that direction: “skulls not too broad,” “muzzles only moderately pointed,” “tails being of moderate thickness,” “feet moderately large.” The chest is stuck with contradictions from “Breast wide” to “not too narrow or too broad.” The standard never asks for a narrow hound and I did see a few of those here. The standard states “stifles nicely bent;” a straight stifle joint is a fault. Conversely, an over-bent stifle joint is also a fault. But, do not be confused; the straight stifled hound is not moderate.

You must do a little digging to understand what the standard calls for with upper arms (humerus bone). I hear and read about IWs with the fault of short upper arms. I recall only one such hound at this specialty. Instead, I see too many hounds with nearly vertical upper arms. Instead of angling down and back to the rear of the hound, which puts the elbows directly underneath the withers, the upper arm extends straight up & down. That places the rest of the front leg too far forward limiting the hound’s ability to reach efficiently and making the neck appear short. The standard’s “elbows well set under” is telling us where the upper arm fits into the equation. Over the years, I have seen an improvement in upper arms at the PVIWC specialties. Keep it up.

Thank you again for this opportunity to view and touch your excellent hounds. You are all my friends and I hope there was no concern about my impartiality. I know virtually all of you. When I judge, I get lost in the hounds and don’t really recall what was at the other end of the leash. I plan for Karen and I and the Lismore crew to be back in our more familiar role as exhibitors in the future. Many thanks.