

National Specialty

Irish Water Spaniel Club of America 2005

Bear Delaware April 25 to April 30

My name is Penni Smith and I exhibit Irish Water Spaniels here in Australia. I have been involved in the breed from a young age, growing up in Tasmania with my mum having Craythorne Irish Water Spaniels. I have shown the breed for some 32 years now, and have been lucky enough to see many beautiful IWS in this time, both here and in England and America. At present I have a beautiful dog, Aust Gr Ch Castlehill's Journey Downunder (imp USA), Ike. It is with great excitement that I sit and write my memories of my recent trip to America to attend the 66th Irish Water Spaniel National Specialty, the second time I have been able to attend this great event.

The trip started with a long, 21-hour flight from Sydney to JFK airport (New York), arriving the same day I left. I was greeted by a warm friendly smile from my dear friend Susan Tapp (Castlehill Kennels), who co-owns and bred Ike. The long trip was made all worthwhile to see Ike's ancestry and to see one of the largest entries of Irish Water Spaniel ever at a National - 112 entries I believe.

The National was held in a beautiful part of the world, Bear Delaware. It was a seamless week of lovely Spring weather in a beautiful setting. The rain fell at the end of the week but the luck of the Irish was with us for most parts. The dogs were magnificent. This is true not only of the conformation ring but also all the performance events.

On Monday and Tuesday were the field dogs and it was thrilling to see IWS doing what they are bred for. The venue was at Rebel Ridge Farm, in the rolling hills of Northern Maryland (a ten minute drive from the host hotel). This magnificent setting had an unobstructed gallery position to view the dogs at work. A total of 31 IWS were in attendance for the w/wcx. Many qualified and exceeded all the wants of their owners. On Tuesday night we all gathered together for a spit roast at the farm. Wednesday had agility, sweepstakes and a freestyle demonstration to finish.

Sadly, due to my commitment to prepare dogs for the sweepstakes classes, I didn't get to see much of the Agility. The judge was Mr Rich Mackintosh from Maryland. After the finish of the Agility, the sweepstakes, puppy and veteran were started.

The judge was Mrs Elizabeth F Trainor VMD, the wife of the late great handler Bill Trainor. Her introduction to Irish Water Spaniels came in the late 1970s when Mrs Anne Snelling (Canada) left a young male IWS in their care and both Bill and Elizabeth fell in love with him. This was the great Am Ch Oaktrees Irishocrat CD. After Dugan won BIS at the 1979 Westminster Kennel Club Show, Bill became his co-owner and he spent the rest of his life with them. So, Elizabeth was a wonderful choice for judging the sweepstakes.

Puppy Sweepstakes is open to dogs and bitches 6 months and under 18 months. There were 6 male entrants in varying classes. Best Male was awarded to Castlehill's Oliver Twist O'fate (owned: Susan Tapp and Mary Beth Adams; bred: Susan Tapp and Betty Wathne). This was a special event for me as Oliver is an Ike grandson, his dam (Craythorne N Castlehill, Noosa) being a bitch my mum, Mrs Shirley Smith, and I sent to Susan Tapp. Sadly, Noosa died not long after having the litter. We had always hoped that something special would come from her litter. His sire is the beautiful Am Ch Madcap If My Heart had Wings.



Castlehill's Oliver Twist O'fate

Out of the 9 bitches entered, Best Bitch was awarded to Poole's Ide Then There's Maud, bred by Greg Siner.

Both the dog and bitch winner entered the ring for Best in Sweepstakes and it was awarded to the dog Castlehill's Oliver's Twist O'fate. Of course, the tears did start to flow then. A great win for all.

Next was the Veterans Sweepstakes, which was split up into dogs and bitches and then into ages 7-10 years and 10 years and over. What a special event it is to see such beautiful dogs still strutting their stuff at the fine age of 10 and over. Most of the dogs in the Veteran 7-10 years group are the current big winning dogs in America at present. Due to being such a slow maturing breed, they really do look their best at this age bracket.

7 to 10 years Male was won by Am Ch Poole's Ide Marksman Mclean. He went on to win BIS at the National and also at the 2 All Breeds support shows held that same weekend.

10 and over was won by Am BallyHoo's Cairbre O'wyndsong CD JH. Second in this class was another special boy, being Am Ch Donegal's Bailey O'crispin CD. This is Ike's father. Nearing 12 years of age, he still performed to his best, with his tail wagging at all stages.

Best Male Veteran was Marksman Mclean. 7-10 Bitches was awarded to Am Ch Poole's Ide First Water CD. 10 and over Bitches was Am Ch Poole's Ide Water Mark (This is Marksman Mclean's mother). Second was again very special for me. Not only was I given the great honour of showing this beautiful bitch, but she is also Ike's mother, Am Ch Castlehill's Carrera Magic CD. I couldn't ever have been prouder of showing a dog. At the fine age of almost 12 years, this lady gave everything she had to present herself to her best. She is a wonderful show dog and it was a moment I will never forget.



Am Ch Castlehill's Carrera Magic CD

Best Bitch was awarded to WaterMark and Best in Veteran Sweepstakes was the dog, Marksman Mclean.



Am Ch Poole's Ide Marksman Mclean

The day ended with the Freestyle entertainment. Every year this gets better. It's a wonderful sight to see the dogs and handlers enjoying themselves so much. This involves dancing moves with a mix of obedience and agility moves - a great way to end the day.

Thursday morning saw obedience in the ring, judged by Mrs Evelyn Van Uden. There was a total entry of 35 with 29 dogs shown. High in Trial went to Am Ch Realta's Meteor Shower, who was also awarded Highest Combined. Again, I didn't get to see any of the dogs working, as the Conformation was starting straight after.

The Conformation judge was Mr Michael Dachel, who has been showing dogs for some 39 years and judging for 10. His association with the breed was also through Am Ch Oaktree's Irishocrat Dugan, from when he was working for the Trainors.

There were 16 dogs entered in the regular classes competing for Winners Dog, and WD came from the Bred-by Exhibitor class. A lovely young male, Tara's Teal Take Flight, Oliver (Ike's grandson), placed 3rd on this day. 25 bitches were entered for Winners Bitch and this was won by the Open Class winner Cuchulain's Lia Fail.

Now on to the Veteran Dog class - more males over 7 years old. This was won by Am Ch Sylmar's Raindancer.

There were 7 entries in the Veteran Bitch class, again for bitches over 7 years old. It was a very strong class with lots of past Specialty winners. This was won by a beautiful bitch, owned/bred by Melissa Munn, Am Ch Landacre's The Air up There NA NAJ. She was 7 years old and also went on to be Best OppSexIS. Second again was my special girl, Am Ch Castlehill's Carrera Magic CD, handled by myself and owned by Susan Tapp. Not bad for a near 12 year old.



Am Ch Landacre's The Air up There NA NAJ

Now all of the BOB competition entered. What a grand sight 34 IWS all in one ring was. A mix of beautiful IWS in all shapes and sizes. The judge broke the judging up into dogs and bitches, then short-listed and then chose the winners.

BIS was Marksman Mclean (owned/bred Greg Siner). Best of Winners was Tara's Teal Take Flight (owned/bred Tara Darling Lyon). Awards of Merit went to Ch Sylmar's Raindancer, Ch Dreadlocks Dralion Du Tidemark and Ch Jaybren's Miss Down South Jukin

A great day was had by all. It ended with a presentation dinner and a fabulous auction; a big night of socialisation. There were quite a few people who had travelled from other countries, such as England and Ireland, and 3 of us were from Australia.

Then back to our room with 4 IWS to catch some sleep for the next day, a supported entry All Breeds show.

This show was held at the same grounds and we had an entry of 56 IWS to be judged. Again a special day for us, as Castlehill's Oliver Twist O'fate was awarded Best of Winners again to gain his American title. BOB was again Am Ch Poole's Ide Marksman Mclean. We were all ringside to watch him for the Group but no help was needed as he won it and went on to win BIS.

The next day saw another all breeds show but also saw rain and we decided not to show on this day. We just looked and shopped instead. BOB again was Am Ch Poole's Ide Marksman Mclean and again he went on to win BIS. What a way to finish a specialty week!

So again, another National Specialty week was over and a great time had by all. I can't congratulate the team of organisers enough for a great week of IWS. The week always goes too fast. I guess it's true what they say, time flies when you're having fun.

I had a few more days of shopping left in New York before I left for home. And yes, I did need to buy 2 more suitcases and I had a great time.

Thanks for reading my memories

PENNI SMITH, Waterboys IWS

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