

# Helsinki Winner Show

## was a parade of new faces

**The last and most important show of the year in Finland, the Helsinki Winner Show, was held at the beginning of December at the Helsinki Fair Centre, as usual.**

This magnificent show was bigger than ever, with 8500 dogs and 33 000 spectators. In spite of the big numbers the Winner Shows have not been particularly profitable, because of the costs of the huge fair centre and its staff. The show committee has done a lot of thinking to find ways to improve the economic result. There is always an army of volunteers working, and there are various things to attract the general public. There was again a pet fair in one of the halls, with lots of rabbits, parrots, rats, mice etc. For children there was also a show and competition of toy dogs, that is stuffed toy dogs. Several interesting lectures of various subjects were held, too.

The traditional parts of the program, like giving awards of the hero dogs and distinguished breeders took place, there was also a dog fashion show and breed presentations for those who are not so interested in breed judging. The national final of the junior handlers is always a big thing, too. Just before the BIS final the awards of the three "of the Year" competitions were festively handed out. The main ring was spectacular as always, with stunning tall blonde beauty Leena Sarvi as the speaker. Everything works like a clock, effortlessly and well planned. Being a Finn, I am not the right person to evaluate the show, but many judges and exhibitors from abroad seem always to be very impressed by the size of the show, quality of the dogs and especially the organisation, year after year.

The show was probably this time also more international than ever, there were exhibitors from 20 different countries. The panel of judges was colourful as always, many nationalities were represented and many familiar faces, but many of the judges this time got to judge their own breeds and that might be one of the secrets of the big entry. The furthest travelled judges came from Thailand, Dr Passiri Nisalak and Mr Apiwut Kasemsanta, plus Ann Joe Sampaio from Brazil.

The BIS judge was Giuseppe Alessandra, the renowned Italian allrounder. He, like Santa Claus, had come with a Christmas present for the Finnish Kennel Club. He had brought a picture, a valuable engraving of Tomas Landseer after Edwin Landseer's famous painting of a big black and white dog. The Continental Landseer breed is named after that. It is slightly different from the Newfoundland, although the origins of the two breeds are same. Mr Alessandra is a frequent and appreciated visitor to the Finnish shows, and now the FKC decorated him with a golden badge of honour.

The BIS line-up was somewhat unusual, most of the final ten were interesting new faces. In fact, there are a lot of good dogs around, and it really is refreshing to see them get their chance. It looks like a skip of generations has happened in our top show dogs. Very often the veterans are still going strong and winning over here, but now it was time for the new talents to pop up.

Most of all Mr Alessandra was attracted to the young Lhasa Apso, Ch Chic Choix Sky's the Limit, owned and handled by Lauryna Rubikaite in Lithuania but bred by Juha Kares in Finland, who is one of our most successful breeders of several different breeds. "Sky" is sired by the GB Ch Kutani Reckless, but from the dam's side sixth or seventh generation of Juha's own breeding, from American bloodlines. This dog is not quite two years old, but has already his American Ch title in addition to several "Winner" titles from Baltic countries, but not yet the Ch titles of any country, because over here it is not possible to finish the Champion title before having earned a CC after two years of age.

After the judge had gone over all the finalists, he told his decision to the speaker and dogs were sent out. They were called back in, in reverse order, starting with the one who was placed fourth. This makes it very exciting, certainly not least for the handlers who are waiting behind the scene with their dogs, hoping to hear their names called. Lauryna Rubikaite was obviously so touched by her dog's win that she was wiping her eyes when she came in as the last one to be called, and walked to the podium.

For Reserve BIS Mr Alessandra annointed the Wire-haired Standard Dachshund Minelan Balsami, o & br Pirkko Peippola, but handled by Jani Ultamo. This bitch is another young upcoming star, same age as the Lhasa and so not yet a Champion. She has only been shown four times before this, but has been BOB three times, so not a bad start for a career. Although she doesn't have a lot of experience of show rings, she was behaving calmly and self-confidently, like she had always been in the spotlight. Surely we will hear more about this bitch in the future. She is an example of the Scandinavian co-operation, sired by a Swedish dog, with a Norwegian grandsire but the dam's side consists of Finnish dogs. Nearly all the ancestors are qualified in field trials as well.

Third place also went to a new rising star, the English Springer Spaniel Ch Jefferson de los Tres Robles, imported from Spain, owned by a third generation Springer enthusiast, Kirsi Heiskari-Leppänen. This young dog is just over two years, so he was able to finish his Ch title a couple of weeks before this show. The fourth one on the winners' stands was already an established winner, the Italian Greyhound Int Ch Soltar's Unbelievable, co-owned by her breeder Jukka Lillstrang and Hanna Ukura. The partners shared the handling work, Hanna handled her delicate little beauty on Saturday in the breed ring and Group final, while Jukka took the task at Sunday's final. This beautiful bitch has been in the top winners of the country for a couple of years, after her sire did the same.

The Herding Group winner was another interesting new face, the White Shepherd Ch Snamerto Staomner, o. Pirjo Miettinen but imported from the UK. I guess he was registered there as a White German Shepherd. This breed is relatively newly recognised by the FCI as the White Shepherd. There have always been white and longhaired puppies born in the GSD litters, although they are not wanted. However, they are beautiful and perfectly healthy decent dogs, so there have been many who didn't want to destroy these puppies but kept them and started breeding. As a matter of fact, there is quite a big population of White GSDs in the world. Some enthusiasts in Switzerland managed to get them recognised there, and fought for the international recognition. Their efforts were finally successful, and the White Shepherd is now internationally recognised as a separate breed. However, those White GSDs registered in UK, USA and some other countries, can be transferred into White Shepherds after some formalities, when they are imported to Europe. Both longhaired and shorthaired variety are accepted, but not as separate breeds, they are judged together and can be born in one litter. In fact, this breed resembles the old fashioned GSD with a straight back, and it has gained tremendous popularity in a short time.

It always is a hard job to win the huge Group 2, the Molossers, Pinschers and Schnauzers. Now the winner was a young English Bulldog Ch Black Hope Brando, two and a half years old. He is owned by Tarja Järvinen but was handled by the breeder Ari Hyvönen. In spite of his young age, Brando has already done some winning. The British judge Karina Le Mare was so greatly impressed by him when she judged in Finland earlier this year, that she tried to buy the dog. The blunt answer to her enquiry was simply "NO".

Ari didn't mean to be rude, but he is not very fluent in English and could not explain that like most show dogs in Finland, Brando is Tarja's beloved family member and absolutely not for sale. Both his parents have been remarkable winners, too, so the apple hasn't fallen far from the tree.

Bryn Cadogan had the finest collection of Terriers to choose from. He liked most the Soft Coated Wheaten Ch Wheaten Island's Lord Humphrey, born in Sweden but owned by Marika Berg-Karhunen and Pirita Flink in Finland. This dog is again a little over two years old and so just came into his bloom. His previous achievements include the Junior Winner title at the World Show in Poland last year, so again, a name to remember for the future.

The Spitz Group is a very big and tough group in Scandinavia with a lot of breeds not so well known in other countries. The experienced Finnish All Breed judge Paavo Mattila is naturally familiar with all these, but still he chose as his final four very cosmopolitan dogs. The winner came from Denmark, the American Akita Ch Redwitch Turning Heads, who of course comes from David Killilea's famous strain in UK. This handsome dog has been a consistent winner in Denmark, but as far as I know, this was his first visit to Finland. He is owned by Anders Johansen and Heidi Thomsen.

The Scenthound Group was bigger than usual because some rare continental hound breeds have been imported to Finland lately, and in this main show of course all those were present. Still the winner was representing a well-known established breed from a well-known experienced breeder, Eeva Resko's latest Beagle star, the bitch Daragoj Heaven Can Wait. The Beagles have to be qualified in the field to get the Ch title, so the doesn't have that, but she was European Winner last year. Eeva was handling the bitch herself on Saturday, but hurt her leg and was unable to walk on Sunday, so she had to trust her bitch to Molli Nyman's capable hands

The Pointing Gundog Group was judged by the Finnish judge Jorma Silta, for whom this was his last show before retirement. He was decorated both by the Kennel Club and the Continental Pointer Club and they thanked him for all the work he has done for the clubs during the years. The main ring in the Winner Show is certainly the most appropriate and festive place for this kind of gesture of consideration. Jorma Silta was certainly pleased to find a new young dog of his favourite breed, German Shorthaired Pointer, to put up as his Group winner. This 2.5 years old dog Charleswood Illusion, o. Arja Manelius, has only been shown three times before this. He had a CC already, so now he has another one. But what is more important usually for the owners of this breed, he is already qualified in the field trials, and so is likely to get the full Ch title in the future.

Best Veteran in Show was judged by Bo Skalin, the Swedish multi-breed judge who found the love of his life in Finland and is now living here with his Finnish wife. On Saturday it was no surprise, that the red Australian Terrier Int Ch Bluepepper's Thunder King won once again, and on Sunday the winner was another well-known and successful oldie, the Miniature Poodle Int Ch Soltar's Beautiful Stranger. So it was a double for both the owners of these dogs, as Marjo Ahola also won Best Breeder's group with her Bluepepper Aussies, while Jukka Lillstrang is the breeder of both the Poodle and the Group winning Italian Greyhound. On Sunday the Best Breeder's Group was a team of Smooth Collies from Nina Seppälä, kennel Dandinas.



**BIS, Lhasa Apso, Ch Chic Choix Sky's the Limit**



**BIS 2, Dachshund Standard Wire Hair Minelan Balsami**



**BIS3, English Springer Spaniel Ch Jefferson de los Tres Robles,**



**BIS 4, Italian Greyhound, Int Ch Soltar's Unbelievable**