

Crufts '09..... Absolutely Awesome!!!

On 24 February, the family and I left home - off to Crufts. We had a week's stop in Bangkok, on leaving, my bag was already plastered in heavy stickers. Arriving in England was absolutely freezing. I don't think any one dared to take off thermals or jackets. When 4 March finally came we headed out early to the NEC Centre, where Crufts is held. Such an amazing place to be. For the first 3 days we did sooo much shopping and watched Group judging. Throughout these days I was able to catch up with Clare from Australia, Wesley from South Africa and even ran into and spent nearly every remaining minute with fellow New Zealander Samantha Calvert.

On the 5th mum and I left for a new motel where all the juniors would be. That evening we had the formal evening meal. Mum spent most of the afternoon trying to teach me how to walk in high heels, what a mission!! The evening meal was lots of fun, I think once again we had the loudest table. I found one of the most nervous moments was walking up to the stage without falling over my heels! What a relief that my speech had gone well and I even made it back to our table without falling over.

On Saturday was Gundog judging. I didn't see any off my family as they were away watching the Springers (typical) and I found myself in another hall watching Pointers all day. I was fortunate enough to run into some friends from last time and they found a dog from Scotland for me to show. Her name was Eve, a puppy bitch. We ended up getting 5th out of 15, so that was awesome. After Gundog judging only the juniors were left in the huge arena, for the practise session. Although we only went through it once we didn't get back till 11 pm. Everybody was tired and went straight off to bed.

Sunday could not have come sooner. We were up at 5.30. I spent most of the morning getting stabbed by mum's hairclips or drowned by the endless amounts of hairspray ... There was no way that hair-do was coming out! At 8am all the juniors were waiting impatiently by their benches for their dogs. And then came the Pointers, 9 of them all supplied by the same lady. My pointer was a 10-year-old black and white dog named Gravy. What a cool dude!! His tail never stopped wagging and his intentions were always to please. Our first round started at 9 am. It was once again such a proud moment running in and hearing your country's name called out. When it was my and Gravy's turn was, things could not have gone better. Gravy stood so well and never moved. We flew around the ring and I even got chills up my spine.

When it came to the swap part I was sad to leave Gravy. I was given a 2-year-old PBGV named Shardae. Lining back up to go into the arena was more nerve racking as I had been with Shardae for such a small amount of time. When we were told to GO! (always had to be on que) I think we were both a little too excited, whilst Shardae bounced a step or two, I lost my shoe! Leaving it in the main arena of Crufts, Shardae and I kept running and fortunately a grumpy looking steward brought it back to me. Some didn't even realise it was my shoe thankfully. When it came to our turn in front of the judge, it became a bit of a sprint to get Shardae stacked before being told to go to the back of the line, fortunately we got there and managed to get a nice wee pose in there too. Before we were excused from the ring a big cheer was let up from people in the stand supporting their country. The whole arena was filled with Hillary Calvert's NZ (once famous Canterbury) call. All alone she drowned out everyone's attempts, Go Hillary!

It was then a very long exaggerated 5-hour wait until we were back in the ring. The arena was quickly filling for Best in Show. And at 4.30 pm when we were back in the ring, the arena couldn't feel much fuller. I could hardly move while the top ten was being called out. I could feel my hand shaking and my arm getting weak. I was ecstatic to hear NZ called over the loud booming speaker. As the top ten lined up in the middle of the ring, each competitor was brought out, told to stack (very quickly) and then join the end of the line. All too fast the final three were places were pointed at. 1st= Brazil, 2nd= Monaco and 3rd= NZ! Gravy was just as excited as me and was up on two feet the whole time! After the event was filled with many photos and some great times, many that will stay with me forever!

At this stage I would like to take this time to thank Keith Brown, your support here and at Crufts was amazing! You kept me calm and really gave me the words that were needed. Paul and Carolyn Robinson, once again you guys lent me an amazing and fun dog. To the NZKC for sponsoring me to go over. Lavina - thanks for the extra help behind the scenes. Sam and Hillary Calvert, I can still hear the cheering ringing through my ears. The Trevallyn Family for looking after our house and dogs and reminding me to clean my new shoes, and last but not least all of NZ for words of advice and the many well wishes.

Although it feels a little depressing being too old now to even be called a junior handler, I would like to wish the next NZ representative the very best of luck!

AMY-LEE TRAINOR



**Photos
Paula Heikkinen-Lehkonen**



Top - Amy Lee Trainor from New Zealand, above left - Clare Tyler from Australia and the winner who represented Brazil (Amongst the other competitions held in the Arena today was the International Junior Handling competition, which attracted a bumper entry of young dog handlers from all over the globe.

Over 30 entrants from different countries had to handle dogs that they had only just met, giving them the chance to showcase their natural handling abilities.

The worldwide scope of the competition was highlighted by a top three coming from Brazil, Monaco and New Zealand respectively. I would give you more information on the winner but she had the kind of name which makes you realise why Brazilians tend to shorten their names to something short and simple like Pele! (from the Crufts daily report)





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