

## POTOMAC 2017 CRITIQUES FROM PAULINE MORTIER

So many years ago I was encouraged by a wonderful mentor, the late Erik Bergishagen, to attend the LRCP in order to educate myself on Labradors. And so the trek began in 1984 where I was simply a spectator. In all the years ensuing it has been my special joy to attend, never dreaming I would be given the privilege & honor to judge Best of Breed as well as the Hunting Retriever classes, Brace, Team, and a favorite of mine, the Veterans.

It was a daunting task to get down to a final 23 out of well over 100 entries in BOB due to the exceptional quality of type & temperament & superb handling. Thanks to the hard working members of the Potomac & my wonderful stewards, who made it all go so smoothly & special thanks to the exhibitors who showed me their best & exhibited great sportsmanship.

BOB, Ch Bellwether Sweetest Taboo, is breathtaking! She never put a foot wrong & was a classic black whose lines flowed perfectly from the top of her beautiful face & expression onto a strong, level topline ending in perfect tailset with that famous wrapped otter tail. Angles fore & aft were in perfect balance allowing her to cover ground effortlessly & smoothly. In perfect coat & condition she is a dream come true for both breeder/handler Tina Barks & me. Bravo!

BOW, Dickendall Buckstone Hou's He, won it handily coming from the Am Bred dog class. A tribute to the influential line of Dickendall. He was shown to perfection & had all the attributes of head, coat & tail we seek. He demanded attention & deservedly got the win. Postscript: please to see him finish a month later at the Miami Valley LRC.

BOS, Ch Kimleigh Gucci Roll In The Moon, is a black stallion who captured my heart & attention. Strongly built & in hard condition, he smoothly drove with such power off his rear keeping that level topline flowing into the tailset right off the top. Best of all he possesses the kind expression of head that shows no coarseness. He kept it all together even when his handler grew a tad nervous knowing I was looking for my best.

Select Dog, Ch Blackwing Superslick, was splitting hairs with his 2 kennelmates that also received AOMs --- Ch Blackwing Superman & Ch Blackwing Stroke of Luck. What a coup for his breeders Mike & Lenore Hamilton to have 3 entries in BOB & all three in the running for BOB! "Superslick" exudes my idea of great type, temperament & movement that we all strive for such consistency in our breeding program. Amazing!

Select Bitch, Ch Harbor Run's I'll Have Another, is an old fashioned black that is a tad longer in loin enabling her to have superb movement. She was in perfect coat & showed her heart out & had that fetching expression not to be denied. Feminine to the core. Postscript: perusing my catalog I see that she is out of an old favorite of mine --- Ch Wiscoy's Robin.

At the end of my 23 lineup, alongside my BOB & Select Bitch, were these amazing black bitches who were in the running for consideration for BOB & will forever be remembered by me for their exceptional quality & much deserving of their AOMs: Ch Bellwether Paradocs Valley Vista, Ch Paradocs Regina Dolorem, Ch Gallivant Big Pine Sarafina on Broadway, & Ch Wiscoys Antonette.

Looking back at the catalog post judging I was pleased to see an AOM to my only chocolate, Ch Epochs Moccasin Joe, who has handily stamped his attributes on his get. He is special in any color. He & "Superslick" sandwiched my BOS "Gucci" & made for a gorgeous trio of stallions to savor & consider for more than AOMs. Other AOMs that deserved more than a second look were: Ch Nipntuck Blame It On Fame (who grew up beautifully from that 6 month old black puppy of yore); Ch Caer Bren Macallan (a super black sired by one of my all time favorites); Ch Erinhill's Significant Otter (could E. Irish Rose be back there in his pedigree?); Ch Zinfndel Langley's Big Papi (kennelmate to the popular chocolate "Timber"); & Ch Marvilla Trujillo.

Yes, I heard the ringside commentary of "where are all the yellows". Not to be forgotten with AOMs were: Ch Chablais Rendez-Vous (somewhere back in his pedigree might be the inimitable "Myrtille"); Ch Sunnydaze Running Across The Miles (presented with panache & not to be overlooked); & the UK import Am Eng Ch Farnfield Topo Gigio (already putting his stamp on the breed in limited time stateside).

Two special AOMs came from the Veteran classes: Ch Paradocs Obsidian (who has given his breeder/owner Karen Helmers a wonderful line of get to be so proud of) & my Best Veteran Ch Nipntuck Stocking Stuffer, from the 9 to 11 years class, proving it only gets better with age!

My Best Puppy, Brookstone Lightyear Out Of The Blue, from the 6 – 9 month yellow puppy dog class stole my heart. His competition that won BOS Puppy, Gallivant Call Girl gave him a run for the money from the huge 6 – 9 month black puppy bitch class. My BBE was a smart, short coupled, beautifully balanced black, Gallivant Wellington (Postscript: pleased to award him WD at Miami Valley LRC later next month).

This was my most difficult judging assignment ever! The depth of quality in Labradors presented to me is unparalleled. A memory forever to treasure! Thank you!