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A Show Puppy?

Our Guest Writer is Bill Youmans, from Midlothian, Virginia

As I walked into the warm room and saw the little rascals pulling themselves around in the padded box, a huge smile spread across my face without my even knowing it. But, as I went over to the box and their mother jumped up and wagged her tail, I knew I had to have one for my own. One little one crawled its way over to me and I picked it up. A boy, a black and rust boy. He snuggled into my hand and fell asleep. As I sat on the couch, he snuggled even more into my chest and slept and wiggled then, slept. I was curious, though. What if he was selected as a show dog?

What is the difference between a show dog and a pet dog, I asked. Her response was not much really. Breeders breed their dogs to artistically create a dog that matches a written breed standard. They study pedigrees and pictures and research stock from other breeders. When the puppies are born, they are all touched, hugged, fed and kept warm and dry. At certain ages they are evaluated for structure and movement against the breed's written standard. As the puppies grow, the ones with the best structure and movement are labeled show dogs and the others are labeled pets. It's not the pets are weak or unhealthy or poor tempered, it's the breeders are keeping the best to further their breeding programs and the rest are placed in loving homes for the rest of their lives. So with a little time away from home, a show dog becomes a pet when they finish their job of showing off the breeding program results of breeders.

I had watched my breeder train and socialize and work with the puppies and then the adults. There really wasn't any difference between a show dog and a pet dog from what I could see. Show dogs live at home and bark and play, chase balls, even chase the cats! They do have to have some special training, but not much more than a well behaved house dog. My business is building and repairing Harley Davidson motorcycles and working for the government as a Project Manager. My days are busy and I travel often. How would I be able to make sure he was at the shows and was properly trained? What if I was on a business trip and he needed to be at a show?

The more he was in my arms, I knew I was hooked whether he was a show dog or a pet dog. Watching him grow through the weeks and months were fascinating. I never even thought that little feisty dog would be so comfortable walking and playing around the bikes and equipment, but he was. His breeder kept telling me to go ahead and take him everywhere, let him get used to the busy shop and the noises. She said he'll need the socialization. Heck! He owned the place. Visiting with every customer and friend that stopped by and even chasing the cats when they came too close.

His first six months were playing and learning to stand on the table. I even learned how to stack him. He stood on counters, tables and chairs. His first experience with the leash was hilarious! Squealing and jumping around like I'd done something horrible. Made

me feel bad, but it had to be done. I had to train my Mother (who lives with me) not to feed him table scraps. He had a special diet to help him grow strong and develop muscles. He needed good exercise and fresh air every day. Not a couch potato dog to be sure!

Then came the day of his first show. As any proud dog parent, I watched as she put his show lead on his head and he settled in under her trained hand. With gentle guidance, he strutted around the ring and won his class! What a great feeling to see this little guy work like a young pro and got the job done... blue and purple ribbons. I had to learn a new language, i.e., Winner's Dog, Best of Winners, Best of Breed. Foreign names for coveted ribbons and placements.

His second show weekend was far from home and I worried if he saw me how would he react. Would he know me because he hadn't seen me for a few weeks? Would he act badly in the ring? He jumped into my arms and licked and wiggled into his favorite place, the crook of my arm. He snuggled, as he always did into my chest, and calmly looked around like a dog show pro. I was beaming with pride that this little dog had learned so much and was sure of himself. He was still my pet dog, but he had a job. He would come home and play and sleep on the bed and "work" in the shop, but he had a job. When that job was done, he would come home forever. A show puppy? Absolutely! Each one is still a loving pet and only is gone from you for a short time of their lives, then comes home forever.

Thanks, Bill, for giving us an insight as a new show dog owner and what goes into owning and training a conformation show puppy.

Congratulations to 2011 Miniature Pinscher National Specialty Best of Breed winner GCH Marlex Classic Red Glare – "Classie" and her owners Leah Monte and Armando Angelbello. Classie is handled by Armando and was bred by Carole Ann Mohr-Rio. Congratulations goes to the Best of Opposite Sex – CH Windwalker Call in the Clowns, Winners Bitch/Best of Winners/Best Bred By went to Marlex KISA Wildfire, Winners Dog went to Four Tens Echo V Copperspur and the Award of Merit Winners were Ch Pevenseys Chino Maritza (also Select Bitch), Ch Copperspurs Four Tens to Win (also Select Dog), Ch Lulin Let's Get It On at Marlex, GCH Flashfires Frozen Asset, GCH Shadowmist's Dust Bunny.

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