

## **Honesty and Education - To Wicket Or Not To Wicket**

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At a recent dog show, I made a decision, one that will affect me as a breeder for the rest of my dog showing days. I decided that from this point forward, I would request measurement on any dog that is of questionable size.

It is high time we as breeders quit deceiving ourselves and others by showing these big dogs, dogs that should be disqualified. Albeit some will finish before they go over size, however, once they are over standard.....we as responsible breeders and owners should not be in the Specials ring week in and week out with these dogs.

My recent experience was an eye opener for sure. I now know beyond a shadow of a doubt that we as breeders and exhibitors need to be more honest, with ourselves and with the judges. I also learned that there are judges out there that do not know the correct procedure for wicketing a dog, nor do they appear to know the ramifications of NOT wicketing a dog when requested to.

Recently I requested of a judge a measurement of a Special that preceded me in the ring. Commenting to the judge about his size prior to requesting the measurement, I was told..no no honey, he is 12 1/2 inches, I have one at home that is just like that. Feed him too much and he can go over, but he is 12 1/2 inches. Not deterred by her judgment, I requested the measurement anyway.

Let me tell you...if ever you could hear a pin drop at a dog show, it was the moment that the judge walked over to the exhibitor and told her a measurement had been requested on her dog. Dead silence. Why is everyone so afraid of the wicket? If the dog we have in the ring is in standard this should be a non-issue?

The exhibitor set her dog up on the table, the judge set the wicket to its proper height and moved towards the examination table. As the judge was preparing to present the wicket to the exhibitor, she slid the wicket on its side onto the table pinching the foot of the dog to be measured, causing him to jump back. Quickly the exhibitor picked up her dog and set him down at the rear of the table, obviously shaken.

The judge then proceeded to use her tape measure to show the exhibitor the height was set a 12 1/2 inches, the exhibitor nodded in agreement. The judge picked up the wicket to allow the repositioning of the dog at the front of the table. When she was ready and her dog was in position, the exhibitor nodded to the

judge to proceed. Please note: the dog was set up with its rear at a 90-degree angle and its head shoulder high. Not the correct stack for a min pin to say the least.

To everyone's horror, we watched the judge position the wicket above the dog's shoulders then drop the wicket onto the dog. Of course this action caused the dog to help and flatten himself against the table. Spectators were dumbfounded, the judge apologized to the exhibitor who once again repositioned her dog for measurement. This time the dog is visibly cowering and crouching simply unsure of what is going to happen to him next. He measures in, but let it be noted one could not fit a piece of paper between the withers and the wicket.

The judge then looks at me and says: "Sorry hon, he's in size", then proceeded to give him Best of Breed.

Being utterly aghast at the happenings in the ring, I mentioned it to the AKC Representative on site. As I recounted the morning's events the AKC Rep was also disturbed.

We had a discussion as to the correct way to measure a dog, most importantly being that a dog is to be free standing naturally not distorted or manipulated in any way by his handler and the wicket should be brought up and over from the rear, so the dog's stance is never disturbed by the presence of the wicket.

After our conversation, the AKC Rep assured me that he would be at ringside the following day to observe ring procedure and happenings.

Ring time Sunday came, again I knew I had to ask for a measurement and hope that it would be done correctly this time. The AKC Rep was ringside as promised.

When it was my turn on the table I again commented to the judge on the size of the Special that had preceded me and I asked for a measurement. The judge told me he could measure the dog but it would be a waste of time. I was so surprised by his statement I asked why he thought that. His response to me was equally surprising. He said... he already knew who his winner was and it wasn't that dog. He went on to say that it wouldn't matter if he was measured or not as he was clearly oversized. He continued by telling me that I should have faith in the judges - they knew what they were doing. When I assured him I did have faith in the judges and for that very reason I was asking for the dog to be disqualified if warranted, or settle the matter once and for all...by measuring him in. Time for conversation was over, he motioned for me to do my down and back, then

proceeded to give my Special Best of Breed and the over sized dog Best of Opposite.

When the others left the ring, I lingered behind to find out why he didn't do the measurement as I had asked. When I asked him if he thought the dog was over sized, his reply was "easily", so why then did he not do a measurement? Since he was certain the dog was oversized by his own admission, why was the dog not measured?

Unfortunately, this particular judge didn't want to take the time to measure or possibly to be known as a judge that measures. Whatever his motive for not measuring a dog he felt was obviously oversized, his choice to not award a breed ribbon vs disqualification was in my opinion a poor one.

Equally as unfortunate is the fact that the AKC Rep was disturbed to learn that while I had specifically asked for a measurement, the judge had ignored my request. The Rep told me that a judge is obligated to measure a dog if requested by another exhibitor.

So where do we go from here.....education and honesty. Shouldn't we as exhibitors take responsibility and set an example for one another.....we have a breed standard for a reason. Judges shouldn't be put in the position to have to choose between ribbons or disqualification. However, they should have the ability to (without fear of any type of retaliation) honestly wicket a dog and do what is right.