

Borzoi

Class Distinction

National specialties are exciting times that include meeting new friends, reminiscing with old friends attending educational seminars, a social hour or two, and watching the breed classes. For me there are two classes that I never miss at a national, and those are the Bred-by-Exhibitor dog and bitch classes. While the puppy classes are fun and show promise for tomorrow, and the veteran classes draw on our heartstrings, the future of the breed should be evident in the Bred-by classes.

Looking back at the Bred-by class over time, some of the great dogs and bitches have come from those classes—maybe not the next great specials, but some of the more influential stud dogs and brood bitches have been standouts in their classes in the past. I have watched this class as breeders show off what they think is the best of the dogs they have bred. Whether in the quality and the lack of it, this should be a testament of what those breeders value most in their programs.

Some people go to a national just to see the Best of Breed judging, but by doing so they miss the heart and soul of what to expect in the coming years. For me, I have seen great dogs in the

Bred-by class who were overlooked by judges who miss the essence of a breed. Sometimes the second or third place dog goes on to be a big winner and influential producer years later.

Glancing at photos from the specialties in the 1960s, before my time in the breed, you look down the lineup of the Bred-by class, and sure enough there were some of the greats getting red, yellow, or white ribbons—not blue.

As a showcase for your breeding program, in the Bred-by class should be examples of the best you have in your kennel. Often I grab my catalog to check the pedigree of a dog or bitch in this class and then rush ahead to see if the sire or dam is entered as a special. I'll start marking all the dogs I want to see just based on how well I like the entry in the Bred-by class. Sometimes it is breed type that stands out, and sometimes it can be movement, and it's even better when both are exhibited in the same dog. Later in the specials ring it is like getting a second look but using the sire or dam to verify what I noted in the earlier class.

Eventually there is only one Winners Dog or Bitch, one Best of Breed, and one Best of Opposite at any national, but hidden in the Bred-by classes are gems—some proving to be eventual winners, and others having bigger impacts in the breed through their progeny.

While the Stud Dog and Brood Bitch classes are great, it is not always the quantity of progeny but the quality of just one individual that can make a difference in the future of our breed. Breeders should use the Bred-by class to their advantage, demonstrating distinction of type in a class of the best they can breed. You never know who is watching, and sometimes the dog on the end of your lead can end up more of winner than the one at the front of the line.

—Jon Titus Steele,

jonauroal@gmail.com

Borzoi Club of America website: borzoiclubofamerica.org