

The Northern Staffordshire Bull Terrier Club (NZ)

Judge's Critique

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I would like to take the opportunity to thank the club for the wonderful opportunity to judge in New Zealand again, 21 years after my first appointment. I have travelled extensively in New Zealand for business over the years and always look forward to visiting, however to come and judge my chosen breed of dog is especially enticing.

Whilst the numbers entered today were similar to the last time I judged the breed in New Zealand all those years ago, the quality today was a leap of several quantum's and as a result there were a number of unlucky exhibits today with a number of decisions coming down to minor points. Top awards were particularly close and difficult decisions as there was enough quality in our midst to satisfy a breed purist to a high degree.

The most noticeable change across the years for me were mouths. Last time there were far too many bad mouths and some extremely bad faults in that area. Today there were only 3 dogs were I noticed dentition issues and even then they were very mild and two of them were associated with the fact that the dogs in question carried a virtuously strong under jaw that had just developed that fraction too far so therefore were easily overlooked.

Those that have either been judged by me in the past or have seen me judge will know that I place a strong emphasis on fitness for function and whether we like our breed's evolutionary foundation or not, this is a fighting breed. That being the case, for a Stafford to be well regarded by me he/she needs to be able to convince me he/she can go the distance in a fight. With this in mind, there are two issues that I identified on the day that I specifically want to mention:

1. Some dogs could have been presented in a fitter state, the Standard carries the important phrase "active and agile" which, in reality, any fighter must demonstrate and I simply do not accept that an overweight dog satisfies this phrase.
2. I noticed on a small number of exhibits quite small "slitty" nostrils. I would definitely breed away from this trait if I had it in any of my dogs and recommend the same to those who do have this. When a Stafford has hold of his foe in a fight he would surely not be able to breathe effectively through such nostrils and almost certainly would be a candidate for unconsciousness very quickly in that situation. This is very definitely a serious soundness issue in my opinion.

I thoroughly enjoyed my day with the members and exhibitors and want to thank them all for the manner in which they accepted the decisions made. Particular mention goes to some that I am aware travelled long distances to exhibit, thank you for making the effort.

I look forward to coming back again one day to see your dogs again.

Baby Puppy Dog (1 entered, 0 absent)

1. Westwood Django Unchained – 3½ month old black brindle. A well presented young lad that shows a pleasant compact construction with ample bone. At this stage of his development his head would need to come on a little more for me, but at this age that is entirely probable. He has lovely ears and expression now, so if it does strengthen I suspect he could end up very nice in this department. Has a great depth of chest coupled up as required to a good rear and moved quite well for one so young.

Puppy Dog (1 entered, 0 absent)

1. Ashbek Phatboy Slim – 9 month old brindle. Pleasant head with good strong muzzle, nicely developed cheeks, good ears well set on, however eyes lacking the real roundness we really want to see which detracts from the overall picture of what otherwise is a nice head. Lovely muscular neck resting on well laid shoulders. Good chest with plenty of heart room but a whisker too long in the coupling for me upsetting the overall balance of the dog. Well angulated rear, slightly notchy tail, not moving away that well but good in profile and coming in.

Junior Dog (7 entered, 1 absent)

1. Kaylajaz Gangsta Nothin On U – 12 month old black brindle with extensive white marking. Good strong young dog of correct size with a headpiece of the highest order. Excellent through the muzzle with pronounced stop, excellent skull and cheeks housing beautifully dark round eyes. Lovely ears finishing off the head to give great expression. Good strong neck settling into shoulders that if I had to be really picky may be just a tad upright, bone a plenty. Very good strong and deep chest with a lovely short coupling connecting to a well angulated rear. Correct tail set and carriage. Moved really well in all directions and held his topline perfectly in doing so. A really nice specimen of the breed, handled very well and a pleasure to award Dog CC and Best In Show.
2. Challenger Major Tom – 17 month old red with white chest. Good sized dog showing plenty of strength and pleasantly compact. A lovely head again with a good strong muzzle, good bite, nicely shaped skull, lovely sized well set ears. Comparing to the boy in front of him slightly shallower in stop and not quite as round in eye which became a key decision point in the end. Well angulated front with plenty of bone and good strong feet. Lovely ribbing with good short coupling bring a well angulated rear together to provide a lovely balanced outline. Tail correctly set and carried, moved well in profile and inwards.
3. Battleaxe Dust Storm – 19 month old black brindle with white. Quite similar to number 1 in most departments right down to colour and white markings. In fact, I could almost do a copy and paste of the critique above. Could have pushed for a higher placing if he was more settled leaving me querying if there was a temperament issue in play. I also would have liked him to have been presented better as he was a little soft to the touch, including trimming of a very furry tail. In fact, I found myself wondering if the two of them were closely related such were the similarities throughout. His greatest asset is his head which is very comparable to the class winner in all ways.

Intermediate Dog (2 entered, 1 absent)

1. Ch Kaylajaz Ace of Spades – 2½ year old black brindle. Head showing all the correct structural proportions with strong muzzle, good bite, strong stop aiding good eye shape with

nice dark eyes. Good strong skull with lovely sized well set rose ears. Muscular neck of correct length, slightly upright in shoulder, nicely boned. Very well ribbed with good depth, a real asset for this boy, good strong coupling. The topline is level except that his haunch bone seems to be slightly pronounced in profile although the rear is very well angulated from the hip down. Tail set slightly low but carried well. Moved well in all directions. Reserve Challenge Dog.

New Zealand Bred Dog (7 entered, 1 absent)

1. Takoda Halos Amulet – 2½ year old black brindle standing right at the top of the standard. Presented as a well balanced dog creating a pleasing picture in profile. Very strong head, probably a bit stronger than I usually prefer, with a fantastic expression created by well sized round dark eyes and very well set rose ears of perfect size for this head. Well boned forequarters of reasonable angulation. Great ribbing of good depth. A whisker long in coupling with level topline, well angulated rear, well set and carried tail. Moved well.
2. Ch Westwood Amarilla Moonshine – 5½ year old. This dog is one of those that challenges judges to focus on the virtues as he is not without fault but it is his virtues on balance that got him where he is today. Lets start with his cracking head which I see as being perfect apart from a very mild dentition fault that I was prepared to overlook in the overall scheme as it is, after all, a result of his strength of underjaw. Strong muzzle, excellent stop with lovely round dark eyes, well set on and carried ears. Excellent front, extremely well boned great ribbing and short coupling with a level topline. Well angulated rear, well set on and carried tail. Movement away is a weakness on this boy but in profile and coming in is very good.
3. Sladestaff Didgeridoo – 3¼ year old black brindle. Placed today on the qualities of his head which is amongst the best on the day. If the rest of the dog had the qualities of the head then the sky may have been the limit for this boy but unfortunately the overall picture is spoilt by being out of balance due to a long coupling which may also be contributing to a slight loss of topline on the move. Forequarters and bone is very good as is the depth of chest, although ribbing could be longer. Good hindquarters and tail. Moved well.

Veteran Dog (2 entered, 1 absent)

1. Sup Ch Rojeme Pop Gun – 8¼ year old brindle of obvious quality who pushed the CC and Reserve CC exhibits all the way to top honours. I would have loved to seen this dog in his prime although he is carrying his 8 years extremely well. This dog carries the right proportions just about everywhere, excellent head in every way, great bone, good feet, ribbing just about perfect, good short coupling. Its only when you get to the rear that this dog is not close to perfection but even then its only slightly off and it's the fact that he carries his tail a little high that points this out. However, he moves very well.

Open Dog (5 entered, 1 absent)

1. Ch Kaylajaz Just A Swagga – 4 year old black brindle. Another one that came under consideration for the top awards. Presented in the hard, fit condition I look for with a very pleasant head showing lovely expression. Good dark round eyes and perfectly placed and carried ears forming a great picture. Good strong muzzle which housed a very minor dentition fault related to his strong underjaw, so fault forgiven. Well angulated forequarters

which demonstrated excellent bone, well ribbed, correct coupling showing as a well balanced dog. A whisker straight in the rear, good tail correctly carried. Moved well.

2. Ch Oakstaff Jetstream – 5 year old. Very similar to the boy in front of him but standing second today because he didn't look quite as balanced, and this is probably due to a slightly longer coupling and slightly shorter neck. Nevertheless this dog has another cracking head very close in structure to the winner with the exception of his ears which were a bit larger. Excellent bone and well angulated at both ends. Level topline on the stack but tends to lose it a bit on the move, Good tail. Moved well.
3. NZ Ch Highbourne Entrepreneur (Imp Aust) – 3¾ year old black brindle with white blaze. This is a good quality Stafford but, for me, simply too big, which is one major reason why he stands third today. My assessment is that he is at least an inch over Standard and possibly more. A good strong head that matches his size with lovely round dark eye, excellent muzzle, beautiful well set and carried rose ears, providing great expression. Strong muscular neck sitting on correctly laid shoulders and as could be expected in a dog of this size, excellent bone. Well ribbed back, although I'd like just a little more depth of brisket. Well angulated rear, level topline and moved well.

Baby Puppy Bitch (4 entered, 0 absent)

1. Colken Khethiwe – 3 month old brindle pied. A very well put together young girl showing plenty of promise. Whilst her head is a little weak at this stage as is often the case with young bitches I could see a good sound structure all the same, so I would expect it to come on. Her body is fantastic already, good bone, lovely ribbing, excellent chest, level topline, closely coupled. Angulation good both ends, moved well.
2. Ironheart Dart – 3½ month old black brindle with white markings. Very similar to the winner in all ways, with a slightly weaker head which, again, I would expect to come on. This was the difference between the 2 of them today. Another very nice body ribbing excellent, perhaps slightly longer in the coupling than the winner. Good bone, well angulated and moved well.
3. Westwood Annie Oakley - 3½ month old brindle. Another nicely constructed young girl, slightly lighter in build than those ahead of her but well constructed all the same, with everything in harmony presenting as a well balanced bitch.

Puppy Bitch (1 entered, 0 absent)

1. Takoda Precious Poppy At Anevay – 10 month old black brindle. Not happy today and possibly carrying a little too much weight this was nevertheless a well put together bitch. Very good yet feminine head. Good dark round eyes, strong muzzle, good bite. Ears not being used today so difficult to assess but may be a little high set but a good size. Lovely strong neck, well angulated front and rear, good bone. Very well ribbed with a good coupling, level topline. Moved well out and across but pulled coming in so hard to assess properly.

Junior Bitch (5 entered, 1 absent)

1. Takoda Dream Weaver – 17 month old black brindle with white chest fleck. Very well presented young girl with an absolutely stunning head showing great expression, clearly her greatest attribute and worthy to be used as a demonstration of what a Stafford bitch head

should look like in all departments. Good length muscular neck, well laid shoulders, very good bone. Well ribbed, a little long in the coupling upsetting the balance slightly, held level at all time. Well angulated rear. Good tail set and carriage. Moved well.

2. Battleaxe Harmony Storm – 19 month old. Very similar to the girl ahead of her today in all ways and another cracking head. The essential difference between the two is the fact that this girl has a slightly shorter muzzle and for my preference not as well balanced as the girl ahead of her. Notwithstanding this finer differentiating detail this remains a very good head. Very good in the body, coupling department, good bone with correctly laid shoulders. I would [refer a bit more angulation in the rear. Moved very well.
3. Aldoushire Got The Force – 15 month old black brindle pied. Presented in very fit form, looking quite athletic. Another excellent head piece and competing strongly with both ahead of her in this area. Where she has been beaten today is in the body stakes. Whilst she is well constructed her competition carried better substance throughout their bodies. This girl is a whisker longer also upsetting the correct balanced view that I prefer. Moved well.

Intermediate Bitch (5 entered, 1 absent)

1. Anevay Fire Dancer – 2¼ year old red red. Caught my eye as soon as she entered the ring with a “look at me” presence about her, presented in precisely the condition I believe a Stafford should be shown in. Excellent head with near perfect round dark eyes. Good strong muzzle, correct bite, well placed and carried ears, good stop. Muscled to perfection throughout, she gives the impression she could go all day long without tiring. Good strong bone, excellent feet. Ribbed very well, good coupling holding a level topline throughout. Well set pump handle tail, moved well in all directions. Challenge bitch and pushed the Dog CC winner all the way in taking Runner Up to Best in Show.
2. Ch Warefare Enchanted Princess – 2¾ year old brindle with white markings. Another very nice bitch indeed. With a lovely strong feminine head. Well placed dark round eyes, good strong muzzle, good bite. Well placed and carried ears, perhaps just a whisker too big for this head, but that’s being picky. Nice strong muscular neck sitting very well into correctly laid shoulders. Ribbing very good, coupling a whisker longer than the girl ahead of her but a level topline all the same. Correct rear angulation and tail. Moved well.
3. Westwood Delta Dedazzler – 2¼ year old black brindle. Beaten today due to a balance issue which appears to be in the coupling area. This girl either needs to be slightly taller or shorter to compete with the balance of those ahead of her. That said she has a very pleasant head that competed well with some of the lovely heads seen today. Good strong muzzle, correct bite, nicely placed eyes of correct colouring, nicely placed and carried ears, good muscular neck, adequate bone and well constructed front. Good ribbing, level topline. Would like to see slightly better angulation down back. Correct pump handle tail. A little erratic moving away but good in other directions.

New Zealand Bred Bitch (4 entered, 2 absent)

1. Ch Aldoushire Burlesque Babe – 6½ year old black brindle with white blaze. Yet another of these lovely heads I am seeing today, in fact reminding me of the Challenge Dog a lot in this department. Expression amongst the best on the day set up by lovely dark round eyes and near perfect ears in all ways. Nice strong muzzle with good bite and excellent stop. Correct

length muscular neck. Shoulders a little upright on this girl, great bone. Well ribbed, good coupling and well angulated rear. Good tail. Moved well.

2. Shadowstaff Diamond Dare – 2 year old black brindle. Lost out today to the girl ahead of her in the head department. Whilst her head is well put together, it lacks the overall strength of the competition which is the style that I usually prefer. Good strong neck, well angulated both ends and probably the best feet of the day. Well ribbed, correct in the coupling and a good level topline. Lovely well set pump handle tail. Moved well all ways.

Veteran Bitch (2 entered, 0 absent)

1. NZ Ch Valglo Belle Of The Ball (Imp UK) – 8¾ year old. A quality bitch holding her age very well. Her head is of the highest order, showing great strength throughout whilst still very clearly one belonging to a bitch. Her eyes in particular are of the highest quality and when combining with lovely well set and carried ears gives great expression. Good strong muzzle and bite. Lovely muscular neck sitting on well laid shoulders. Good bone. Well ribbed. A whisker long in the coupling and a little straight in the rear. Level topline, well set and carried tail. Moved well.
2. Exile Turn The Page – 7 year old brindle with white markings. Beaten today by the lovely head on the bitch ahead of her, this girl's head is nevertheless not a bad one just lighter in features for my preference. Good neck, well laid shoulders, good bone. Feet could be tighter. Very well ribbed but perhaps a tad long in back, level topline. Well angulated rear. Tail set is a little low but carried well. Moved well.

Open Bitch (3 entered, 1 absent)

1. Ch Aldoushire Fairest Of Th Ball – 2¾ year old black brindle. Fantastically presented bitch of high quality. Loved her head, strong yet feminine, of the correct proportions and structure in every department giving rise to excellent expression. Good strong muscular neck of correct length. Great angulation both ends, excellent bone. Nice tidy feet. Excellent ribbing and a chest that came to hand as required, great strong level topline despite perhaps being just a whisker long in the coupling. Well set and carried tail, one of the best movers of the day. A great package to round out the day. Reserve Challenge bitch.
2. Ch Battleaxe Surestorm Lass - 5¼ year old black brindle. One of the closest decisions of the day as this is another quality bitch. Lovely strong head yet again. As was the case in the Junior class the difference between the two is the fact that this girl has a slightly shorter muzzle and purely on my preference for the balance of the heads is where this class was decided. This girl has a great body, excellent bone, ribbed very well, correct angulation front and rear. Due to her shorter stature, she appears a little out of balance but this is not confirmed when examining her structure as her coupling is correct, so it is purely a visual perception that wouldn't be there is she was half an inch taller. Moved well.