

# The Importance of Good Sportsmanship

by Ron Williams

**W**hen I was first introduced to the world of showing dogs, I had no idea of the complexity of this sport. I was in my mid-twenties and very active participating in other sports. Therefore, success in this “so-called-sport” should be automatic...NOT!

I quickly found out that being an athlete wasn't the key to success! Whether the dog is of high or medium quality, you still need to know what to do with it. You need to know how to show off their attributes and hide their faults. You need to know what to do when your dog surprises you and doesn't behave as they do every time at home.

I strongly believe most people entering the world of dog showing find out very quickly, as I did, how complex handling a dog can be. Many of these folks don't have access to classes, or knowledgeable and good-hearted friends who are ring savvy. In some breeds, a professional handler friend told me, if you're not in the clubs, or in someone's camp, you're rarely spoken to. He proceeded to say the Borzoi ring is a joy, because there's a general love for the breed and respect for each other. I agreed.

I was lucky to have access to advantages that many do not. I was introduced to dog shows by Dr. Alfred Edlin, a breeder/judge. We went to handling classes during the winter. In the warmer months we rotated classes at the homes of people like Barbara Skinner, Carol Kubiak Zamora, Angela and Peter San Palo, Jim Heard and the late Barry Ellison. At these classes we evaluated the dogs and handlers and went through actual ring situations. We even video taped some of the classes and studied them afterwards over coffee and pastries. For a rookie like me, this was such a valuable and wonderful experience.

Still, the best experience is the ring! In my early days, Fred had told me to watch certain handlers in the ring. Notice how they handle temporary misbehaving dogs and how they get the most out of their dogs. You'll also notice, they'll do a fair amount of winning or placements. I

always had someone at ringside to answer any questions I might have. I took all this experience and knowledge into the ring with me and felt fairly comfortable until one day, Fred says “I entered two shows on the same day. You're going south and I'm going north.” SOLO??? PANIC!!!!

Without my security blanket, I nervously arrived at ringside. While waiting for judging, I suddenly started to question everything I thought I knew. Are bitches judged before dogs, what's the order of the classes, what's the name of this dog at the end of the lead? Seeing a familiar face (Karen Staudt Cartabona) eased some of my nervousness. She asked, “Where's Fred?” I told her, “I'm going solo today!” She smiled.

Once judging started, Karen made sure I knew when to go in, which I soon was to discover, was the same class as she. Then she wished me good luck! She really made me feel at ease. I took the points that day! The last thing Karen said to me was “make sure you bring a catalog back to Fred. He'd want to know the results of the show today.”

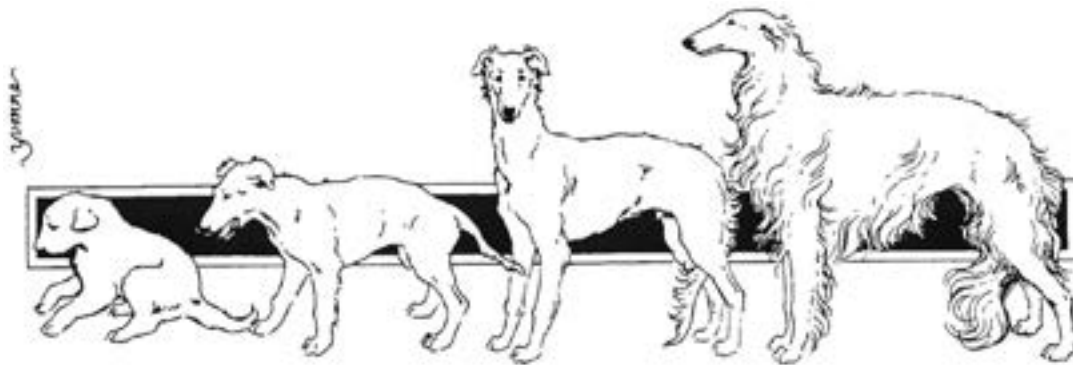
I thought my experience that day was just wonderful. A fellow competitor making sure I presented my dog the best I could. To this day I try to be a friendly and helpful competitor to all my co-exhibitors.

So you see, I've been lucky to be surrounded by people who wanted me to do the best I can do! They are all lovers of Borzoi and appreciate when a dog is presented well.

There are many new faces each year in the show ring. We as lovers of the breed need to embrace them and make them feel at home. Should we approach someone when show after show they obviously have no clue on how to present their dog? If nothing else we should at least suggest handling classes and match shows. A tactful, goodhearted approach with a smile goes a long way.

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