

## **Statement from the GSD League of Great Britain incorporating the British Regional Groups and Working Dog Branches**

### **Re GSD Best of Breed at Crufts 2016**

The GSD League condemns most strongly the manner in which the Kennel Club and the Crufts presenters have created public hysteria regarding the German Shepherd Bitch who gained Best of Breed at Crufts 2016 under breed specialist judge, Davy Hall.

With complete disregard for all of the many breed specialist judges, including highly regarded judges from the breed's country of origin, that have awarded this bitch top honours at both Kennel Club and WUSV shows, the Channel 4 coverage acted as judge, jury and hangman without any balance of reporting.

Cruaghair Catoria is a correct type to the German Shepherd Dog standard, she has a KC/BVA hip score of 13 and elbow score of 0 – these scores are well below the maximum for showing at WUSV shows, the Kennel Club have no minimum standard for showing or breeding purposes. She is a fit, healthy, family dog.

The judge, Davy Hall, of the Gayville's GSDs kennels has been an exhibitor and breeder of GSDs for many years having bred, owned, trained and handled many top winning animals and Champions including the current breed CC record holder.

After being awarded Best of Breed, Catoria was then passed by the appointed Crufts vet to certify that she was fit and healthy to enter the big ring. She had passed another vet health check 6 months earlier. Indeed, no GSD has ever failed a vet health test at a Championship Show since they were introduced as part of the KC's Breed Watch.

German Shepherd Dogs are generally shown outside and certainly very few have ever experienced anything like the Crufts Best In Show ring. This young bitch performed extremely well in her breed ring but shortly afterwards in the main arena became overwhelmed by the environment and did not show her true beauty or proper movement, she was not the only dog to react badly to the pressure of the situation. Her internationally renowned handler Craig Rice, who has handled at the top level for many years, explained what took place in the lead up to the group judging and in the main arena....

*After a foot perfect performance in the GSD Breed ring, where Tori gained Best of Breed in a high quality entry that included 2 VA rated Dogs, we were taken to do the KC appointed Vet Check. The Vet stated that there was absolutely no possible reason that he could not pass Tori as she showed no signs of bad health and her movement was not impaired in any way. This test included movement of the dog.*

*After a long wait of over 3 hours, which includes numerous forced photo shoots in the Crufts Best of Breed collection ring, we were finally abruptly told we would be entering the main Arena. This is a situation that no owner, trainer or handler can prepare for. A packed auditorium with hot lights, music, loud speakers and constant cheers and clapping is not an everyday occurrence for any dog. Unfortunately, after a further wait whilst inside the Arena, Tori had become quite agitated. I had tried to calm her by allowing her move around a little but was repeatedly told that I must not let the dog move at all. By the time we were judged Tori was in a high level of distress and was struggling to cope with the situation, which seemed to worsen after the judges rough handling, whilst checking the teeth, of a clearly stressed dog. Tori's uncharacteristic erratic behaviour has clearly given a bad impression of what I consider a GSD of the highest standard in both construction and health test results.*

German Shepherd Breeders lead the World in their attention to health testing and breeding selection and whilst they must not be complacent about any exaggerations in conformation or temperament, the breed should not be victimised in this way by the Kennel Club, the media and social media.

German Shepherd exhibitors have a viable alternative to Kennel Club shows and it is of no surprise that more and more are turning their back on traditional UK shows in favour of the WUSV style show where DNA recording, identification and health tests are pre-requisites, not afterthoughts. All dogs are graded and critiqued so that their owners and breeders are given a clear picture of what they need to do to improve in the next generation. This is a great responsibility for the judges who are trained to a high level and have to have considerable experience as breeders before they are approved.

The GSD League will continue to strive to consult with the Kennel Club on matters regarding health of the GSD and hope that our suggestion of piloting compulsory identification of all exhibits, health testing prior to confirmation of Champion title and mandatory minimum health test requirements for all breeding animals will one day become a reality.

German Shepherd Dog League

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