

## **What Makes a Champion a Special?**

***By: Sherrie Krogh (as published in the Pinscher Patter, Sept 1998)***

The word Champion in our dog world means that an AKC registered dog has gone to enough dog shows to finish to his championship. The dog was awarded 15 points, which included at least two major wins under two different judges. There needs to be at least a total of three different judges involved.

The word special is described by WEBSTER as follows: "1. Of a kind different from others; distinctive, peculiar, or unique 2. Exceptional; extraordinary 3. Highly regarded or valued."

That Webster fellow was a smart man he knew that not all champions are specials! Did you know that? If not, maybe we can think about this together. Let's start by considering the next puppy you have decided is show quality. The puppy is 10 weeks old (min pin magic number), he demonstrates promise, and you want to start showing him when he turns six months. At 10 weeks, have you evaluated your puppy for the most important qualifications, temperament and showmanship? If a dog is not outstanding in both these areas, forget the show ring. Next, does he move true, coming and going? Does he hold his topline and his tailset? Is his head pleasing and is his bite good? If a male, does he have both testicles? Does he have signs of any disqualifications? (Note: If he does, he is NOT a show quality puppy. Find him a great home on a spay/neuter contract.)

OK, your puppy has passed the 10 week test, you have taken him to training class, and he is a really wonderful showman. You go to your first show and it is all uphill from there! He is finished before you know it, and you are really thinking about a visit to the specials class. Here's where we separate the smart breeder from the NOT-so-smart breeder.

You notice we call it the specials class. Do you remember what Mr. Webster said about special? "Of a kind different from others." Last year a ton of min pins finished to their championships - not all belong in the specials class. But the GOOD "kind different from others" do belong there. Is your new champion different, or is he just RUN OF THE MILL? Can you look at your new champion and say that he is, "distinctive, unique, exceptional, extraordinary, and highly regarded?" If you can, then go for it! If you can not, then it would be better to try again with a new dog.

Maybe you do not know if you have a special, and you want to be objective and not kennel blind. What do you do? Find a dog person whom you respect and

trust, someone who has been around longer than five minutes, and ask their opinion. They do not have to be a min pin person, but they do have to have a history in our sport. Ask a judge who you think does a great job judging our breed. Go to the judge with a positive attitude and share with him/her that you are thinking about the specials class. If you ask with an open heart, they will be honest with you. If you do not want their honest opinion, DON'T ASK!

When you have all the opinions you can, then be honest with yourself. Do YOU believe that your new champion is good enough to make a mark in the specials class. If you enter him and he wins, and wins, and wins, is he a credit to the breed? If he loses, and loses, and loses, can you afford the lose? Or would it be better for the breed and your pocket book to just be thankful for the championship and leave the dog at home?

There are two times, as breeder exhibitors when we owe the breed big time. One is when we decide to show that puppy and the other is when we decide to show that champion in the specials class. Be "gut wrenchingly" honest with yourself and the breed will benefit.