

Judge Barb Williams

How long have you been judging the breed? How many times a year do you judge German Shepherds?

I have been judging since the late 1960s. I rarely accept assignments unless they are close to home, as we have four very active German Shepherds to care for and my husband is getting older. I feel it isn't fair to leave him with all the responsibility of caring for them. My last assignment was in September 2007 for the Eugene Kennel Club, the Emerald Circuit.

Are you an active breed of German Shepherd Dogs?

Yes, but on a limited basis.

Do you have a kennel name?

Santana German Shepherds

How long have you been in the breed?

Since about 1950, although I was raised with German Shepherds. Before 'jumping in' And becoming an active breeder (about 1954), I took time to learn and study all I could, and discuss and read and absorb from old-timers about the breed. I have always considered breeding a litter as a monumental and responsible undertaking, like having children of your own.

When and how did you get started?

The best thing that ever happened to me as meeting my mentor (My 'other mother,' as I call her), Ruth Schriefer of Von Schrief Shepherds fame. She was one of the most generous, loving, sharing, and kind people I have ever met. And she had great KNOWLEDGE of the BREED. She literally took me under her wing and spent endless hours answering my questions. She taught my husband and I the fine art of handling the German Shepherd. We were privileged to handle many of her wonderful Shepherds and were blessed to have purchased our beloved CH Von Schrief's Portrait ROM from her as a five week old baby. She became a Legend in the Breed and was our incomparable foundation dam.

Do you judge both all-breeds and specialties? If so, which do you prefer?

Yes, but I prefer specialties. Mainly because of the large rings provided and the quality and number of the overall entry is usually superior.

Do you have a color preference?

NO!!! As long as the pigmentation is rich and strong. I have always believed that good Shepherds come in all good colors. I particularly admire solid blacks and those with black saddles or blankets with deep, rich red pigment.

Do you find it harder to judge solid blacks? If so, why?

NO! I think they are easier to judge because the conformation of the dog, being a solid silhouette and outline, one can instantly evaluate all the qualities, as well as faults. They show up immediately, standing and moving. I have been fortunate to have found several outstanding ones in the past that I have been privileged to award 'Big Wins'.

When judging the dog, do you also judge the handler? Please elaborate if possible.

Having been a handler myself, I prefer the handler to be quietly and unobtrusively in the background. I was taught that a handler is there to showcase the dog they are presenting, NOT themselves.

And as a judge, I am simply there to see and judge the dog before me, not the 'flashy' performance of a handler.

I would actually prefer, if possible, that all the dogs come in the ring all by themselves, and set themselves up and gait around. Not possible, I know.

Some handlers distract from the dog with their antics and just get in the way of a dog's performance.

I require a handler be polite and respectful, so I can return the favor; and that they follow my requests for how the dog is presented and moved. I truly dislike having a handler being mainly concerned about giving directions to double-handlers and making lots of motions and calling out vocal orders – drawing attention to themselves and away from the dog they are supposed to be presenting.

I was taught and I believe that the handler, alone, is the one who should get the performance out of the dog, not from those racing, yelling wildly outside the ring.

What importance do you place on missing teeth?

I believe that a Specialty Judge of any breed owes that breed a special responsibility. In my opinion, a specialty judge should know which faults are prominent in their breed and should use that knowledge also, as well as the standard. For instance, if I have an entry and start seeing missing teeth in several of them, and I am aware that missing teeth are becoming a serious breed issue, then I would penalize the fault to a stronger degree. If I had a dog or bitch that I preferred over others that had a missing #1 or #2 premolar, and the instance of missing teeth was relatively low in the breed, I would give that dog or bitch a little leeway.

Missing teeth are a fault and certainly must be seriously taken into consideration, along with bites and small teeth widely spaced. In working/herding breeds, full dentition and ability to bite and grasp and hold are VERY important. Nothing to be taken lightly. But we are always in a balancing act when judging, weighing faults and virtues against each other.

It is also always more difficult when a dentition fault involves a male, as he will have more generally a much greater influence on the breed than a female. So all of that must be taken into consideration. Nothing is simply black and white.

Judging involves all the years of accumulated experience and all we have learned, all the Shepherds we have bred and owned and shown and all the others we have seen over the years – all that information is stored away in our minds and memory and hearts. That is what we should bring with us into the ring.

Please discuss temperament in the ring today. Has it improved? Declined? Please explain.

It has CHANGED quite dramatically in the past 50-plus years I have been involved with the breed. The GSD was mainly from German import lines as well as American breeds, and bred back and forth with each other. The GSD breed was for a long time exhibited in the working group with Dobies and Rotties and Danes and Boxers – breeds which were all considered very TOUGH and protective, not to be casually approached or 'handled.' They demanded RESPECT and the judges often did not ever touch the dogs. The handlers showed the mouth (dentition) and did so quite professionally. The judge instructed the handlers to get a firm hold on the dogs' head when they examined the male's testicles, and when they ran their hands firmly down the tail to look for fused vertebrae (which used to be a disqualifying fault).

We never just ran up to one another if one of us had our Shepherds with us. We stopped a respectable two or three feet away and talked. The Shepherds were, over time, gradually

bred for a softer, less defensive, more generic temperament so they could be sold as pets without concern and that they could be expected to go to handlers homes and on show circuits without concern. I still prefer the Protective 'Guard and Defend' ones myself. One last point: In the time when I came into showing GSDs in conformation, the early 1950s, most of us who exhibited our Shepherds were breeder/owner/handlers. The Guard/Defend/Protect temperament was much in evidence, partially due to our Shepherds natural inclination to protect. Naturally, with pro handlers assuming so much of the handling today, the Shepherds they handle are not so much 'on guard.'

Do you prefer a dog be shown on a loose lead?

YES!!!!!!!!!!!!

How would you rate the following in sequence of importance? (on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the best).

Coming/Going: **7**

Sidegait: **8**

Temperament: **10**

Teeth: **6**

Coat: **3**

Pasterns, hocks, feet:

Pigment: **4**

Structure: **9** (which actually includes, in my opinion, feet, pasterns and hocks)

Shoulder/Reach: **9**

Attitude: **2**

In your opinion, should double-handling be allowed? Please explain.

I do not mind anyone quietly, and without disturbing others, including the other dogs in the ring, getting their own dog's attention by simply showing themselves to the dog. I am very against the bells, whistles and calling dogs out by name.

I think the Germans have a good method with the roped off double-handlers ring outside the main ring, where they can run without running over others.

Do you feel more emphasis should be put on the total package and less on movement?

To me, the total package IS a dog with Very Good to Excellent Structure and Movement, combined in One Total Package. Otherwise, you can have a bitchy male going like a coyote, but unworthy of taking the breed on into the future with his progeny. You can also have a narrow-bodied female, over-refined with hocks flat on the ground, going around like a hyped-up rabbit, who also has little to give the breed. We are supposed to be Specialists of our breed and judging strictly for the qualities that can improve our breed in future generations, sired and whelped from those we are judging on their ability – or lack thereof – to offer a significant contribution of their genes to future generations. We are the Guardians of the Breed Standard – or should be.

I think EDUCATION on correct movement for the GSD Breed is sorely needed!!! The GSD should move easily, covering the maximum amount of ground with the least amount of effort. This requires a shoulder to open and let that foreleg move out straight and far and close to the ground – not up in the air, which is what happens with one which opens from the elbow, not the shoulder, giving a scrambling action.

The correct moving GSD does NOT have to move their legs faster and faster to increase speed. They simply open up further in the front, as the hindquarter drives up farther underneath them and produces the power through the level topline, into the forequarter, to move their body over the ground in a flat arc.

It is a beautiful, rhythmic gait that belongs to the GSD breed alone. They should also run on their footpads, not on their pasterns and/or hocks. When you have one that is correctly put together to achieve this Standard gait, then you usually have one of correct proportions and correct structure, so it is the TOTAL package. One without the other leaves much lacking in the value of their producing ability for future generations.

Do you have a pet peeve about anything owners or handlers do concerning the showing of dogs? (Do you have any suggestions for owners or handlers regarding anything they should NEVER do when showing under you?)

I just ask that everyone is polite and courteous to me and to each other. That we all show respect to each other and the dogs. I will not allow a handler to question my decisions in the ring, or make faces, or exaggerated facial movements of lifted eyebrows or throwing up their hands to the Heavens, encouraging their followers to act the same, or generally acting like unruly, undisciplined children. After the show, they can ask me anything they like and disagree with me til the cows come home.

Do you have any suggestions for owners or handlers regarding anything they should ALWAYS do when showing under you?

Simply take your handling task seriously and act considerately toward your fellow handlers – and always behave professionally, and I shall do the same.

Do you have advice for people who are relatively new to showing and/or breeding?

Watch the Best! Study them and seek to be better than they are. Learn your breed from the feet on UP, and nose back to tail!! ASK QUESTIONS and keep asking until you get a satisfactory answer!

Any final comments?

I think breeders need to concentrate on improving the forequarters of our Shepherds. Very good to excellent forequarters have become very RARE today.

They must certainly concentrate on getting the hock action back to normal, so the Shepherds don't move with their hocks flat on the ground. The flat-hock movers would find it very difficult to herd or work over rough terrain with their hocks landing on the uneven ground or rocks, etc. If they were required to work on any surface other than those that are smooth, level, or non-abrasive, they would have torn and bloody hocks. After all, this is a WORKING breed!

I believe one must LOVE the breed they judge. And . . . as the late Lloyd Bracket said, "You have to know what a good pie tastes like before you can bake one." To which I can add, "You have to know what a GOOD Shepherd looks like before you can judge one."