

Judge Joe Bihari

How long have you been judging the breed? How many times a year do you judge German Shepherds? About 25 years. This varies; some years, I judge 3 – 4 shows and other years, I judge only 1 or 2 shows.

Are you an active breeder of German Shepherd Dogs? Do you have a kennel name? Yes. Bihari Shepherds.

How long have you been in the breed? When and how did you get started?

I have been in the breed for over 55 years. I purchased my first German Shepherd Dog when I was a young man in Hungary. My first GSD was a sable male named Spitosh (“my pal” or “my buddy”). He was a Czech import. Spitosh was trained in both obedience and protection.

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

I judge only specialties.

Do you have a color preference?

Black and reddish tan.

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

No. To me, it is structure, movement, temperament and first impression regardless of color. However, it may take more effort to see the motion of a solid black against a dark background. This is why at the National we have a white background.

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

No way! That would be a no-no! However, a good handler can present the dog better for the owner. As the handler is presenting the dog, he/she can bring the best out of the dog. This is the reason owners pay them—to bring the best out of the dog.

What importance do you place on missing teeth?

Missing teeth is a very important issue. If a P1 is missing, it is not a big thing. When you have good movement, beautiful structure and excellent temperament and if two dogs are very close; you are going to put emphasis on the missing teeth. This is because it is an inadequacy—they are going to produce missing teeth.

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

Oh, it has improved tremendously since we included the loose lead examination.

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

I prefer a dog to be shown on both a loose and tight lead. The dog will give you a different presentation each time. Certain dogs look better on a tight lead. I want to see it both ways. I tell handlers: “Take it twice around; once your way and the second time my way with a loose lead.”

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

Coming/Going: It should be correct.

Sidegait: The final analysis of the structure, harmonious (balanced) and suspended.

Temperament: Correct

Teeth: Prefer a full mouth, but a missing first may be okay.

Coat: But it should be a correct double coat.

Pasterns, hocks, feet: It’s part of the front assembly.

Pigment: Rich is better.

Structure: Should be proportionate and correct. The first impression should show correct proportion and structure.

Shoulder/Reach: Should be outreaching, without going down or up. You cannot have a

dog that moves as though a plane lands or takes off. A dog should not go upward or downward, they should go forward.

Attitude: You can have the most beautifully structured dog, but without attitude, they won't win. They need the attitude to use their parts properly. They have to have a desire to work. They have to be motivated, too (see below).

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

Double handling should not be allowed, but motivation should be allowed. Again, I don't count double handling as double handling. I don't know who created that term. It's wrong! It's not double handling - it's motivation! The beagle won't run in the brushes if there's no rabbit there. The retriever won't go into the water without seeing the duck that is shot and falling. It's genetic! The Shepherd has no reason to go around, around, around without encouragement to go! Shepherds are genetically created to connect to the human race. They love people. It's motivation mostly.

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

No. The movement is the final decision. This is when the judge is pointing the finger! The total package is created by movement. Don't forget the whole dog—the total package, but without movement/motion you can't have the total package. Temperament, first impression, attitude, condition, and movement together - that is the total dog. All the parts make up the total package.

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?)

Don't try to dictate to me in the ring! I know what some try to do! I can read them and they try to persuade me that I should do that and not what I want to do. I hate that! Don't enter progeny from my breeding or from out of my stud dogs when I am judging!

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

Present dogs that are in perfect condition, well-trained and well-presented.

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

1. Learn more and more about the breed.
2. Seek and take advice about the breed from knowledgeable people.
3. Get the handler who will tell the truth (facts) about your dog.

Any final comments?

The biggest problem we have with beginners is that they think they know enough. But they don't know what they don't know. Everyone would be better if they would understand they need to listen to someone successful with years and years of experience. They are just starting to go through what the experienced person already has knowledge about. Beginners should be involved with people who can teach them!