

Judge Laurie Telfair

How long have you been judging the breed? How many times a year do you judge German Shepherds? Since 2001. Two or three times a year, usually at all breeds

Are you an active breeder of German Shepherd Dogs? Do you have a kennel name ?

We, my longtime friend Pat Butcher and I, will probably not breed another litter. My kennel name is Tela and Pat's is Carwin. Most of our dogs are under the Carwin prefix but we registered Carwin-Tela.

How long have you been in the breed? When and how did you get started? Since about 1956. When I was a kid, an AKC licensed handler moved into our neighborhood and I hung out there. We got a GSD for me to show.

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

I mostly judge all breeds. I don't have a judging preference.

Do you have a color preference?

I love sables and black and reds. My least favorite is bi-color or black. However, I try very hard not to pay attention to color in the ring as color has little to do with structure.

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

No, blacks present a very distinct outline visually. And your hands verify substance and structure.

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

A well presented dog is easier to evaluate. And a handler's job is to accentuate the positive and disguise the negative so a dog with an inept handler is at a disadvantage. If a handler repeatedly refused to show a dog to me at the speed and manner that I require, I would probably penalize the dog for the handler's error.

What importance do you place on missing teeth?

The standard specifies that any missing teeth other than the first pre-molars is a serious fault so I am required to view missing teeth as a serious fault.

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

I think temperament has improved considerably since the early 1970s (which has been the period that I have been most active in showing.) I think the emphasis the parent club has placed on temperament, by asking judges to do a temperament test, has been a major factor in breeders working to improve temperament. That said, I also think that a judge who can't spot bad temperament without a test doesn't know enough about dogs to be judging.

Do you prefer a dog to be shown on a loose lead? Absolutely. Loose lead and moderate speed.

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

Coming/Going: 6

Sidegait: 7

Temperament: 10

Teeth: 3

Coat: 1

Pasterns, hocks, feet: 4

Pigment: 2

Structure: 9
Shoulder/Reach: 8
Attitude: 5

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

No. If it were officially allowed, it would be even more outrageous than it is now. I don't care if owners attract the dog's attention while it is standing to get the ears up, though ideally the dog would be baiting to the handler. But too often, the dog gets frantic trying to get to the owner and looks like a fruitcake. Double handling while the dog is moving usually messes the dog up, making it pull too hard and plow into the lead, scrambling with the rear and humping its back. Not a pretty picture.

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

Movement is a part of breed type, as is outline, temperament, coat and head etc. To have a typey dog, you have to have a GSD that looks like a Shepherd and that moves like a Shepherd. One without the other says you have a dog that lacks breed type. But there are degrees of everything and there is usually a trade off. I usually don't find all the qualities I would like to reward in the same dog. My best looking dog is not the best mover, for example. I'm looking for virtues so the decision becomes which dog has the best qualities to reward. That might be the best mover. Or not.

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?)

Dogs should be clean, have short toenails and reasonably clean teeth. They need to be in proper weight. I hate to put my hands on a dog and feel a rack of bones. Feel ribs, okay. Feel hip bones and back bones, no way.

Do you have any suggestions for owners or handlers regarding anything they should ALWAYS do when showing under you ? Show them on a loose lead at a moderate speed. I want to see a dog float around the ring, not try to plow it.

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

Develop a thick skin because there will be untold numbers of disappointments along the way. Watch, read, listen and talk to people. See as many dogs as you can, especially at herding trials. Go to seminars on structure (Pat and Ed Gilbert do a nice job, as does Katie Gammill. Both seminars include GSDs in the discussion. I'm sure there are other good ones as well.) Enjoy your dogs and spend time with them. Take lots of photos because, in the end, all you have left are pictures and memories.

Any final comments? Soundness is important. A sound dog uses less energy and will hold up to an older age than will an unsound dog. Coming and going might not be important to a breeder or a judge but it's really important to the dog. A good dog will look athletic and coordinated, no matter what size of enclosure it is moving in. Watch a German Shepherd working livestock in a small round pen. He, or she, can move well in a little pen if the structure is right. You won't get that same quality of movement in a small show ring because the dog doesn't have any purpose to move in a small ring and he's not stupid. But a well put together dog will always move well no matter what the size of the ring. When the standard compares the movement to that of a well-oiled machine, I don't think they meant for a dog to look like it was put together with stretched out rubber bands and spit. One of the most disappointing things I've seen lately is some of the dogs at the last couple of Nationals, moving so fast that they are trying to break stride with their rear legs and trot with their front legs. This causes the rear legs to pump up and down like pistons and makes it look like their butt is ready to fall off. The easy, effortless, suspended trot was nowhere to be seen. What a shame.