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## The German Shepherd by Design Judges' Questionnaire

**How long have you been judging the breed? How many times a year do you judge German Shepherds? I was licensed on January 2nd of 2009 and have already judged a major specialty with more specialties on my schedule. I would really prefer to judge a maximum of 4 specialties a year; more than that can be hard on the clubs that hire you.**

**Are you an active breeder of German Shepherd Dogs? Do you have a kennel name ?**  
**Yes. My kennel name is Silstra German Shepherds.**

**How long have you been in the breed? When and how did you get started?**  
**I have had GSDs all my life - my dad had them before I was born so they have been part of my family since day one. I began in Obedience in 1967 and in Conformation in 1983.**

**Do you judge both all-breeds and specialties. If so, which do you prefer ? I will judge both but prefer the Specialty or the supported AB with a large, outdoor ring. The GSD is, above all, a gaing breed and I don't feel that the typically small AB rings afford the dog enough room to open up and move.**

**Do you have a color preference? Black and red; for me, it is SO striking and beautiful. I also love a rich sable or black and tan.**

**Do you find it harder to judge solid blacks ? If so, why? No - it's just a matter of adjusting your eye.**

**When judging the dog, do you also judge the handler? Please elaborate if possible. No. If the handler is inexperienced and not showing the dog to its advantage, I see nothing wrong with asking him or her to slow down, speed up, give more lead etc. But does it matter to me who is on the end of the lead? Absolutely not. Of course, the top handlers are usually savvy enough to know what judge likes what type and will show the right dogs under the right judge.**

**What importance do you place on missing teeth? On premolars, not a lot. All things being equal, I want to see a full mouth. But a dog that is spectacular in every way and missing a premolar, well, that missing button is not going to mean much to me.**

**Please discuss temperament in the ring today. Has it improved? Declined? Please explain.**  
**I think it has improved - or, perhaps, the dogs are better trained<G>. Honestly, you don't see the number of soft dogs that you used to but, then again, entries are so far down that the percentage might just be the same.**

**Do you prefer a dog to be shown on a loose lead? Yes. I want to see the dog's natural gait, not that the handler can hold up a 90 pound animal on a taut lead and think he or she is fooling me by hiding a host of faults that way. Only on a loose lead you can see the suspension, rear drive, condition of the back, opening of the shoulder, etc.**

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

**Coming/Going: 8**  
**Sidegait: 10**  
**Temperament: 10**

**Teeth: 8**  
**Coat: 4**  
**Pasterns, hocks, feet: 6**  
**Pigment: 5**

**Structure: 10**

**Shoulder/Reach: 10**

**Attitude: 9**

**In your opinion should double handling be allowed? Please explain.** Yes - as long as it doesn't adversely affect the dog's performance. A good double handler is an asset; a bad double handler can make a good dog look horrible.

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

No. This is a working, herding breed and, if the dog can't move as it is supposed to, it can't fulfill its purpose. If the dog is structured according to the standard, it will be able to move .

**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 ?) YES!**

Dying dogs. If I believe that an owner or handler has artificially enhanced the dog's color, that dog will probably not do well under me. It's cheating and against AKC rules and regulations but, much worse, some of the products being used are potentially toxic to the dogs. I find this deplorable.

**Do you have any suggestions for owners or handlers regarding anything they should ALWAYS do when showing under you ?** Be kind to the dogs they are showing and remember that the dog can have a bad day. I not only expect exhibitors to show me and their fellow exhibitors respect but they need to be respectful of the dogs as well. And it's nice to open a mouth to clean teeth, too<G>.

**Do you have any advice for people who are relatively new to showing and/or breeding?** Enjoy your dogs, enjoy the sport and listen, learn, study and then do it again and again. We can all learn something new and that's what makes showing dogs exciting. Also, start out with the best dog you can. Develop a thick skin - it's a competitive sport.

**Any final comments?** Showing dogs is a chosen hobby. If you truly love the dogs, you will love the hobby.

Diane Silver-Strasser

Silstra German Shepherds

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