

Sweepstakes – Irish Wolfhound Club of Canada – Ontario Branch
Sunday, September 17, 2023
Judge: Christopher Shields

I would like to thank the Irish Wolfhound Club of Canada -- Ontario Branch for inviting me to judge the Sweepstakes at this year's regional specialty. I may be a greyhound person, but Irish wolfhounds have been near and dear to my heart ever since the mid-80s. I enjoyed judging this quality entry, packed with some very promising youngsters.

Senior Puppy Dog – 1. Taliesin's Beul-Aithris of Sceolan – alone in his class but worthy of his place. Nice type, big and shapely. He has a nice head, but his ears are a bit flat. He has nice reach of neck leading into good shoulders; overall, he has good forequarters. He has a good topline, and though his rear is a little straight (I'd like more bend of stifle), he moves well off it. He is especially good on the move, showing off a free and easy gait. He lost out to the more mature 12-15 Month Dog for BOSS.

12-15 Months Dog – 1. Castlekeep's A Study In Scarlet – also alone in his class and also a worthy winner. This boy is just the type I like. He is big with plenty of shape and scope. He has a good head with fairly good ears. He has nice reach of neck leading into very good shoulders; overall, he has really good forequarters. I appreciate his length of body, ideal topline and croup, and the sweep in his rear from hip to hock, which allows him to stand over a lot of ground. He is so balanced, and it really shows in his sound, clean movement. Initially, he was a bit unruly, not showing himself to best advantage, but his handler is so good with him and was able to get his head in the game. He really is a powerhouse on the move, being true coming and going and with wonderful reach and drive from the side. Even as I judged him in his class, I thought it would take something special to beat him, and it turns out that the 'something special' was his litter sister. But he ended up BOS in Sweeps, which he entirely deserved. He is one to watch.

Senior Puppy Bitch – an interesting class with three litter sisters, all with a lot to like about them. 1. Hops-N-Hounds The Timeless Child Kerry – very mature for a puppy, this girl has size and substance. She has a good head, though her ears are not the best. She has good reach of neck leading into good shoulders; overall, her forequarters are good. She also has a good topline and croup. She wasn't always as free moving as I could want, but she was moving with a runner, and she didn't always look like she wanted to leave her handler standing on the sidelines. However, it was her type, balance, and soundness in the end that won her this class.

2. Hops-N-Hounds Aoife of the Forbidden Forest – a bit finer than her sister, but still presenting a nice shape and scope. She has a good head with OK ears. She has good reach of neck leading into good shoulders, but she is a little straight in the upper arm. She also has a good topline and croup with a nice sweep to her rear. She is a nice, easy mover.

3. Hops-N-Hounds Rune Singer Althea – also a nice girl; I was nit-picking when placing these sisters. She has a lot of the same virtues as the other two, showing a nice shape with a good topline. She seemed a little distracted, though, and wasn't always as steady on the move.

12-15 Months Bitch – 1. Castlekeep’s Scarlet Letter – litter sister to the BOSS winner (what a litter!) and has all the same virtues and then some. She draws the eye from the moment she enters the ring—she is just the type I like. It is hard to believe that she is just 12 months old, as she is so put together! She has substance, shape, and scope. She has a lovely head with good ears (these seem particularly hard to come by these days), with good reach of neck leading into excellent shoulders; overall, her forequarters are bang on. Like her brother, she also has correct length of body with ideal topline and croup, and that powerful sweeping rear, which allows her to stand over a lot of ground. On the move she is something else, being so steady and true—she cannot put a foot wrong. She was an easy winner of this class, and in the run-off for Best in Sweepstakes, it was between her and her brother. To be honest, her brother probably has the edge for showmanship—he looks like he really enjoys himself out there—but this girl was in season, so I was willing to cut her some slack. She is the total package. In the end, with a slight edge on structure and movement, she took the BISS award. She is a certain star of the future.

2. Draconcrome Agatha – a girl of a slightly smaller build, she presents a nice type. She has a nice head and ears, with a good reach of neck leading into good shoulders. Overall, her forequarters are good. She has a nice topline, and while her rear is good, her handler has a tendency to over-extend it on the stack. She was sometimes unsettled on the move, and she comes at you a little wide. But—and here is a lesson for those who feel that a judge’s mind can’t be changed by the time it gets to the final go around—the handler had this girl really collected for that final move, and she looked really good, showing that she is capable of beautiful reach and drive while holding her shape. She fully deserved her place here.

3. Sassway Chili Pepper at Hops-N-Hounds – bigger than 2, with good substance. She has a nice head; her ears are a little big but OK. She has good forequarters, and she moves better in front than 2. However, she shows too much rise over the loin and has a steep croup, which means that she doesn’t drive off her rear like she should. Still, she is a typey girl.