

THE COURIER®

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE PORTUGUESE WATER DOG CLUB OF AMERICA, INC.

2011 STUD DOG DIRECTORY



Ancient Mariner: *Raven*

Choosing "The One"

by Cathy Dugan, Marilyn Rimmer, Jack Girton

The Specialist's Role In Veterinary Healthcare

by Debra Channick, PhD

Training To Succeed: *Optional Titling Obedience Classes*

by Frank Cardillino



CAN BIS CH DEBLON'S RISING STAR TO PATTEDEAU "HENRY"

ON THE COVER – our September/October 2011 cover contest winner:

Can BIS CH Deblon's Rising Star to Pattedeau "Henry"

DOB: 1-17-09 GM-1: Nor OFA: 6156G25M-VPI EL: 2291M25-VPI CERF: 7193/11-29 OptiGen: Nor JDCM: 1-1 IC13: Nor

Henry is a happy boy, having fun with all dogs and people. He also loves to be a show dog, and at 16 months he won a Best in Show in Canada. This year, he was selected as Winners Dog at the PWDCA National Specialty, all owner-handled. Next year, Karine and Henry are looking forward to doing performance. Let's see what happens with this funny boy in the obedience and agility ring!

Owner: Karine Simard Breeder: Barb Bucheit Photo: Denis Landry

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COURIER OFFICE ADDRESS

Send materials to:

Terry Cardillino
Editor, *The Courier*
The Type & Design Center, Inc.
1230 Hudson Road
Cambridge, MD 21613
Phone/Fax: 410-901-6020
Email: TCardillino@hughes.net
PWDCA web site www.pwdca.org

To change your address,
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Membership Directory
Contact: Pat Qvigstad
PWDCA Membership Chair
PO Box 760
North Oxford, MA 01537-0760
Email: membership@pwdca.org
foxtailspwds@charter.net
508-434-0618

FedEx/UPS deliveries should be sent to:
1 Manor Forest Circle
Charlton, MA 01507-1488

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*How do you
evaluate a litter and
pick out a future Star?*

CHOOSING “The One”

by Cathy Dugan, Marilyn Rimmer, Jack Girton

**Left: Top winning Portuguese Water Dog
in history – “Ladybug”**

Photo: Heidi Erland

**Right: Three time National Specialty
Best of Breed – “Rascal”**

Photo: Carol Beuchat

When Aviator's Luck Be A Lady, "Ladybug" retired from competition after her group win at the 2011 Westminster show, she returned home and got ready for her next assignment as a mom. As the top winning Portuguese Water Dog in history, Ladybug exceeded all of the goals and expectations we had developed for her. She adjusted to being back home after over 400 shows in three years in amazing fashion. We thought she would take a while to adjust but true to the nature of PWDs her adaptability was extraordinary. We watched in amazement as she laid flat on her back on the floor, stuck her legs in the air and went to sleep. We should be so adaptable!

How do you find and identify a great dog?

When Ladybug came home, it gave us the opportunity to think about her career and what it takes to make a great show dog or for that matter a great dog for any purpose. As breeders for 25 years we have tried to breed dogs that fit our criteria for temperament, health, structure and type and finally, competitiveness. It may surprise some owners that competitiveness comes fourth, but we've found that if the first three benchmarks aren't met we won't want to compete with the dog in any case.

Temperament

We like to breed dogs that will be easy to live with and like to hear from our owners about how "easy going and smart" our pups are when they go to their new family. They're still wild crazy puppies chewing on anything (preferably shoes), but when the family settles in for the evening we want our pups to settle down with them. We want PWDs that are excited and overjoyed when their owners come home from work or an errand, but they also settle down within a few minutes and mold into the owners' activities and routine. They should understand that their job is to please and obey their owners even as young puppies. We don't mean that young puppies should be subservient or afraid and we advise against anything except positive reinforcement for PWDs.

In addition, temperament is a trait that can be tracked in one's line and can be reinforced in your breeding program. We all know of certain dogs or breeding lines that are more hyperactive or aggressive than others. If you breed to these dogs you need to understand what you're getting and use a dog that will offset those traits as much as possible.

Health

The key to breeding dogs with robust health and as free of breed health issues as much as possible is your breeding

program. By that we mean that when we plan our breeding two to three years out we're looking for sires and dams and lines that are as free of health issues as possible. We have been pleased to work with breeders who are honest and forthright about any health issues they may have.

For the breed in general, our attention to health standards and testing has resulted in one of the healthier breeds in the AKC world.

No matter how much you might like a particular dog, if that dog brings serious health issues from the past into your program it's a good idea to think twice about taking that chance. Just because a dog is a great champion doesn't always make them a good breeding partner. When you breed, you are breeding to a whole line of ancestors, not just the sire or dam of the moment.

Structure and type

Over the years, our dogs have been consistent in their black color with a little white and their structure and type. What we want is breed consistency with improvement at each new breeding. Ideally, the next batch of puppies will be incrementally better than their parents. It doesn't always work that way, so we evaluate our litters to find the puppies who are the next better generation of your dogs.

As an AKC judge I've had to learn the breed standards for many breeds in addition to PWDs. Because of that, I've had to assess the small differences between outstanding dogs in the ring, using the standards to make hard decisions. As between two terrific dogs what is it that makes one dog slightly better than the other and worthy of the blue ribbon? This process of matching structure and type to the breed standards is useful especially when you assess puppies, as I'll talk about later.

Competitiveness

Ladybug was dominant as a competitor because she first met our standards for temperament, health and structure and type. Her "look at me" attitude as a puppy evolved into the mature show girl who loved the big ring, the spotlight and the applause. Like any great show dog, you can tell that they love being in the ring. Like most great show dogs, Ladybug could not get enough of the competition; she simply loved it! We watched as she worked with her first litter and she poured the same energy she showed in the ring into her first experience as a mother. Part of the result is eight puppies with big attitudes and exuberance.

Every dog matures at a different rate. We have had some dogs like Ladybug coming out of the gate like gangbusters at seven months old, going Winners Bitch & Best of Winners from the Bred By Exhibitor class at the PWDCA

Continued next page

Specialty associated with the AKC/Eukanuba National Dog Show in 2006. Other successful champions, though, had to wait to grow up to win in the ring; some not ready until they were three years old. Because we work very closely with our co-owners, we never want to put a dog in competition before the dog is really ready. That just creates the opportunity for failure, potentially hurting the dog's chances and show temperament and disappointing co-owners for no good reason.



Photo courtesy Mike Dugan

Ladybug "The One," with her new puppies 2011

How do you evaluate them at a young age?

For any litter, identifying the great pups from the good ones is more art than science. We'll talk about formal breed evaluations in a minute, but nothing beats years of breeding and years of competition. While Ladybug was one of several standouts in her litter, she was always the one to make eye contact and "ask for it" even as a five-week-old puppy.

Once we got the pups out into the yard, Ladybug ran everywhere with intention and never put a foot down incorrectly. Always confident and curious, she watched us out of the corner of her eye, even while the other pups crashed about like, well – puppies. We knew we had a good one and I showed her from the Bred By Exhibitor class.

We wish we could tell you there is "ONE" in every litter, but as we all know...that just ain't so! A litter evaluation to determine which dogs are going to be the pets is the easy part. Determining show and performance prospects is a multilayer ongoing evaluation of the pups from week to week. We whelp and raise our co-owned litters for the advantage of being with them day to day – week to week, to evaluate each puppy. There is marked benefit to knowing each pup when it comes time for placement and consideration of who will be show/breeding stock.

We know lots of breeders who would say there is no way to know at birth that a puppy is going to be "The ONE."

We all know that hindsight is 20/20. That said, when the pup was born who became Ladybug, Cathy knew she was a good one! As we progressed week to week, Ladybug continued to exceed my expectations in structure, temperament and athleticism.

We color code our pups for ease of identification and tracking weight and growth patterns. Mike maintains a weight chart database of all of our litters that we use to assess progress of the current litter. We weigh at birth and every day thereafter for the first week and then every three days for two weeks, followed by weight checks every week. This gives us the opportunity to intervene if somebody needs supplementation.

Out of habit, we use the same colors for each litter and make random decisions about who gets what color; no science here. Dogs that "feel" promising generally get red, blue, purple or yellow, while pups that are smaller or weaker get pink, lavender, teal or green. Just as a playful rule we always put yellow on the noisy pup – guess who that was!

The evaluation process

At birth – We are looking for the pup that is heavy, robust and generally larger than its littermates. We want to feel the density of the pup in our hand right from the start. I know a good one can be a smaller birth weight pup, but we are always drawn to the hardy, chunky pups.

Week 1-2 – We begin noticing head formation and shape. Are the fontanels closed? Are they nursing well? At this stage, we like to see heads shaped like Newfies, with deep stops, short square muzzles and wide set eyes. Again, my eye goes to the robust pups. We record all of these observations in our master weight progress file.

Week 2-3 – As eyes and ears open, we look for the beginning of vocal communication and directional response to noise (old Dalmatian breeder). At this point we want pups up on their legs and trying to walk even though they fall over easily. Heads should be continuing to develop with a widening of back skull. We expect some pups to be getting out of the whelping box by now.

Week 3-4 – We want pups all up on their legs and making contact with us as we transition them to puppy mush. We expect barking, growling and puppy rough housing.

Week 4-5 – By now the puppies have been transferred from the whelping box to a large 4' x 8' two-part pen designed to potty train the kids. We look for playfulness and interaction with their litter mates in the larger area and making connection to us through eye contact. We want that "look at me" attitude with tails and heads up!

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