



AN EXERCISE IN Futility

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IN ONE OR MORE ARTICLES I HAVE EXPLORED AND DESCRIBED THE UNCOMPROMISING REALITY FOR A SEGMENT OF TODAY'S APPROXIMATELY 3,000 AKC JUDGES. THIS PARTICULAR SEGMENT I AM REFERRING TO ARE JUDGES APPROVED FOR ONE OR FEW BREEDS, JUDGES PROVISIONAL IN ONE OR FEW BREEDS AND EVEN TO INCLUDE, ON OCCASION, JUDGES WHO HAVE LESS THAN A GROUP. THIS GROUP OF JUDGES ARE CONSIDERED A MINORITY BUT, IN MY OPINION, NO LESS IMPORTANT THAN THE MAJORITY.

Some would even agree with me that the minority are even more important as our constituency is populated with the younger generation of judges. Due to our age, we will hopefully move up through the judging ranks over a sensible number of years. We will secure the AKC's future existence as we carry on the passionate pursuit of sporting purebred dogs.

In this article I would like to discuss and enlighten everyone on the most recent issue and infringement we minority judges have suffered.

This being the absence and/or unavailability of the AKC Field Representative (AKC Rep) at AKC conformation shows. Many exhibitors have not noticed their absence, many do not stop to question why there is not an AKC Rep at many dog shows, and others may ask, "So what if there is or isn't a Field Rep?" I will answer the "So what" and will set about explaining why this recent decision by the AKC Board of Directors undermines and is an impediment for minority judges.

Recently, the AKC Board of Directors reached and enacted upon an administrative decision. We can only speculate as to the reason(s) for the AKC Board decision, however, it seems safe to conclude that it was due to the austerity of which we all now live. This decision was to decrease or limit their AKC Field Reps' attendance at purebred sporting events. I was informed by an excellent source that this resolution was out of the Judging Operations Department control as it was administrative in nature. So, why is this decision and implementation of such policy important? Simply because AKC requires ALL provisional breed judges to complete five provisional assignments in each breed with observations by three different Field Representatives before notifying Judging Operations to request regular status. I will provide real life scenarios to bring the point home and help clarify why their decision is significant.

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We minority judges with few approved breeds are essentially unmarketable. This is true not only in today's economic times but almost all this past decade as many clubs have tightened their financial belts because they have not been flourishing. Not unlike what many of us are doing in our household budgets and leisure activities. What has unfolded is that clubs cut back on or simply do not hire minority provisional judges. The reason stated is they cannot afford to hire minority judges who are only approved for a few breeds, unlike a multi-group judge who is approved for multi-group breeds. The more judges they have, the more it costs the club. However, as I have written previously, many show chairpersons are uninformed because almost all minority provisional judges would gladly accept new provisional assignments and waive any fees. It is my practice and apparently is not uncommon from my conversations with other judges, that I waive and donate back the \$3 or \$4 per dog to the show giving club's rescue efforts or for use as they see fit.

Because of the belt tightening, provisional assignments are very infrequent. Once an assignment is offered, it is typically one year in advance. In some cases it may be one-and-a-half to two years as some clubs fill their judging slates well ahead of time. This leaves us with perhaps one assignment annually to complete five provisional assignments. A third grade child can do the math on how long it may take to complete five provisional assignments. These long expanses of time effectively suppresses new talented judges from advancement. This is one of the reasons why many minority judges are or have been disillusioned with their judging career. I stated my views to the AKC that once what might have been great, new talent is lost; it is difficult at best to bring them back into the fold again, if ever.

Now, today's minority judges have even a greater concern and it is not only frustrating but instrumental. On the day of your provisional assignment you arrive to find that, as a result of the AKC Board decision, there is NO AKC Field Rep in attendance at the show. You are exasperated! How will you complete the proviso of observations by three different Field Representatives if there are no AKC Reps in attendance at your provisional assignments? Are you to wait six months or, more likely, another year until your next assignment to possibly obtain one? Also keep in mind that often, even if there is a Field Rep in attendance and you have a low number of entries in your provisional breed, the Field Rep may not be available to observe your assignment. Last but not least, as of June, 2011, an entry of one dog in a breed, not on the Low Entry Breed List, may not count towards the required five provisional assignments. How is this, so far? You need to complete assignments to advance but when you do there are no Field Reps available to provide the evaluations therefore you cannot move forward in your judging career.

Let me illustrate by narrating what has recently occurred to me. I have had three of four provisional assignments with entries. Of the three completed assignments with entries, I have been able to obtain only one Field Rep evaluation and this from a few years ago. My second assignment there were no entries in my provisional breed because this breed rarely, if ever, has an entry at this club's show and location. Under AKC current

policy, you must complete five judging assignments with dogs present, therefore this assignment is not counted towards the fulfillment of the AKC required provisional assignments. My third provisional assignment I was informed by the AKC Rep that they would be unavailable to observe my judging, therefore I was unable to acquire a Field Rep evaluation for that provisional assignment. This brings me to my fourth and most recent assignment in which I had the pleasure to judge a specialty club supported entry at an all-breed show. I had an entry of 20, this number being exactly consistent with past entries.

Upon arriving at the kennel club dog show that was located 3,000 miles cross-country, I was informed by show officials there was no AKC Field Representative at the show. This was a Saturday conformation show having an entry of 688 dogs with a specialty supported entry that was major pointed in dogs. You can imagine my dismay upon hearing this news. As I stated previously, we minority provisional judges are responsible for our own expenses. Most of us readily accept this obligation and financial burden as it is the only avenue available to us. Most of us do so because we are gaining valuable breed experience, we love to judge the dogs, and we are fulfilling our compulsory AKC conditions. Simultaneously though, what we do require is that the AKC upholds their end of the bargain. That is to say we have every right, every expectation that when the AKC judging approval imposes a requirement for us to interact with their personnel, e.g. Field Reps, then the AKC will have the field personnel to administer this requirement.

I flew nearly 6000 miles of air travel from New York to the West Coast and back, rented a vehicle for two days with additional fuel costs, drove nearly six hours to and from the airport to reach the show location, incurred two nights hotel accommodations, plus meals, to discover that, again, I was unable to obtain a required AKC Field Rep evaluation. This trip alone, my personal expenses were a minimum of \$2,000. My to-date expenses for this one provisional breed alone are roughly \$6,000 and I have only completed three of my five provisional assignments with entries. I estimate that after completing my final two assignments, with the foreknowledge that one is again cross-country, I will have spent nearly \$10,000. This total does not include any monies spent completing my first provisional breed.

In this present economic climate, we minority provisional judges have a well-founded apprehension. We have no confidence nor knowledge if an AKC Field Rep will be present at our future assignments. The reality is that we may not obtain observations by three different Field Reps upon completion of our assignments. Where does that leave us? Well, according to the AKC Requirements for Regular Status effective 2007, although Judging Operations staff may reduce this requirement in breeds with consistently small entries, they state, "Additional provisional assignments may be required."

The AKC Board decision of decreasing or limiting Field Rep attendance at dog shows lacks consideration. It is and will continue to have a deleterious effect on all provisional judges, especially minority judges and it effectively impedes advancement. What am I and the countless other minority provisional judges to do? The AKC has felt the pinch of economic unease,

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nevertheless, we minority judges certainly cannot continue spending thousands of dollars completing all-breed show assignments that are not considered because an AKC Field Rep was unavailable or was not in attendance.

Has it come down now to we provisional judges, especially minority judges, advising show chairpersons that we **MUST** first contact the AKC to ascertain if an AKC Field Rep is scheduled to attend their show before we can accept their offer of a provisional breed assignment? Will the AKC have this information if the future assignment is 12 months to a 1.5 years in advance? Are we now supposed to decline all provisional assignments that are a significant distance because of the uncertainty that some or many shows will no longer have an AKC Field Rep in attendance? If we have completed our required five provisional assignments and we do not have three AKC required observations by three different Field Representatives due to their absence or unavailability, are we to wait one or more years to complete additional assignments that may or may not have an AKC Field Rep in attendance? The AKC states performance is an important component in the additional breed process and therefore current evaluations are an essential part thereof. I do not disagree with performance as being essential however, the situation we now find ourselves in is completely unworkable, inconceivable and nonsensical.

If the AKC does not have the personnel to administer to their requirements then they must allow immediate exceptions to their required observation of all provisional judges by AKC Field Reps in continuing provisional breeds. Further, a swift solution to the problem is to dispense with the required observations by AKC Field Reps. Currently, the proviso is not one hundred percent achievable, therefore it is impractical and unreasonable.

In total, it will have taken me a minimum of five years and, conceivably, it may take me six or more years to complete approval for just two breeds. Amazingly and unbelievably, the requirements to become an AKC group judge involves more time than is required to become qualified for many professional careers—including lawyers, teachers, professors and doctors.

I led off this discussion by stating that many younger generational judges such as myself represent the future of our sport. I will hypothesize here and again use third grade mathematics. Under current policy AKC states judges are eligible to apply for up to the number of breeds for which they are already approved. It is a one-to-one policy. If I have one breed, I am permitted to apply for one more breed. If I have two breeds then I am allowed to apply for two more and so forth. Once a judge has completed the first four application cycles or has been approved for 14 breeds, he may apply for up to 14 breeds. In my scenario, I am in my second application cycle for a second breed, and it will have taken 5 years minimum to complete just two breeds. To date, I have never declined a judging assignment and have judged cross-country more than in my region.

How long do you think it will take to complete all breeds in one group? It very well may be that my third application cycle for my next two breeds may again take another 5 plus years to complete. That would bring my judging career span

of 10 plus years and only 4 breeds! How much money do you think that will cost? If mine is even close to the average time frames then how long do you believe that younger, new judging talent are going to stick around? If you do not believe this will affect breeders and exhibitors, I wholeheartedly disagree. Fresh, new talent is necessary in our very subjective sport. We cannot have the same assembly of multi-group judges repeatedly judging our dogs. In the words of the renowned Col. Wally Pede, "We will never have any Generals if we don't make some Lieutenants."

For our sport to thrive, let alone survive, the AKC needs to invest in its younger generation to secure its future existence. To do that the AKC needs to raise, nurture and inspire upcoming judges. A future that depicts an interactant AKC, an organization of mentors rather than an organization who makes or enacts roadblocks and unrealistic hurdles for its members to overcome. This is not a contest of survival of the fittest.

I am not advocating dumbing down the qualifications, lowering the standards of our breed knowledge or lessening the highest quality expectations we judges must meet and possess to advance in our judging careers. I passionately believe the breeds and their welfare come first. I am a vociferous advocate of primary and continuing judges education throughout our careers derived from multiple, knowledgable sources. This will help all our breeds since so many, unfortunately, have degenerated over the past decades. I will not digress here but I will say that a large majority of veteran breeders clearly point the finger of blame for such breed degradation at unknowing Judges. On a side note as an excellent example, in my state of New York we licensed real estate brokers and agents must complete 22.5 hours of continuing education every 2 years to renew our license to broker real estate. Since I am notoriously pragmatic, I will concede this does not guarantee nor insure that all real estate agents are excellent, knowledgable industry representatives. This requirement does insure though that every licensee is exposed to education intended to assist the student and licensee in best representing the fiduciary interests of their clients. Not unlike what may be the result of judges continuing education and their relationship and influence over and with our breeds.

An AKC official informed me that a committee, whose task is to review the Judging approval process, will be making an announcement soon after the AKC Board approves their findings and suggestions. They speculated this may be as early as August or possibly October 2011. In this conversation, it was suggested that we shall see a revolutionary change, his words not mine, in the Judging approval process. This topic was ambiguous, as the AKC Board is required to approve any changes before dissemination to the public. However, never in my conversation did they indicate that the committee was addressing the issue of AKC Field Reps availability, absenteeism or evaluations. We can only hope that the AKC Board will look harder and longer at the requirement for evaluations by an AKC Field Rep and conclude that it is an unviable and unproductive stipulation.

We wait with bated breath.