

Critique

German Shepherd Dog Club of Canada

National Specialty Show

Friday, September 12th, 2025

Entry: 29, Shown 26

Thank you to the members of the GSDCC for electing me to judge your national specialty show. It was an honor to be chosen, and I truly appreciate the opportunity. The weather and Dorchester Fairgrounds, Ontario show site was ideal with a large, grass ring and all the customary amenities to host the show. I've always appreciated the comfortable manner in which the GSDCC has handled its national specialty shows as a weekend event. More importantly, the club was recently recognized for 100 years of service and continues to play as an integral part in the history and development of the GSD. It is my hope your focus remains on the preservation and advancement of the breed. A special thanks to the ring stewards, show secretary, show chair, photographer and all those involved in putting on the show. It's a tremendous amount of work, and you all did an exceptional job! Congratulations to the winners, and thank you all for allowing me the privilege of judging your excellent show dogs.

A slight modification to my ring procedure was used as I chose to handle the exam of teeth, tail, etc., in line and not at center stage. This allowed for the dog alone to be showcased during the camera/livestream pose without blocking the view. As well, greater attention was placed upon free posing as I judged the entries as they stood, without the need for frequent hand-setting or handler maneuvering. As always, comparative gaiting was used when needed for final evaluation and placement.

General Observations of the Breed and Judge's POV:

Overall, temperaments were acceptable, with few exceptions, and no dentition issues were observed. Heads, backs and topline were generally good however, shorter coupling is needed to correct length-to-height ratio. In fact, excessive length is rapidly becoming problematic throughout the breed and I would urge breeders to pay close attention to this issue. The entry was down significantly from the last time I judged bitches in 2009, but the winner's class was deep in quality within this diverse group of bitches. Unfortunately, the breed continues to lack general uniformity in structure and type. Specifically, overly angulated hindquarters (*excessive length of lower thigh & hocks*) that impair the function and coordination of gait. Moreover, front assemblies lacked proper angulation, length of upper arm and correct shoulder lay-back. Together, this front and rear combination (*i.e., straight front with excessive rear*) creates an unnatural imbalance of structure and greatly affects the athleticism required of the breed.

I often speak about Type, Temperament, & Transmission (*transmission being a product of structure*) as the hallmarks of the breed. These are the characteristics that make the breed unique -- how they look, how they act, and how they move. Unlike other breeds, the GSD is not judged standing, nor as a head breed, or by any specific coat, color or markings. By way of history, the GSD was derived from various herding stock to be developed as a working/service dog. Or to quote the breed founder's mission and aim: "*a reliable dog, qualified for every service, according to his body construction and his disposition.*" Given these criteria, the highest priorities would then be given to transmission and temperament. Simply put, a strong, athletic dog with the proper work ethic. While beautiful type has developed greatly since the creation of the breed, it should not take priority above body construction, disposition and the basic ideals on which the breed was created. Yet these values come as a set, not individually, not at the sacrifice of each other, and NONE more important than the whole.

Critique of the class winners as follows:

OPEN & WB: PATMAR LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT – From the moment this gal hit the ring she was moving and WOW can she move! She is a medium/large, black and light tan bitch with good temperament, high drive, and a strong work ethic. There was nothing about her grooming that was hiding her structure as she was shown completely out of coat. Her gait is smooth, coordinated, one-piece, as she covers the maximum amount of ground with ease. Her front and rear are well balanced with full extension as she easily executes Drive & Reach with no wasted motion. Her outline remains consistent regardless of leash tension and she smoothly transitions well between various gaiting speeds. The back is firm and croup is properly angled. At the 2009 Canadian national specialty show, I awarded her sire, (*GV CH Tazzman's Aregon*) Maturity Victor, and it's no surprise his daughter possesses the same exceptional side gait. She could be cleaner going but, this is a big ring, nationally competitive, bitch of select quality.

2nd OPEN & RWB: NORBERG CLAYFIELD ANNIE JIMENI EKLECTIC - A correct size bitch with good color & pigment, a feminine expression, and lovely type. She is a solid, one piece-coordinated mover. In fact, this is the kind of GSD that could be successful in many different venues and appreciated by all as she is an all-around, good quality bitch of select quality. Her sire (*CH Kis Malchik Van Contra Haus*) is an imported dog that is leaving a very positive impact upon the breed. Adding new blood to the limited gene pool we have in North America, has many benefits, and this bitch is a perfect example of this blending.

BRED BY EXHITOR: WHISPER HILL'S ISN'T SHE LOVELY– A medium/large black & tan gal with good temperament & secondary sex characteristics. She is moderately angulated, has a hard topline, balanced front and rear, and is a coordinated and efficient mover. She was nicely presented by her breeder in the class.

CANADIAN BRED: CH KENNELWOOD'S MIDNIGHT TRAIN TO GEORGIA– A correct sized, attractive black & tan gal with nice type, excellent body proportions & coupling, as her length to height ratio is ideal. Her back is hard and croup is long and nicely angled. Overall, a nicely balanced and efficient moving bitch with a bright show career ahead.

15-18 MONTH: CLAYFIELD ROCKYOK BEDAZZLED OF NORBERG– A medium sized, dark black & tan bitch with good secondary sex characteristics and nice type. She is very stylish in motion with an attractive topline & underline, and her overall silhouette is very eye appealing. On this day, she lacked the maturity and stamina to compete with the older bitches however, this is a rising young star!

12-15 MONTH: MICKENA'S JOYFUL HEART OF RALLYNS– From the largest class of the day, this gal got better as the class went on. A medium sized sable with nice type and good temperament. She's attractive standing and presents a nice outline in motion with a firm back, nice topline, and maintains correct head position.

SENIOR PUPPY: CARLISLE'S SOME KIND OF WONDERFUL V NORBERG– A dark black & tan teenager with excellent color and pigment. Her temperament is good and she was shown in excellent condition.

JUNIOR PUPPY: TIMBERLINE ELITE DESIGN'S LEGACY– A difficult decision to begin this day of judging with the first two puppies competing for the win as both are of good quality. The class winner, a black & tan gal with nice type, good temperament, great show attitude and work ethic. She is balanced front and rear, her gait is coordinated, athletic, and she easily covers ground. I would prefer shorter coupling but, the back is firm. It will be fun to watch the careers of both puppies.

VETERAN BITCH: CH KENNELWOOD'S MY MARIA OF MAZERICK– Another good competitive class with two exceptional old gals competing for the win. One, a top specialty winner and former Canadian Grand Victrix, and the other, a top winning All-Breed/Specialty winner in the U.S. The class winner, is a beautiful typey gal that still loves to show. Her gait is smooth, balanced, and powerful as she easily covers ground. She was awarded Select #3 the following day in the Best of Breed competition. And if that's not enough, she's the #1 producing GSD Dam in Canada! Wow! Congratulations to Lesley and Allan Wood.

Again, thank you all for your time, efforts, friendship, and most of all, your continued commitment to Preserve, Protect, and Promote the German Shepherd Dog...

All the best,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Randy Darnell". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of "Randy" and "Darnell" being capitalized and prominent.

Randolph "Randy" Darnell
AKC #25343