

SAINT BERNARD COLOR

BY: E. GEORGEAN RAULSTON/TAKEN FROM THE BULLETIN

Before a fair appraisal of any dog is possible, we must refer to the Standard. There are many Champions, and few resemble each other to any highly consistent degree. However, they must have met the Standard to a greater degree, or they neither could have become Champions of Record nor gained a major win at a show.

Whether the individual prefers the other fellow's dog or not, the title "Champion" is distributed equally to those whose dogs have met the requirements of the American Kennel Club for such a title. There are no "with honor" titles handed down, nor any "almost titles." A title is a title and should be honored as such.

The American Kennel Club is happy to send copies of the Saint Bernard Standard to those who wish to read it. Prejudices and preferences are allowed within the scope of the Standard, as it should be.

Some of the "faults" which are readily pointed out by heavy-handed critics are not faults, such as, they are preferences of the individual. Let me cite some examples:

The Standard does not have the judge eliminate dogs from the ring that are heavily freckled; very white, or even half-masked; males that are 28 inches at the withers or 39 inches at the withers; undershot bites are undesirable, but do not disqualify a dog in the ring; nor does the lack of a full white collar-only a spot of white at the nape of the neck is required by the Standard. While all of us would like to have dogs marked according to our mentally held ideal dog (a dog whose qualities we hold most dear), it is far more important to the breeder to try for those marking qualities while striving even harder for an animal with more ideal conformation and movement, good balance of over-all parts and fine disposition.

No person with a beautifully built dog that moves well and balanced in parts need be ashamed of freckles or other markings on which we have some controversy in the breed. It is destructive to become "fixed" in our thinking and disallow all of the other good qualities because he or she may have a feature which disturbs a personal preference. Since no dog is perfect, weaknesses and faults must be weighed against each other for their seriousness. Therefore a freckle or poor mouth isn't as serious as a bad rear-end or faulty structural condition. Some people prefer wide blazes-others prefer a narrower blaze. The width of the blaze neither hinders nor helps the working ability or structural integrity of the dog. It is a small point on which to be critical. Most experienced breeders notice marking  
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Most experienced breeders consider a weak rear as being far more serious than a bit of straight shoulder or a dog slightly down at the pastern. The gay tail upsets others as unwarranted, especially if that gay tail is on an otherwise sound, beautiful animal. The "picayune" critics are more destructive than helpful.

While it is good to be able to interpret the Standard for others, it is damaging to go beyond that and antagonize and/or impose our preferences and prejudices upon others. Knowing how to discourage owners, tactfully, from breeding SUB STANDARD dogs and knowing when to stop when appraising a Standard dog with slight deviations from our own preferences is a sign of greatness in a person. To withhold praise where it is due is a sign of petty people - almost as petty as refusing to accept an apology when it is offered. Remember, those who are winning can afford to be generous. So the next time someone "picks" unfairly at your dog say, "So What." Those who offer praise and constructive help are the winners in this sport.