

Drumlanrig delivers the goods

Despite the harshest of winters this magnificent venue allowed the top cockers to display their outstanding ability, as **Jon Kean** reports.

Photography: Glyn Satterley

Great ground, cracking cockers and convivial company were the main ingredients of the truly brilliant 79th Kennel Club Cocker

Spaniel Championship at Drumlanrig Castle in Dumfriesshire, Scotland. The event was held on January 20-21 by kind permission of the Duke of Buccleuch and headkeeper Rab

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Clark, and sporting manager Roy Green had everything running like a Swiss watch. They were aided by chief steward John Dickson, stewards Anne Heading and Davy Dunn, and an army of volunteers.

Sponsors Eukanuba were represented by their global marketing president David Minifie, who flew in from the USA for the championship, and the UK manager, Mike Blosome.

There were a record-breaking 36 entries (28 bitches and eight dogs) and 35 dogs competed in the two-day event under the watchful eyes of judges Jon Bailey, David Chudley, Stan Pearson and Eddie Scott. Every



The overall winners were Ben Randall with FTCh Heolybwich Fatty.



The Buccleuch keepers.



Spectators came from all over Europe to Drumlanrig Castle.

Championship facts

THERE ARE 42 field trial clubs and societies recognised by the KC for the purpose of qualification.

To qualify a dog must take first prize in an open field trial stake for cocker spaniels which has taken place since last year's championship. Three open cocker field trials had to be cancelled because of cold weather.

The youngest cocker competing was one-year and eight months old. Somerset man Nigel Partiss' bitch Winhocklin Single Star of Tiptop Jack qualified at the south west Scotland open stake in October last year.

Rob in Laud's FTCh Fenbird Rosey was the oldest competitor at seven years and six months. Rosey qualified at the Cambridgeshire Field Trial Society open trial in December last year.

Three dogs (FTCh Mallowdale Zander, FTCh Mallowdale Gun and FTCh Maesydderwen Scimitar) each had four progeny running.

Cocker veteran Joe Shotton of Shropshire, qualified his bitch FTCh Chyknell Iris at the Lothian and Borders Gundog Association open stake at the beginning of December. She was handled by Ian Openshaw. ■



The judges were, from left: David Chudley, Jon Bailey, Stan Pearson & Eddie Scott.

competitor was put through their paces. Day one was staged at the Farm Strip near Drumlanrig Castle and day two was run at the Hill Shed Road best.

Remarkably, despite the appalling winter, the cover at Drumlanrig was exceptionally good. The trial ground

consisted mostly of snowberry bracken, brambles and mixed deciduous trees. Both days had temperatures averaging -7°C and by 11am each day we had brilliant sunshine. A large crowd - one of the biggest ever - had a grandstand view of the proceedings. On the first day I

counted 93 cars parked at the castle. Cocker enthusiasts from Norway, Holland, Sweden and Denmark were among the spectators.

The guns were Derek Goodwin, Andy Donnachie, Graham Osbourne, Charles Robinson, Rab Clark and Roy Green who all shot well. Headkeeper

Rab Clark controlled the whole line with some skill, and also shot the first pheasant of the championship.

As the trial progressed it was evident it would take an extra special dog to win the competition. By 4pm on the first day, championship secretary Mike Smith had announced



The whole field lined up in the grounds of the castle.

20 dogs were required for day two, so it was all to play for.

After some deliberation the judges called for Ben Randall's bitch FTCh Heolybwich Fatty and Joe Shotton's bitch FTCh Chyknell Iris to compete in the run off. Ben Randall's cocker bitch, bred by Gareth Davies, hunted with relentless energy on both days, flowing back and forth over the ground. Her running was straight out of the top drawer and she showed serious commitment, thoroughly deserving her victory. In second place came Joe Shotton's bitch, handled by Ian Openshaw. Iris pressed hard all the way and was a delight to watch. In third place was Mr C. Fearn's Selrach Daisy.



Arctic temperatures didn't stop the cockers showing their abilities.

handled with ease by Simon Tyers of Staffordshire.

Winning handler Ben Randall, of Ledbury Lodge Kennels in Herefordshire, was emotional as he collected the silverware. Afterwards, he said: "I was very, very nervous going into the run off. I knew I had

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to keep as calm as possible. My bitch handled beautifully for me. I would like to thank everyone who has helped me to be here at this championship. I am elated."

Judge Jon Bailey said: "I thought this was the best championship I had seen at Drumlanrig Castle. The preparation of the ground and game was second to none, with good cover to test the dogs and show what they were capable of. Most dogs hunted well, even though scenting conditions were not good at times. The dogs had to be handled right onto shot game. The top dogs all showed drive and good game finding ability, with the top two completely at one with their handlers." ■

Results

1st

● Ben Randall's FTCh Heolybwich Fatty (FTCh Malloxdale Zander x Dearnvalley Venus).

2nd

● Joe Shotton's FTCh Chyknell Iris (FTCh Malloxdale Gun x FTCh Chyknell Hide). Also Guns' Choice and handled by Ian Openshaw

3rd

● Mr C. Fearn's Selrach Daisy (Sandford Rio x Housty Tilly) handled by Simon Tyers.

4th

● Richard Preest's FTCh Centrewalk Daydream (FTCh Danderw Druid x Like Sister 'N' Brother)

Diplomas of Merit

● Mark Whitehouse's FTCh Chewky Scholes (FTCh Malloxdale Zander x FTCh Dearnvalley Jade of Chewky)
 ● Dai Ormond's FTCh Rowston Serans (FTCh Maezydderwen Scimitar x Rowston Soot)
 ● Nigel Partiss' FTCh Brook Ruffong of Tiptop Jack (Malloxdale Tab x Tiptop Jack Kinder Scout) handled by Ian Openshaw. ■



The Duke Of Buccleuch presents headkeeper Rab Clark with the Chris Green Cup.