

The Kennel Club's 79th Spaniel Championship for cocker spaniels, in association with Eukanuba, was held on Thursday 20 and Friday 21 January 2011, at the Queensberry estate, in Scotland, by gracious permission of the Duke of Buccleuch. The headkeeper and steward of the beat, Rab Clark, with the help of staff from the Buccleuch Estates had prepared the ground and game supply brilliantly. Under his control, the field trial line ran smoothly throughout both days, allowing every one of the enthusiastic cockers the opportunity to show their hunting, gamefinding and retrieving skills under the close scrutiny of four experienced judges, Jon Bailey, David Chudley, Stan Pearson and Eddie Scott.

A record entry of 36 cockers were taking part, 35 having qualified by winning an Open stake for cocker spaniels since last year's Championship, plus the defending champion, FTCh *Moelffaman Mini*. With only one withdrawal, 35 began the stake. Females were definitely in the majority, with 28 bitches against only eight dogs, and 20 of the runners were black.

There was no dominant sire this year, but FTCh *Mallowdale Gwn*, FTCh *Maesydderwen Scimitar* and FTCh *Mallowdale Zander* all had four progeny competing. However, Zander,

I am full of envy. No way in a million years could I imagine myself participating in your sport, which requires such skill, such nerve, and such a wonderful rapport between animal and human being
The Duke of Buccleuch

besides running himself, also had the distinction of siring the winner, while Gun sired the runner-up.

Good Guns are all important at trials and the Buccleuch team was no exception. Graham Osbourne, Derek Goodwin, Andy Donnachie, Charles Robinson, Rab Clark and Roy Green all shot fantastically well. Sub-zero temperatures did not help scenting, and complications, exacerbated by the lack of scent, confronted the dogs right from the start.

A vanishing bird

Beginning the dog-work in this Championship was Mark Whitehouse, handling his hard-going liver dog FTCh *Cheweky Scholes* under judges Jon Bailey and David Chudley on the right, while on the left, running under Eddie Scott and Stan Pearson, was David Sowerby with his home-bred black bitch *Kirkstall Amethyst*. The brambles, laurels and brashings were full of birds and soon gave the Guns an early opportunity when a hen bird was dropped in the middle of the line, right into the thickest of the cover. Amethyst was sent, but while being handled, another shot

► FTCh *Heolybwlch Fatty* kept her nerve, showing fierce concentration, excellent ground treatment and drive



▲ The judges: (l-r) David Chudley, Jon Bailey, Stan Pearson (who replaced an indisposed Mark Clifford at the last minute) and Eddie Scott

was heard from the other side and then the sound of whistling indicated that Scholes had also been sent for another bird. Amethyst was stopped by the judges and after Scholes had tried for a strong runner without success, Amethyst also searched, but to no avail, as, to the relief of both handlers, did the judges. The trial continued after Amethyst had picked the original bird. Will Clulee had qualified four dogs this year, but his first, *Lockslane Archibald*, was soon eliminated when Howard Kirby's *Western Rosie* completed the eyewipe on a running hen dropped behind the line.

Gareth Davies's FTCh *Mallowdale Zander* subsequently failed to lock on to another runner and Richard Claydon's FTCh *Kingcott Eclipse* uncharacteristically took a long time to locate a dead rabbit shot well out on fairly open ground, another indication that the scent was poor. Last year's winner, Will Clulee's FTCh *Moelffaman Mini*, had a clean first run, but Greg Beeton's FTCh *Maesydderwen Sizzle* unfortunately passed a pheasant, ►



FIELD TRIALS

► The gamekeeping team and the Guns: back row (l-r) Andy Donnachie, Nick Smith, Graham Osbourne, Roy Green, Derek Goodwin, James Rhodes and David Lisett; front row (l-r) James Green, Charles Robinson, headkeeper Rab Clark, Keith Cottle and Adam Clark



◀ then FTCh *Randall Black Knight* moved too far on a flush. Dead birds were being collected more easily — Joe Shotton's FTCh *Chyknell Iris* and FTCh *Chyknell Hidie*, both handled by Ian Openshaw, dealt with their retrieves well, but then a runner shot for FTCh *Gibbetore Style* escaped capture. Style made a great first attempt, but then seemed to lose commitment.

However, it was more likely that the lack of scent gave the dog nothing at all to work once a few seconds had elapsed. Ben Randall's FTCh *Heolywalch Fatty* also tried on this bird, but by then it had long since departed. Fatty then showed her class when she was not distracted by several birds flushing as she was sent out for a retrieve.

Dai Ormond's FTCh *Rowston Serena* hunted with drive, as did Nigel Partiss's FTCh *Brook Furlong of Tiptop Jack*. Martin Smees's FTCh *Chewky Bovril* also hit the cover with determination and completed a double retrieve of two pheasants shot well out in front with minimal handling. FTCh *Mallowdale Kim* retrieved a lively bird with ease to handler Wendy Openshaw, and husband Ian skilfully handled John Heeley's FTCh *Chyknell Lilly* down the slope,

over a ride and into the gully behind for a bird shot out of sight of the dog. A second good, long, marked retrieve off its own flush completed their run. Graham West's *Wetlands Spice of Leeglen* got confused when returning with a bird and put it down among the people slightly behind the line. Robin Laud's FTCh *Fenlord Rosey* hesitated before picking-up a dead hen shot well forward, and a large brown hare proved too much to retrieve all the way back to hand through the briars for Will Clulee's little bitch *Midnight Honeysuckle*.

As the day progressed, so the standard looked fairly even and with the thick cover it was difficult for anyone, apart from the judges, to have any clear opinion on which dogs had excelled. The popular buzz around the spectators

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Andy Whitehouse's *Scarlet Dusk* retrieves a hen pheasant

as the day drew to a close was that Joe Shotton's FTCh *Chyknell Iris* must definitely be in contention after completing both her runs. However, many other dogs were still surviving. After thorough deliberation, the judges dropped any with lesser marks, leaving 20 to resume the Championship on day two.

A close-run finish

Once again, the weather was a crisp -8°C at the start, promising a lack of scent. Ian Openshaw handled Nigel Partiss's *Winhocklin Single Star of Tiptop Jack*, the last dog to complete the first round. The dog had a long run with good patterns and eventually produced a bird out of some rushes, but took a little handling to complete the short retrieve. Mini completed a good retrieve off the open field, but a strong runner eluded her. Fatty consolidated her previous day's work with excellent ground treatment and drive. She could easily have moved when another dog was sent past her for a retrieve, but stayed rock steady. *Selrach Daisy* had a run full

2011 Cocker Spaniel Championship results

1st FTCh *Heolybwich Fatty* (bitch)

Owner/handler: Ben Randall
Awarded: £100, the Lady Auckland Memorial Trophy, the Brook Challenge Cup, the C.A. Philips Perpetual Challenge Cup, the Prewett Cup and the silver frame from the Kennel Club.



The winner, Ben Randall, with his bitch FTCh *Heolybwich Fatty*

2nd FTCh *Chyknell Iris* (bitch)

Owner: Joe Shotton
Handler: Ian Openshaw
Awarded: £50, the Jack Windle Memorial Trophy and the Kirkstall Salver for the Gurs' Choice

3rd *Selrach Daisy* (bitch)

Owner: Charles Fearn
Handler: Simon Tyers
Awarded: £30 and the Chyknell Trophy

4th FTCh *Centrewalk Daydream* (bitch)

Owner/handler: Richard Preest

Diplomas of Merit

- FTCh *Chewely Scholes* (dog)
Owner/handler: Mark Whitehouse
- FTCh *Rowston Serena* (bitch)
Owner/handler: Dai Ormond
- FTCh *Brook Furlong of Tiptop Jack* (bitch)
Owner: Nigel Partiss
Handler: Ian Openshaw

Awards and prizes

The Peter Hall Trophy is awarded by the Cocker Spaniel Club to the cocker spaniel with the most points gained in Open stakes during the current season. It was presented to Richard Claydon's FTCh *Kingcott Eclipse*.

Sponsors and organisers

There are many people who made this Championship possible, and thanks must be extended to the Duke of Buccleuch for his generosity. Thanks must also go, of course, to the sponsor Eukanuba, for without its substantial input, it would be impossible for the Kennel Club to maintain the standard of the event.

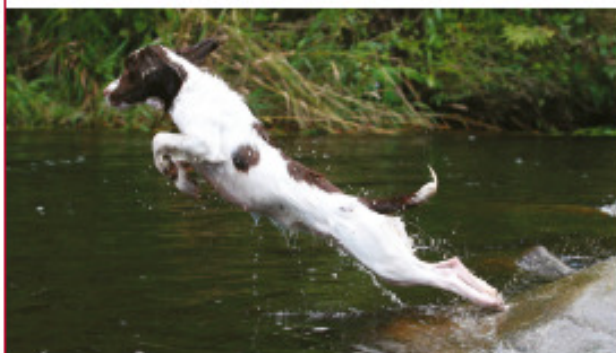
of excitement, with several flushes and three retrieves, while Brook Furlong finished with a long marked retrieve of a cock pheasant. FTCh *Chewely Twiggy* hunted with enthusiasm, picked a good running cock that was shot out of sight of the dog, had a short retrieve of a woodcock, but then got too excited while waiting for the dog to retrieve on the other side. A similar fate awaited Andy Whitehouse's *Scarlet Dusk* when, as she went to retrieve a bird shot fairly close, she let her eagerness be known. The last dog to complete the body of the stake was Spiky Will's FTCh *Maesydderwen Sarong*, before the judges, after a short, two-dog run-off, announced that the dog-work for the 2011 Cocker Championship was completed.

Back at Drumlanrig Castle, the Duke of Buccleuch paid tribute to the hard work of Rab Clark and his team. The winners were then announced in reverse order by the Championship secretary Mike Smith. Tremendous applause rang out as Ben Randall stepped forward to accept the trophy from the Duke of Buccleuch, and a delighted Gareth Davies received the Rivington Challenge Cup as the breeder of the winning cocker, FTCh *Heolybwich Fatty*. ■



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