

# Westminster: An exhibitor's viewpoint



*Dorinda Ostermann, left, and Tre make spectators smile in the Westminster benching area. Below: Dorinda puts Tre through his paces under the watchful eye of Westminster PBGV breed judge Dana Cline.*

Our first PBGV shown at Westminster was Ch. Lilith Chien Blanc des Rêves. Lilith was a singleton puppy out of our Ch. Foxmead's Chasseuse des Rêves, full sister to the first PBGV to place in the group at Westminster, Ch. Foxmead's La Belle Sauterelle (group 2, 1994). Showing a dog there that you have bred, whelped and taken to its championship is a thrill. Those first Westminster experiences were amazing for their newness and the number of PBGV breeders and owners in the benching area. What fun we had in 2004 and following years as Lilith's son Ch. Rêves d'épée de Trebuchet (Tre) was shown in 2007. But when 2008 came around, we decided it was time to show our own dog instead of placing him with a professional handler.

For most shows, one arrives at the show site an hour before ring time and departs immediately after judging.



Not at Westminster, which is an all-day-and-night affair. No one will forget that first walk up the ramp from the outside of Madison Square Garden, through the throngs of tables and dogs being groomed. Unlike other shows, there is no going back to the car in case you forget something! You really do have to carry everything in at once. We were lucky to have Tre's co-owner, Bernadette, with us to help. I was already overheated by the time we reached the benching area, but Tre calmly walked through the mayhem. It was his remarkable calm that kept me grounded during the long day and night of the show.

We were surprised to see only three PBGVs were to be benched, but we had no time to think about that. We had

spent the weeks prior to Westminster getting Tre ready for the big show. We stick to the breed standard language, "He should be shown naturally," with some "neatening,"



so not much was needed to get Tre ready for our 10:15 a.m. ring time, which came blazingly fast. The mass of humanity on the Garden floor, all longing to see their favorite breeds, makes it difficult to even walk from the benching area to the ring. But somehow the masses part and you make it to the ring in time for judging — or not, which happened to one handler who missed the breed judging. Oops! And then we were lined up with all of the other beautiful PBGVs and their handlers. I was happy that with armband No. 5, Tre and I were first to go into the ring so I didn't have much time to be nervous; Tre certainly wasn't. He wanted to talk to me about our shared experience the entire time he was in the ring. You know, "good voice freely and purposefully used." No other dog in the entire Garden was making any appreciable noise. Tre's handler from the previous year heard him while she was in the audience and later commented, "That's my boy, always talking."

The rings at Westminster are tiny in comparison to most shows, which makes it difficult for a PBGV who needs to move out to really show off their wonderful gait. After once around the ring and onto the table (where Tre kissed the judge) and around the ring again, I had time to reflect: "My boy and I were at Westminster, the culmination of late nights waiting for puppies to whelp and then sleepless nights making sure they are well-fed and warm, and then POOF! They are grown and showing off to thousands of people in the audience!" I was so proud of Tre that I got a little teary.

And then it was over. The handlers shook hands, and we were back in the benching area surrounded by throngs of adoring fans. Tre greeted literally hundreds of people during the three hours post ring time. He was the



only PBGV in the benched area until Juli Lacey-Black and Donna Bruce arrived in the early afternoon. I watched over and over as Tre drew people in to greet him; the folks would walk by, see Tre and have to come over to pet him. He would meet a spectator's eyes, then his tail would start to wag and he would reel them in to deliver kisses for everyone! Had I been in Tre's place, I would have been overwhelmed by the throngs. Not Tre.

Tre was exhausted by early afternoon, so Juli's Fabio took over greeting spectators for the rest of the afternoon while Tre slept with his head on a bag of ice, facing the fan. You can't imagine how tiring Westminster is for the dogs and their handlers until you have done it. From

8 a.m. until 8 p.m., the dog must be either in the ring or in the benched area, except when using the facilities. We all left the Garden exhausted, but already thinking about next year! Every breeder/owner should have this experience as you will have a greater appreciation for the wonderful personality which make up our beloved breed. Peggy and I first fell in love with the breed while watching them at Westminster, and you can't help but fall in love again as you watch people meet them for the first time. Thanks, Tre!

Note: Always have a native New Yorker with you who can double-park outside of the Garden and wisk you back to the hotel where you can watch the groups from the comfort of your hotel room. Thanks, Bernadette! ■

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