

## **Dr. Christiana C. Hartenstein**

*From her bio: It was not necessarily love at first sight with Irish Wolfhounds, these grey, hairy and - most of all gargantuan - creatures; however, after experiencing their most wonderful temperament (and after having a second look) I was sold and the rest is history. I purchased my first show dog in 1998 while still living in Germany. D'Wanja taught me a great deal about what to do - and what not - in the show ring and I will never forget how patient she was with me. I spent the next few years traveling through Europe, learning from established breeders, handling their hounds, and training my eye.*

*In 2002, I bred my first litter under the kennel name Rockhart. Am./Can. Ch. BISS, BIM Rockhart Anthem was the most successful representative of this litter. His son Am./Can. Ch. MBISS Rockhart Élysée was equally, if not more, successful in the show ring later on, so was his daughter Am./ Can. Ch. MBISS Rockhart Heresy. I left Rockhart in 2010 and have since moved on with my new kennel Samsara. The first puppies were born in December of 2020 and I am excited about their potential.*

*I am looking for a majestic and strong hound, full of curves, and light on the feet - this elusive combination of power and speed that makes our breed so unique.*

## **General Comments**

I want to thank the IWADV for inviting me to judge this 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary specialty show. I felt honored and privileged at the same time as this show, in the past, has always been one of my favorite ones to attend as an exhibitor. Fall is “my” season and this specialty is commonly the second to last of the year in the US, making it one step closer to finish out the year, hibernate, and resurface in spring. For me, it always had a soothing effect. Interestingly, the feeling was the same as I returned, this time as a judge.

The organization of this show was marvelous. Many volunteers and supporters pitched in to make this an enjoyable weekend for everyone. My three ring stewards Chet, Mary, and Linda were fantastic! They divided up most tasks independently and made sure I did not forget to hand out trophies and ribbons, mark my book, take pictures and write critiques. They covered all bases smoothly and efficiently. They even found my cell phone – and some chocolate when I was briefly running out of energy! Having such great support made my life in the ring much easier. It was a major reason for not having to extend judging more than necessary. A huge “thank you” to this great trio, and to everyone else who helped at the show!

Of course, such a specialty show would not be half as meaningful without the exhibitors. Irish Wolfhounds are most wonderful creatures and each single entry in this show reflects the care, dedication, and love of their owner(s) & breeder (s). The efforts to maintain even a single one of these hounds in tip-top condition are enormous and not for the faint-hearted. Dreams of having a top-notch show prospect who will go on to do well regardless of the venue more often

than not do not come true. I take my hat off to all of you who return year after year, with hounds well taken care off, showing them with pride and joy and hoping for a successful day. It was a wonderful sight that deserves respect and gratitude.

For the newcomers in the breed: Don't get discouraged if your hound did not win or place. Success does not come easily. There is a lot to learn, from other people in the breed and from the hounds themselves, whether they are your own or those of others. This breed will also teach you a great deal about yourself and what you are made of – regardless of whether you like it or not. Sometimes one has to leave to come back to do better the next time around, whatever the word “better” may mean for you.

Thank you all again for making this a memorable weekend!

### **About the Hounds**

The majority of hounds were presented in great physical condition – in good weight and with hard muscles. They were well groomed and shown to their advantage. Some handlers struggled to present their entries on a loose lead, which impacted movement and soundness. Plus, it took away from the hounds' presence. Temperaments in general were good, so were heads, tails, and coats.

The biggest surprise for me was the high number of entries lacking balance, male or female. I am not talking about the proportion of head to neck here, depth of chest to length of leg, or overall length of body to height. I am specifically talking about angulation as there were simply too many hounds with straight fronts and well-angulated hindquarters. Only in one or two entries was the front better than the rear. Balance is of utmost importance in a hunting dog, Irish Wolfhound or not, otherwise it wears out before the job is done. In our breed, the chase may take a while and hence, great endurance is needed. It's tough to last and not feel tired and sore if the sum of all parts is not functional.

I was also surprised to see so many entries lacking the typical greyhound-like shape. To me, they resembled boxes more than anything else. Quite a number of them, in addition, had short legs. The standard is very clear when it comes to outline; the word “long” is also mentioned 7 times altogether. Were they balanced? Many of them, yes. Did they resemble a greyhound-like breed? Not so much.

Fronts need watching as usual; very much like I wrote in my critique for the specialty of the Rocky Mountain Irish Wolfhound Association in 2020, a well-laid shoulder is a rare find these days. A good front is not only a long upper arm with good return and a good amount of fore chest - although these 2 specific aspects of the front construction were hit and miss as well.

Lastly, I want to mention necks – a most wonderful, and even more importantly, crucial piece of anatomy which in our breed has a distinct function and is well described in the standard by using words like “rather long,” “very strong,” “muscular” and “well arched.” While

my top winners all exemplified these descriptors, so many entries did not – making me wonder whether they could catch and hold down their quarry, and/or actually survive that battle.

When it comes to looking at the overall quality of the entries, I have to say the bitches were better than the males. And not just “a little better” – they were better by a large margin. The class dogs were challenging to sort through. Several males displayed the “great size and commanding appearance” I so appreciate. But unfortunately, they were either unbalanced in angulation as previously described or unable to move properly as evidenced by either the lack of soundness or constant pacing. Some actually looked quite flashy regardless of these faults! Another male, this one balanced and of impeccable type, simply ignored the constant encouragement of his handler to show off that “easy and active” gait he should possess based on his construction. Not wanting to be in the ring, he plodded along. This hound frustrated me a great deal as I strongly feel he could have gone much further than he did. At the end, two moderately sized males were awarded Winner’s Dog and Reserve Winner’s Dog – both within the standard regarding size, both masculine and strong enough, well-balanced, and efficient on the move. Compromising size for the lack of overall balance, movement – and, of course, greyhound shape, is nowhere written in the standard; in fact, it states clearly, “it is desired to firmly establish a race that shall average from 32-34 inches in dogs, showing the requisite power, activity, courage and symmetry. “

The large bitch classes, on the other hand, were packed with quality and in some of them, I wished for being able to hand out more ribbons. I truly enjoyed my final line-up for the Winner’s bitch competition; while varying in type, I saw great promise for the future in the junior classes (6 months up to 18 months) and a great reflection of the current state in the remaining classes. So many youngsters, between 18 and 24 months of age, were right at the verge for a break through, coming together in their bodies and minds to be, in a few months, true challengers for those bitches in their prime still enjoying the limelight. The one question I continued to ponder was where the stud dogs for this large number of beautiful bitches are to come from ....

My final 5 top winning hounds were lovely representatives of the breed and true to the standard, displaying the “great size and commanding appearance” for their respective gender, the required greyhound shape with that wolf killer-look, balance, and of course that “easy and active gait.” Congratulations to all!