



A JUNIOR HANDLER'S DREAM

by Issac Clark

March 2020, this month is of special importance to me, Isaac Clark. As during this past March, I had the distinct honour of representing Canada as a junior handler at the International Junior Handling Competition. Crufts takes place in Birmingham, England, and is widely renowned as the "World's Greatest Dog Show," and it sure holds up to these claims! Shopping, demonstrations, agility, obedience, conformation, there is always something to watch or to do. It was a blast exploring the show and being able to see the grand scale of it all in person. It was also extremely interesting to see breeds that we don't necessarily see a lot of here in Canada. Another thing I noticed was that some of the grooming and showing styles and practices in England were remarkably different than in Canada. And the size of the entries for each breed was incredible; the Irish Wolfhounds, for instance, had an entry in the hundreds!

Going into more detail about some of the activities at Crufts, there are more vendors at this one show than exhibitors at one of our shows! And with such a vast number of vendors comes an enormous amount of products. You can buy anything from dog toys and crates, to bronze statues of almost every breed of dog. Pre-built grooming stations equipped with everything you'd ever need to groom a dog (it even includes a bathtub!). Say shopping isn't your thing, well then be sure to stop by the Arena to watch demonstrations and presentations galore. From police dogs to mini-plays, to Golden Retrievers organizing them in eye-catching patterns. On top of that, conformation, agility, and obedience events are happening throughout the day, each with an absurd entry. Long story short, there's never a

shortage of things to do.

To qualify for the International Junior Handling Competition, a Junior must first qualify for and then win their "Zone Final." Canada is divided into several Zones, each of which will host a Zone Final. The top 4 score-wise Junior Handlers from each age category's, Novice and Open classes will compete at this Final. The winner of each Zone's Final will then go on to compete at the Canadian National Junior Handling Competition. Then the winner of the Canadian National will then be sent to Crufts to represent Canada at the International Junior Handling Competition. As March approached, I prepared for Crufts by practicing establishing a quick repour with breeds from the majority of the 7 groups. I also studied the rings at dog shows to help myself get a better general idea of how different

breeds with more distinct showing styles were shown. I also watched previous year's competitions to try and visualize the big day.

As for the competition itself. The eve of the competition found us gathering for official photographs before a dress rehearsal so that we could get a better idea of how the next day's events would be



conducted. One funny detail about the dress rehearsal is that, as we were going to meet our dogs for the next day's competition, none of us had a dog to practice with. We had to use our imaginations to fill in the gaps of reality. The pure joy of watching some of the finest handlers pretend to stack dogs of varying sizes still cracks me up to this day. Then it was to dinner, then speeches, with each Junior emphasizing that we had already won and to just have fun on the big day tomorrow. Speeches were concluded, the

gift exchange commenced, which was both fun and chaotic; and then it was off to bed for some needed rest.

The nerves had really begun to kick in now, and I was feeling the stress, to say the least! And it seems that the other Juniors were dealing with similar emotions. When my mom and I went to the area reserved for Canada in the gathering ring, we met the Nova Scotia Duck Toller I was going to show. I had requested a Duck Toller; however, I didn't know the specific dog I'd be taking into the first round. I was beyond relieved, she (her name is Izzy) was everything my mom and I had



hoped for and more, and there was an immediate bond between us.

And after about 30 minutes of working with her and her handler/owner, getting advice, and testing different tactics with her, it was time. My heart could have powered a truck with how fast it was beating. The feeling grew as I became closer and closer to my turn (I was in fifth in line, to begin with, as it was ordered alphabetically). But as soon as my toe hit the iconic green carpet, my worries melted away. I was just there doing my thing with Izzy, not noticing the cameras or the crowd.

The second round came shortly after, where I then took in an American Cocker Spaniel, who was a little bit mom-oriented, and so was more of a challenge to show.



But things still went great, and after watching myself, I can say I'm beyond happy with how Izzy, Zolo (the American Cocker),



and I showed together.

Then it was onto the third round, where I once again took Izzy into the ring.



There they called out the top 10 juniors handlers, and they went on to compete for the top spots, while the rest of the juniors watched the remaining competition.

After a little bit more shopping, that concluded my trip to Crufts.

Crufts was an absolutely amazing and incredibly humbling honour to participate in. I give my biggest

thanks to everybody who supported me in any way, shape, and form; donations, advice, wishing me luck, all of it means so much to me. Thank you everybody so much once again.

Example of Guides Lines for LCI Competition During COVID-19

Abstracts from ECHO Club¹ (Elite Coursing Hound Ontario (ECHO))



A medical doctor and student nurse will be on site to ensure adherence to all Health Canada.²

Nursing student, FTS and FTC are available to clarify procedures.

For the competitors

Face coverings are required for all competitors. Please provide food, water, and shade for yourself and your dogs. Bring your pens and pencils, masks and wipes.

Please park a safe distance from each other.

If socializing, there will be no groupings of more than five people outside your household, each person standing 2 metres apart. No handshakes or contact with other competitors

No competitors will be allowed at the FTS table. Boundaries will be marked and designated areas with hand sanitizers available.

For all Committee members

Face coverings are required for all Field Committee members and volunteers. Gloves may be worn for any high touch areas (not required if the same one or two people are touching those areas as Lure, Bobinator.

Limited designated FTC members handle all equipment.

Touch areas on the equipment/machine to be disinfected in between operators.

The Roll Call and Running the Dogs

Roll call performed at the competitors' car. Human COVID-19 questionnaire checked.

LCI dogs will be measured with minimal contact. Wickets disinfected as required.

Owners will swipe their female dog(s) and show the inspection committee the tissue.

Lures will be a minimum of 2 metres apart.

The dogs will run in alphabetical order by call name. This will expedite things given the Covid rules.

You may leave your car up to 30 minutes before your predetermined running time to dress, potty and warm up your dog.

Once you have finished running your dog, go directly to your vehicle.

Real Time scoring is being assessed. Only one person handles the ribbons. If virtual ribbons or certificates are utilized, these will be emailed.

¹Elite Coursing Hounds of Ontario

²<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/coronavirus-disease-covid-19.html> <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/index.html>