

Jamie Harshfield



What is your background?

My involvement with purebred dogs began in the 80's when I purchased a Saint Bernard. I was encouraged to show him by the breeder but I had no interest at that time. I purchased my first Great Dane in the early 90's the breeder wanted me to show him and the rest is history.

Were you once a junior yourself? If so, what kind of dog did you start out with and how old were you?

No, I never competed in junior showmanship.

How long have you been judging juniors?

I made application to AKC in 2009, prior to that I had judged numerous matches and 4-H.

What do you look for in the junior when judging?

I like to see teamwork. The junior and the dog should work well together. It should appear effortless. The dog and junior should have mutual admiration for each other. Having a GREAT rapport with your dog will take you far.

What is the most common mistake you see juniors make in the ring?

We ALL make mistakes, nobody is perfect. If you make a mistake in the ring and realize it, simply correct it and continue on, as if it never happened. If you are unaware of an error, do not be afraid to ask the judge after all junior judging is completed. Most judges are more than happy to discuss your performance and offer constructive criticism. Take something away from the time you spent in the ring. Go home and focus on those specific areas that need improvement.

What is your biggest pet peeve when it comes to Junior Judging?

I cannot say that I have any when it comes to junior showmanship. It is an opportunity to learn and to perfect your skills as a handler. It is hard to criticize those of us who are at different stages of the learning process.

What's the funniest moment that you recall in the Junior's ring?

There are so many. One that I recall is the time I had asked to see the bite. The junior was trying so hard to show me and each time while attempting to show the bite he too was showing his bite opening his mouth wider and wider revealing his missing two front teeth. I tried to maintain my composure, when the crowd broke out in laughter it was all over, I lost it.

How do you feel about being approached by a Junior about placement?

I encourage ALL juniors to ask questions at the conclusion of judging. If you want to become a better handler you need to know what improvements should be made.

What do you personally see are the good or bad trends in Junior Showmanship today?

Trends are just that.....trends....they come and go. You should be open minded to try new things (at practice, not in the ring for the first time). My advice is to focus on your own dog, become a trendsetter, not a trend follower!

What piece of advice would you give a junior when showing in the Junior's ring?

Here is a list of my top 10 tips:

1. Find a GREAT mentor who is willing to offer their words of wisdom
2. Expect the unexpected. Anything can happen you should always be prepared for that
3. Try to handle as many other breeds as possible, step out of your comfort zone
4. Know your dog's assets as well as their faults. Focus on the positive
5. Study. Know the rules as well as the ring procedures
6. Be confident. Not cocky, confident. ALWAYS present your dog with the notion that he/she is the best dog in the ring
7. Practice, Practice, Practice!
8. Don't throw in the towel. Even if you think the judge has made their final placements....maybe they have not. Keep working
9. Have Fun
10. Be a GOOD SPORT! ALWAYS be courteous to your judge and fellow exhibitors

GDR would like to thank Jamie for taking the time to answer our questions.