

Doberman Pinscher, Cavalier King Charles Spaniel continue their winning ways over strong fields

By Ranny Green

Photos courtesy of Randy Roberts



SATURDAY (MARCH 12) 130TH SEATTLE KENNEL CLUB DOG SHOW BEST-IN-SHOW WINNER MICHELLE SANTANA, OF SUNNY VALLEY, ORE., AND FIFI, A DOBERMAN PINSCHER, STAND ALONGSIDE JUDGE KENNETH BUXTON, OF KINGWOOD, TEXAS, LEFT, AND SEATTLE KENNEL CLUB MEMBERS JULIE HAMASAKI AND TOM GODWIN.

A sleek Doberman Pinscher and a charismatic Cavalier King Charles Spaniel, both of which have been on a winning roll lately, continued their momentum March 12-13 at the Seattle Kennel Club Dog Shows at Qwest Field Event Center before 7,500 spectators.

Michelle Santana, of Sunny Valley, Ore. (20 miles north of Grants Pass) and Fifi, the Working Group winner, took the top prize Saturday over a strong Select Seven field. For Santana, who has been associated with the breed for three decades, it was a third win in four shows, two of the earlier ones coming at large shows in an Arizona cluster the previous weekend.

It's somewhat of a rarity for an owner/breeder/handler to win Best In Show at a major AKC event. But the affable Patrick Kelly, of Stanwood, Wash., put that to rest Sunday, guiding a perky 3-year-old Cavalier named Miles to the top prize over a field that included four of the same finalists from a day earlier.

This was 2-year-old Fifi's (GCH, CH Protocol's Veni Vidi Vici) seventh Best In Show, along with breed wins at the prestigious Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show in New York last month and the AKC/Eukanuba National Championship Show in Long Beach, Calif., in December.

"She has an intense desire, symmetrical balance and that solid noble temperament called for in the breed standard," says Santana, the American Kennel Club's 2010 Working Group Breeder of the Year. Fifi, the No. 1 Doberman in the country last year, is owned by and bred by Kevin and Jocelyn Mullins, of Lewis Center, Ohio.

When Santana saw a photo of Fifi at 5 months old, she recognized potential. And upon spotting her in the hallway at a Doberman Pinscher Club of America national specialty when the dog was 17 months old, she recalled, "I was moved to tears. I thought she was the best Doberman I had ever seen and needed to be campaigned nationally so everyone could appreciate her."

Fifi joined Santana in Southern Oregon in January 2010 and was shown steadily last year. "I like to call it the snowball effect," says Santana. "She just got better as the year went on and in the process we built a solid trust in each other."

Strong financial backing needed to campaign a dog heavily is lacking, however. "That's what you need to get the dog out there week to week," emphasizes Santana. "We want to show the entire sport how beautiful she is and maintain her points ranking."

Her campaigning schedule, Santana concedes, is month-to-month, because of financing and whether Mullins, who is campaigning Fifi's sister, wants this big winner returned home. "I am truly hopeful," Santana says, "she will allow me to continue to campaign her."



PATRICK KELLY, OF STANWOOD, WASH., HOLDS MILES, HIS CAVALIER KING CHARLES SPANIEL, BEST-IN-SHOW WINNER OF THE 131ST SEATTLE KENNEL CLUB ALL-BREED DOG SHOW AT QWEST FIELD EVENT CENTER SUNDAY, MARCH 13. FROM LEFT, ARE JUDGE JOANNE (JAN) PAULK, OF SANTA FE, N.M.; KELLY; DON HANSON AND TOM GODWIN, OF THE SEATTLE KENNEL CLUB.

Miles' (GCH, CH Full of Malarkey Miles of Aisles) triumph Sunday was his second Best In Show, complementing 20 Toy Group triumphs. A singleton in his litter, Miles' gaudy stats sheet, like Fifi's, also includes breed wins at Westminster and Eukanuba. Miles' resume also includes a national specialty win at the American Cavalier King Charles Club 2009 show.

Like Santana, Kelly and his wife, Tamara, are longtime breeders. The couple has been involved with Cavaliers for 16 years and believes Miles is their best yet. "He has that it factor with a melting expression," says Kelly. "He knows his limits but exudes plenty of confidence, too. Everything must be in place for him. In his mind, he's definitely the alpha dog with our other Cavaliers."

Tamara Kelly lists Miles' talking points as good type, head and structure, all key components of the total breed package. "He's a leader in a quiet, peaceful way," she explains. "He really loves to go, whether it's in

our motor home or on a plane (where he travels in cabin). The breed is a companion spaniel and he totally lives up to that no matter where his travels take him.”

Miles thrives on daily walks to the lake (the Kellys have a lakefront home), where part of the ritual includes practice stacking on a picnic table and a follow-up biscuit treat. “He has us pretty well trained,” quips Tamara Kelly.

In a highly unusual twist at the two weekend shows, the same performers won back-to-back titles in junior showmanship Best Junior Handler and obedience High In Trial.

Haley Pemble, a 16-year-old Monroe High School junior, guided 6-year-old Elliot, a Shetland Sheepdog, to junior showmanship wins, her first in back-to-back major AKC events. The smooth, young performer, also a member of the Future Farmers of America, Honor Society and the school band (percussion), handled five other dogs



SIXTEEN-YEAR-OLD HALEY PEMBLE, OF SNOHOMISH, WASH., WON BACK-TO-BACK TOP JUNIOR SHOWMANSHIP AWARDS MARCH 12-13 AT THE 130TH AND 131ST SEATTLE KENNEL CLUB DOG SHOWS. ALONGSIDE HER IS KATIE EFFERT, OF SEATTLE, JUDGE OF THE MARCH 13 COMPETITION

in breed competition Saturday and four Sunday, winning a Herding Group 4th place Sunday with a Belgian Tervuren.

“These wins are special,” she says, “but they are so much more special coming here, right in my own backyard. And placing in group just made it extra special.”

Sharon Colvin, of Seattle, and her incredible Golden Retriever Chilly, won both High In Trial (198, Utility B) and High Combined (395.5) Saturday. She added a High In Trial Sunday (196.5 in a Utility B runoff). High Combined Sunday went to Vern Olson, of Edmonds, and his Portuguese water dog with 389.

Chilly is also a therapy dog and blood donor at the Animal Critical Care and Emergency Services blood bank in Seattle, having donated 16 times, with a 17th scheduled March 25. (A full pint is taken at each visit for dogs 55 pounds plus. After about six weeks, that is replaced in the animal’s body, at which point it is safe for the dog to donate again.)

Next year's event is scheduled March 10-11. It will feature the always popular demonstration events, along with agility, rally, obedience and conformation competition. The latter most likely will include the AKC's newest breeds recognized in January, the Entlebucher Mountain Dog, the six-toed Norwegian Lundehund and the ancient and rare Xoloitzcuintli.