



Dommerprofil:

Michael Behrmanns korthårs-saluki
MCH Villymona Sawahin i aksjon

Michael Behrmann

Michael Behrmann, tysk lc-dommer med mange års erfaring fra hele europa, dømte på den internasjonale lc-prøven på Lillehammer i juni. I dette intervjuet forteller han litt om sine tanker rundt lc, mynder og utfordringene som dommer.

Eva Kristine Wiik

Could you please tell us a little about who you are, your background in sighthounds, and what type of hounds you have?

My name is Michael Behrmann. I live in Cuxhaven, a small town where the river Elbe runs into the North Sea. Nearly 40 years ago I started my "sighthound career" with whippets, but for the last 18 years I've been living with salukis. At the present, I have four bitches and one male, both feathered and smooth. As of 2001 I've been co-breeder of the Sawahin kennel. I like the moderate saluki type. Show *and* performance is for me important. The saluki isn't specialized for only one arena - show or coursing/race tracking - he is an excellent combiner! For carrying out this idea in Norway as well, I donated a special trophy which awards excellency in both fields.

When did your interest in LC begin and when did you become a judge?

When I started with salukis I noticed very soon that race-tracking was a little bit boring for them. Since I'm fortunate enough to own a fenced-in forest, approximately 70.000 square

meters, I became aware of their excellent hunting abilities. From there on, it did not take long before we tried lure coursing. In 1998, I became a LC judge.

In how many different countries have you judged at LC trials, and what are the differences in how the trials are held?

I've judged LC trials in the Netherlands, Belgium, Switzerland, Italy, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Russia, Poland and, naturally, in Germany. If it is an international LC trial there are no differences, because the trial is regulated by FCI rules. If it is a national trial, the differences are mainly in the amount of points given. In Germany we have two systems:

- Norddeutsches System: 3 field judges - each can give 0 to 16 points, and a master - awarding points from -8 up to +8
- LCO-System: 2 judges. They give 0 to 6 points in five different categories.

It is only the LCO coursing that awards a dog with certificates towards the LC champion title.

You need four certificates in order to receive the champion title!

How do you perceive the level of quality in Norwegian LC hounds compared to hounds in other countries?

This is not answered in one sentence. Generally speaking, Norwegian sighthounds are on the same level as hounds anywhere else in Europe. But, because of the few LC events in a year, the dogs in Norway often run a little more “breed typical”. Let me explain: For example, in Germany we have about 40 LC events a year. If you’ve visited a lot of these LC’s you can imagine that we educate our dogs to perform correctly in the field. The dogs learn that the lure’s behavior is different from the hare’s in open field coursing, and so they’re trained to hunt in a “plastic world”.

What do you consider to be the most challenging when judging at a LC trial?

Well, again a question not made for one sentence. Here some are some of the challenges:

- to find a course safe enough for the dogs, and tricky enough for judging
- concentration
- being self-confident enough to make fast and correct decisions
- being self-confident enough to address the LC-officials about any problems that may surface
- knowing the difference between real live hunting and LC
- knowing the hunting abilities of all the breeds

You judged at the International LC trial in Lillehammer in June. What impression are you left with after seeing the dogs compete? Did they



Michael Behrmann og Villymona på internasjonal lc-prøve i Skokloster, hvor hun ble beste tispe

perform well accordingly to the breed standard, and how was the level of competition?

After we changed the track of the course (once again thanks to Geir and the other guys for their co-operation) in order to make it a little bit more difficult for the dogs, I saw dogs with good, and typical, hunting abilities. However, some of the dogs weren’t in as good a condition as I would expect a sighthound to be! Especially a lot of the oriental breeds didn’t have enough stamina for this course which wasn’t very long! I remember Ritzas Phantera, a little saluki bitch. She was excellent in the conformation show a day earlier. She performed very breed typically on the field, and she was in good condition.

In the US it is not uncommon to have the different BOB winners compete against each other. What are your thoughts on this? Is this an American phenomenon, or is it being done in Europe as well?

From my viewpoint this is a great thing! I have some experience with salukis/deerhounds, salukis/borzoi, salukis/whippets and salukis/pharaohs. It is always very exciting to see how quickly the different breeds start working together as

a team. This has to be worth considering elsewhere as well!

Do you think show dogs and coursing dogs can compete on the same level in LC, or has the exterior in the different coursing breeds become more important than their functionality and instinct as a breed used for hunting?

This is a very controversial question! Normally, there doesn't have to be any differences, but, some breeders have special ideas about beauty and some breeders have special ideas on how fast a dog should be. I don't think we should invent the sighthound once more! If we have dogs from breeders whose aim is to preserve a breed, I think we will see dogs that are able to be excellent in both arenas. However, if the aim of the breeding is defined otherwise, we can see afghans with problems due to their long coats or afghans that are faster than a saluki. Also, we can see greyhounds with great problems in speed, and we can see borzois that are too tall to manage a right-angle turn, and so forth.

Why is LC important?

For most owners and breeders of sighthounds, LC is the only way to give their dogs a close-to-natural opportunity to work. Race-tracking, in my opinion, only satisfies the dog's joy of running. LC is also a kind of control. It can control that

the constant breeding of sighthounds is kept moderate, or it can pinpoint if the breeding has specialized in one, or more, specific attributes of a breed. These possible differences require judges with excellent education and a lot of experience.

In a LC trial, what characteristics do you put emphasis on in the different breeds? How do you judge, i.e., a greyhound compared to an afghan hound?

Well, as I said above, in LC we need top educated judges with much experience. The best way to gain experience is by taking part in a real live hunting, with your own dogs, or as a spectator. I have seen nearly all of the sighthound breeds working in live coursing so I have a very firm idea of what sighthounds should be able to do. Also, LC is more of a fun game and very far away from the natural hunt.

Ideally, when it comes to judging the different breeds, there should be different courses! But there aren't. So, judging is about comparing the real hunt and my "standard" to the actual work done on the course. For example, a greyhound must show me that it is able to slow down its speed at the right time in order to react to the fast movements of the lure. I also want to see attentive ears and the hound lifting up its head at the right time. This shows me that the



MCH Zando Khan Sawahin

hound is paying close attention to the lure. Also, a greyhound has to immediately show me its will to catch the lure. An afghan should hunt with endurance, not giving one hundred percent from the beginning. Instead it should carry its head upright, moving elegantly with long and stretched-out jumps. Remember where the afghan comes from!

In your opinion, how should a sakuki, a borzoi and an italian greyhound run in order to perform perfectly at LC?

Well, it will be too much to explain each breed's special behavior in the field. Generally, all breeds must be in good condition and they must perform accordingly to their breed's way of working. The oriental breeds are long-distance runners, while the whippet is a "short-track killer". This is a question worth discussing for a whole weekend!

How should a LC field be constructed? And, should one expect an Italian Greyhound to run the same field as a Galgo Español?

The best case scenario is a special course for each breed, but that isn't possible. So, we have to find compromises. A well structured ground, approximately 1.000 meters, with some trees or bushes, which also offer a variation in daylight throughout the day, is very fortunate. The course can easily be fitted for certain breeds by removing, or adding some pulleys.

Finally, do you have any particularly fond memories of certain dogs or trials that have made an impression on you?

I remember two completely black borzois I judged two years ago in Poland. Until this day I've never seen such good borzoi coursers. At



MCH Tashari Sawahin i full fart gjennom skogen "sin"

the European Championship in Finland this year I judged the podenco ibicenco, and I remember two males that, in my eyes, were the best of all the breeds. The 2005 Championship had two very different courses which made it possible for the dogs to show their different abilities on the field. ■

To all the readers of "Mynden":

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

m.behrmann@t-online.de