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Victory and Vindication for the Beagle at Last

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Beagle lovers were vindicated last week when Uno, a beautiful 15-inch Beagle won “Best in Show” at New York’s prestigious Westminster Kennel Club. This great win for the famous hound represents vindication for the Beagle — the all-American breed. Why has it taken so long?

Writing in *The Weekly Standard*, Philip Terzian remarks that dog show aficionados “constitute an interesting subculture in American life.” No doubt about that. Most Americans know and care little about the entire enterprise, but the television audience for the annual Westminster Club show has been growing.

Many observers believe that the win for the Beagle — the first for a hound in years — will boost ratings and raise interest. Interestingly, Terzian sees a bigger phenomenon behind the fact that hounds have rarely won:

It is, perhaps, a little unfair, but over the decades the Westminster show has tended to conform to stereo-type. There is a preponderance of well-bred, well-fed female owners and trainers, and exquisitely groomed male handlers, and the lucky dogs chosen for Best in Show have had a tendency to resemble the humans surrounding them. Needless to say, certain breeds—particularly of the delicate, long-haired, extravagantly barbered classes—have dominated the proceedings, and with wearisome regularity.

He also wondered why this year was different:

There are two or three possibilities. The first, and most prosaic, may be that the judge for the final round was J. Donald Jones of Marietta, Ga., a retired Emory psychologist and dog fancier whose elderly demeanor and port-wine southern accent suggested someone who had grown up with hounds, and retained happy memories. From an anthropological standpoint, past (female) judges had visibly recoiled from hounds—beagles, bassets, harriers, and foxhounds especially—but Dr. Jones seemed quite taken with Uno.

Well, the four-legged pom-poms didn’t win this one — the Beagle did. The resident hound at our house, **Baxter the Wonder Beagle** [see photo], is basking in reflected glory. Then again, Beagles are not the most reflective creatures. Think cute . . . not smart.

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