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News & Articles

A Show Dog's life is full of Snacks and Attention

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You could hear some of the contestants from a quarter-mile away. And occasionally you'd have to step around a reminder that they were dogs.

But with just a few of those qualifiers, the purebred critters that competed at Del Monte Kennel Club's All-Breed Shows and Obedience Trials in Carmel Valley on Saturday were like beauty contestants anywhere.

Oh they might have paid a little extra attention to the pockets of the people who escorted them around the ring and stood with them as they posed.

For Bentley, a 5-year-old golden retriever who belongs to Janice Hess of Danville, that kind of attention earned him snacks of sirloin roast and bagels that his professional handler, Frank Cresci of Walnut Creek, carried in the pocket of his dapper blue blazer.

Cresci had a pocket bulging with slices of steak, compressed meat and bagel bits for the contestants he was handling.

The snacks are used as bait to hold the dogs' attention so they will keep their ears up and exhibit their best expressions, sad Cresci, a longshoreman in Oakland when he's not working with dogs.



Bentley, who won the best of show in the sporting dogs category Saturday, liked the meat treats just fine, Hess said. But for some reason, he's especially partial to bagels, she said.

When he's not away at a weekend show, Bentley is a house dog, Hess said. He sleeps in her bed and he's allowed on the sofa, she said. For exercise he swims in the pool, retrieving things thrown for him of

course, and runs 25 minutes a day on a treadmill, Hess said.

The group competition that he won was the third of four levels of contests in the dog show, which is being held Saturday and today at the Carmel Middle School.

With more than 900 dogs representing at least 100 breeds entered in this year's competition, the dogs compete first in classes based on age and gender, explained Wendy Johnston of Carmel Valley, chairwoman of this year's show.

The winners of the class competition then compete for best of breed honors.

Then there are seven groups -- sporting dogs, herders, hounds and so on -- of competition. And those winners compete for the best of show, Johnston explained.

There will be two best of shows in this year's contest, one Saturday and another one today. This is the first time the prestigious Del Monte Kennel Club has had a two-day contest, which has turned the lawn of the Carmel Middle School into a campground of recreational vehicles, trailers, tents and vans.

It has traditionally had a one-day show in Pebble Beach in May, then a one-day show in Carmel Valley in August. Last year was the final show at Pebble Beach.

The kennel club decided to combine its two annual shows into one weekend, Johnston said. The Carmel Middle School schedule made it a July event, she said.

There are 200 to 300 fewer dogs in the show this year, she said, probably because of conflicts with other shows and events...

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