

Get The Winning Edge

The Professional Handler in the Scheme of Things



Many people in this wacky sport of purebred dogs have a prejudiced view of the professional handler, especially the neophyte exhibitors. They see the handlers garner the majority of top wins and hear the ringside chatter that the handlers have an “in” with the judges and that the fix is on and only the handlers will win that day. Bull!



Unfortunately many neophytes can't handle their way out of a paper bag. Many make their dogs look so bad they couldn't win if they were showing Lassie incarnate.

As these neophytes progress, so do their skills, but by and large they don't stack up in trimming, training and conditioning with expert professional handlers. You will note I said expert. Handlers come in various gradations of skill just like actors, judges, lawyers, etc.

Many moons ago AKC licensed handlers, and its requirements were tough. Basically, would-be handlers had to serve apprenticeships under other handlers, have adequate kennel facilities, be recommended by their mentors, and be fiscally responsible. Then, and only then, would they be granted licenses and be allowed to call themselves professional handlers. Many of the top-notch handlers of today came through that system.



Unfortunately, because of legal problems, AKC dropped their oversight of handlers. For many years anyone could call themselves an agent or handler. This caused a great many problems in the care and handling of dogs. Finally, in 1999 the handler associations banded together to ask the AKC to again take the responsibility of overseeing professional handlers. This new oversight program is now in place.