

Pointer's air of confidence

by: ALTHEA PETERSON World Staff Writer
Tuesday, February 17, 2009
2/17/2009 4:26:45 AM

Kelley Cheek searched for nearly a year and a half for the perfect pointer puppy, but when she found it, she wasn't sure how to break the news to her roommate, Sara Apel.

"She said, 'Don't freak out; I got a new dog and she's here,' Apel said. "So we came home with a new dog."

Cheek bought the 8-week-old female pointer three years ago at a dog show and named it "Savvy" after the word Captain Jack Sparrow often said in the movie "Pirates of the Caribbean." Last week, Savvy became the top pointer at the Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show.

Even with her new dog celebrity and champion status, Savvy still lives a normal household dog's life in Tulsa with Cheek, 31 and Apel, 28. The household also includes a 5-year-old male pointer named Oriole, a 2-year-old female Italian greyhound named Leia and even a calico cat named Toffee who thinks it's a dog.

The bright lights, national television cameras and judges are now replaced with squeaky dog toys and sofa pillows. Cheek, who works as a dog groomer at PetSmart, said this is exactly what good breeders want for their dogs with show potential.

"Day-to-day life is absolutely no different," Cheek said. "First of all, they're pets, but if you want to show them, that's OK. A good breeder is primarily concerned with them going to a good home."

However, from the very start, Savvy's breeder and Cheek knew that when Savvy wasn't having fun pointing out neighborhood birds, she would be best suited for the shows.

"She had this air about her," Cheek said. "She was very confident, very outgoing, like she wanted to show off. When you're a breeder, you want the best of the sire and the dam to come out in the puppy. The father was a very good mover, while the mom was flashy and a little more 'typey.' Savvy really got the best of both worlds."

Savvy trained as a hunting dog and became a champion show dog last fall. Her win in the "best of breed" category at Westminster was only her second win as a champion pointer. The win is still a surprise to Cheek and Apel, even if they saw those winning show-dog characteristics in Savvy early.

"I didn't know she would be this good," Cheek said. "I had hoped, though. Definitely."

A return trip to Westminster and other dog shows depends on which judges will appear at the shows.

Because of the cost of going to various shows year-round, Cheek said Savvy's next showing will likely be the March 28-29 Claremore Kennel Club of Oklahoma show at Will Rogers Downs.

For those looking to enter the sport, Cheek said she has been in it since she was 10 years old and that it isn't too expensive to start. However, Cheek said the decision to get a dog shouldn't be made lightly.

"It's important to look for a reputable, good breeder, not a puppy mill or a dog store," she said. "It's important for people to really do their research when getting a dog."

Althea Peterson 581-8361
althea.peterson@tulsaworld.com

Associate Images:



Kelley Cheek of Tulsa sits with her Westminster- winning pointer, Savvy, on Monday. CORY YOUNG/Tulsa World

Copyright © 2009, World Publishing Co. All rights reserved

[Return to Story](#)