

Tulsa dog shows some N.Y. savvy

by: ALTHEA PETERSON World Staff Writer
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For Tulsan Kelley Cheek, winning best of breed was only the first step Tuesday for her pointer, Savvy.

Competing for best in the sporting group and possibly for best of show at the top dog show in the world would be, in her words, "icing."

"I was standing ringside just a few feet away," Cheek said of the pointer competition. "I cried. I was so excited."

Savvy, who will turn 3 years old next month, was named best pointer at the Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show in New York City. With that distinction came the opportunity to compete with other top sporting-group dogs.

A Sussex spaniel placed first among the sporting breeds Tuesday evening, shutting Savvy out of the top competition. The Sussex was later named best in show.

"It's honestly been a little overwhelming," Cheek said before the sporting breeds round. "I've been showing dogs since I was 10 — almost 22 years now — and I've never been here. I was in awe and overwhelmed."

Linda Clark, a Tulsa dog handler, put Savvy through her paces Tuesday.

"This is actually the first time Savvy's been shown by someone else," Cheek said. "I didn't feel like Savvy would do this well."

But like a good girl, Savvy took her best-of-breed win in stride in the midst of all the excitement, Cheek said.

"Savvy is such a good dog, so it was just another show to her," Cheek said.

The Tulsa area has other ties to the show, as well. Fred Bassett of Broken Arrow judged the toy dog group competition Tuesday.

Bassett, a retired information technology specialist, has been judging dog shows since 1977 and judged at two previous Westminster shows.

"Westminster is fairly unique in that it was the first of the shows to be televised," he said. "It gives people an opportunity to see every breed, and they talk a little about each breed, so it's helpful if you're in the market for a new dog."

Bassett said he has seen successful breeders and owners from Oklahoma in the past, but for Tulsa to have the top pointer is no small feat.

"Westminster invites the top dogs of each breed, so it's the top competition," he said.

Savvy qualified for Westminster by being declared champion at a Florida dog show last fall. "To win even your breed is a huge accomplishment," Cheek said.

Pointer power

- Pointers, including the German short haired variety, have won best in show at Westminster a total of five times, including 1925, 1932, 1974, 1986 and 2005.
- The "sporting group," which includes pointers, has won 18 best in show awards, more than any other group at Westminster. The most successful sporting breed is the English springer spaniel, which has won six times.

- The Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show is hosted in New York's Madison Square Garden. The first time MSG sold out both days of the event was the last year a pointer won best in show, in 2005.

Source: *Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show*

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Associate Images:



Savvy, a pointer owned by Tulsan Kelley Cheek, is put through her paces at the Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show by Linda Clark, a Tulsa dog handler. Courtesy

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