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July 2008

AKC Gazette

Breed column: Pointers

Sportsmanship

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Sportsmanship. What exactly does that mean? Webster defines it as “fairness in following the rules of the game.” The AKC has a Code of Sportsmanship. It is printed in every catalog and premium list. Before reading any further, I encourage you to take a moment and look at the code the AKC has laid out for us. You can find it on page 2 of this issue. The code has a lot to say about how each one of us—whether a judge, handler, owner, or breeder—is to think and act at AKC events.

After recently rereading the code, I thought of my experience at the APC’s national championship field trial. One of the first braces of the morning brought two professional handlers (for this article I am going to call them Bob and Joe) to the line. Now, while most of the competitors thus far had said good luck before the start of the brace, these two pros took the time to shake hands and say good luck before turning their dogs loose. From watching the braces before, you saw handlers trying to keep track of their dogs. This brace was different. If one handler was looking for his dog and the other saw, they would communicate to each other. “Hey Joe, dog’s at 12 o’clock!” “Thanks Bob!” and so forth. Then it happened. Joe’s dog came on point. There was a lot of cover and it was hard to see. The judge was having a hard time. Joe was on foot looking for the bird and you could hear Bob’s dog in the cover moving around hunting. Bob’s dog finally saw Joe’s dog and came on point. Joe yelled, “Bob, your dog’s on point.” Now, the judge was looking trying to determine if Bob’s dog was backing Joe’s or had tried to steal the point. Joe said to the judge, “Sir, his dog just saw mine. I am sure of it.” I don’t know if the judge believed Joe or made up his own mind, but I do know that Joe could have said nothing. He could have let the judge think that maybe Bob’s dog stole the point. At the end of the brace, I asked Joe why he said that to the judge. He said, “If my dog had won, I would have wanted to know that he won because he was the best dog of the day.” I thought to myself, “Wow! I wonder how many people compete that way.” I know it is easy to think of the many times and ways we think that the AKC Code of Sportsmanship is not being exemplified, but it’s times like this that remind me that there are also many ways and times in which it is followed. I challenge everyone to take the Code of Sportsmanship to heart. Please reread the code and stick to it; live by it. If we did, wouldn’t it be a better dog world?
—K.R.

Thank you, Kristie, for this inspiring column. For more information about our wonderful breed, visit www.americanpointerclub.com. Your suggestions and comments are welcome.