The following presentation combines the written breed standard enhanced with photographs as well as centuries old art reflecting that while some breeds would now be unrecognizable the "Pointer" has changed very little.

Our desire is for this presentation to add visual support to the written standard.
Trouble starts here....
Several breeds were used in the development of the Pointer as we know it today.

The Spanish Pointer was brought to England and in the course of its development, was crossed with the Greyhound, Foxhound and possibly Bloodhounds and Bull Terriers.

Keep in mind that these breeds were very different than what we see today.
Preserved in the British Museum of Natural History in London.

FT Ch. Seabreeze was owned by William Arkwright, the author of the bible of the breed, “The Pointer and his Predecessors,” 1902.

Similar heads can be seen in the ring today and this dog was bred over a 100 years ago!
Possibly the sculptor who signs himself J. Merculiano. He studied in Naples and exhibited there as well as in Palermo. He moved to Paris and became a naturalized Frenchman, winning an honorable mention in the 1889 Exposition Universelle. He was a portraitist and an animalier.
B. 1887-1939 - French artist Leon Danchin was born in Lille in 1887, studied sculpture at L'Ecole des Beaux Art in Paris and was accepted by the Salon des Artists from the age of sixteen. Without abandoning his sculpture, he devoted himself to drawing, painting, watercolours and engraving. His specific interest developed towards country scenes with particular attention to dogs. Danchin's work is widely recognized as some of the finest when it comes to the canine species. He specialized in sporting dogs and his images grace some of the most prestigious homes in the world. Danchin's fine eye for detail and expression is evident in all of his work.
This artwork demonstrates that after a century the Pointer’s characteristics remain unchanged.
Marguerite Kirmse was a versatile and dedicated artist, and although her reputation is deservedly based on her many etchings, she also worked in pencil, pastel, oil and executed a series of bronzes which have become increasingly rare.
Mary Montrose
owned by
William Ziegler, Jr.

Winners Bitch at the 1917 Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show, placing first in the Novice, American-bred, Limit Bitches (50 lbs & over), Open Bitches (50 lbs & over) and Field Trial classes. The judge was Albert F. Hochwalt. It was Mary's first and only appearance at a bench show, and it came directly on the heels of her spectacular derby win at just 2 yrs of age at the National Field Trial Championship held at Grand Junction, TN.

She later became the first triple National Field Trial champion in 1920.
The Pointer is bred primarily for sport afield; he should unmistakably look and act the part. The ideal specimen gives the immediate impression of compact power and agile grace; the head noble, proudly carried; the expression intelligent and alert; the muscular body bespeaking both staying power and dash.
Here is an animal whose every movement shows him to be a wide-awake, hard-driving hunting dog possessing stamina, courage, and the desire to go. And in his expression are the loyalty and devotion of a true friend of man.
TEMPERAMENT

The Pointer’s even temperament and alert good sense make him a congenial companion both in the field and in the home. He should be dignified and should never show timidity toward man or dog.
HEAD

The skull is of medium width, approximately as wide as the length of the muzzle, resulting in an impression of length rather than width. Slight furrow between the eyes, cheeks cleanly chiseled. There should be a pronounced stop. From this point forward the muzzle is a good length, with the nasal bone so formed that the nose is slightly higher at the tip than the muzzle at the stop.
Parallel planes of the skull and muzzle are equally acceptable. The muzzle should be deep without pendulous flews. Jaws ending square and level, should bite evenly or as scissors. Nostrils well developed and wide open.
The head is a characteristic of the breed. The Pointer standard allows for 2 different head planes - parallel and dished.

Parallel planes of the skull and muzzle are equally acceptable.
HEAD

Coat color may vary from light to dark. The Nose and Eye Rim color determines Lemon (Self Colored Nose/Eye Rims) ~ Orange (Black Nose/Eye Rims)
There is one Lemon Head here.......
Nostrils well developed and wide open
Do you see the similarity?
Same dog, different color!
EARS

Set at eye level. When hanging naturally, they should reach just below the lower jaw, close to the head, with little or no folding. They should be somewhat pointed at the tip—never rounded—soft and thin in leather.

The ear leather should be thin so that the veins are visible........
EYES

Eyes - Of ample size, rounded and intense. The eye color should be dark in contrast with the colors of the markings, the darker the better.

An Orange Pointer (Black nose & eye rim) has a darker eye.

A Lemon Pointer (self colored nose) will have a lighter eye. It is genetically impossible for them to have a black eye or rims.
Choose the correct heads
Results

Correct Parallel Planes
Too short in muzzle
Lacking in depth of muzzle
Lacks balance, head planes not parallel & lacking depth in muzzle
Correct dished face
Rounded back skull
NECK ~ SHOULDERS

Neck - Long, dry, muscular and slightly arched, springing cleanly from the shoulders.

Shoulders - Long, thin and sloping, the top of the blades close together.
FRONT

Elbows well let down, directly under the withers and truly parallel so as to work just clear of the body. Forelegs straight and with oval bone. Knee joint never to knuckle over. Pasterns of moderate length, perceptibly finer in bone that the leg, and slightly slanting. Chest, deep rather than wide, must not hinder the free action of forelegs. The breastbone bold, without being unduly prominent. The ribs well sprung, descending as low as the elbow-point.
BACK

Back - Strong and solid with only a slight rise from croup to top of shoulders. Loin of moderate length, powerful and slightly arched. Croup falling only slightly to base of tail. Tuck-up should be apparent, but not exaggerated.
TAIL

Tail - Heavier at the root, tapering to a fine point. Length no greater than the hock. A tail longer than this or docked must be penalized. Carried without a curl, and not more than 20 degrees above the line of the back; never carried between the legs.
HINDQUARTERS

Hindquarters- Muscular and powerful with great propelling leverage. Thighs long and well developed. Stifles well bent. The hocks clean; the legs straight as viewed from behind. Decided angulation is the mark of power and endurance.
FEET

Oval, with long, closely set, arched toes, well padded and deep.

Cat foot is a fault. Dewclaws on the forelegs may be removed.
COAT
Short, dense, smooth with a sheen

COLOR
Liver, Lemon, Black, Orange;
either in combination with white or solid colored. A good Pointer cannot be a bad color. In the darker colors, the nose should be black or brown; in the lighter shades it may be lighter or flesh-colored.
~ Liver & White ~
~ Lemon & White ~
~ Black & White ~
~ Orange & White ~
~ Solid Pointer ~
Markings may cause optical illusions
GAIT

Gait - Smooth, frictionless, with a powerful hindquarters’ drive. The head should be carried high, with nostrils wide, the tail moving from side to side rhythmically with the pace. Giving the impression of a well-balanced, strongly built hunting dog capable to top speed combined with great stamina.

Hackney gait must be faulted.
Moving
Moving
6 Month to 1 Year of age
The Pointer is bred primarily for sport afield; he should unmistakably look and act the part. Before making a final decision, ask yourself, “Could this dog do what it was bred to do?”
BALANCE & SIZE

Balance and overall symmetry are more important in the Pointer than size. A smooth, balanced dog is to be more desired than a dog with strongly contrasting good points and faults. Hound or terrier characteristics are most undesirable. Because a sporting dog must have both endurance and power, great variations in size are undesirable, the desirable height and weight being within the following limits:

Dogs: Height - 25-28 inches
      Weight - 55-75 pounds

Bitches: Height - 23-26 inches
         Weight – 45-65 pounds
The Pointer in Companion Events
The Pointer as a family member
Pointers Aim to Please

THE END
American Pointer Club approved Judges Education materials

3 Breeder Judges give the reader a comprehensive description of their view of the Pointer

- Judging the Pointer – Marjorie Martorella
- Thomas Bradley III on Pointers
- Assessing the Show Pointer – Wayne Cavanaugh
- The Power of Positive Judging – Wayne Cavanaugh

Article on Pointer History

- A Brief History of the Pointer – Karen Blasche – APC Historian
- The Illustrated Standard – Illustrated Standard Committee
Judging the Pointer

With the same consciousness as the breeder evaluates.

“With the FIRST paragraph of the standard”

General Appearance - The Pointer is bred primarily for sport afield; he should unmistakably look and act the part. The ideal specimen gives the immediate impression of compact power and agile grace; the head noble, proudly carried; the expression intelligent and alert; the muscular body bespeaking both staying power and dash. Here is an animal whose every movement shows him to be a wide-awake, hard-driving hunting dog possessing stamina, courage, and the desire to go. And in his expression are the loyalty and devotion of a true friend of man.

Gait - Smooth, frictionless, with a powerful hindquarters’ drive. The head should be carried high, the nostrils wide, the tail moving from side to side rhythmically with the pace, giving the impression of a well-balanced, strongly-built hunting dog capable of top speed combined with great stamina. Hackney gait must be faulted.

Balance and Size - Balance and over-all symmetry are more important in the Pointer than size. A smooth, balanced dog is to be more desired than a dog with strongly contrasting good points and faults. Hound or terrier characteristics are most undesirable. Because a sporting dog must have both endurance and power, great variations in size are undesirable, the desirable height and weight being within the following limits Under Gait: the Pointer gives the impression of a well balanced and strongly built Hunting dog. Under Balance and Size: it again refers to balance and over-all symmetry.

YES, This is a test ............... Outline is important ............ Identify the Pointer ......

Above are 4 Pointing breeds….The photos were taken from AKC breed standards, colored black and tails changed)

The “Topline and or Underline of the Hound above should never be seen on a Pointer”
POINTER

WEIMARANER

GERMAN SHORTHAI

VISZLA
The Pointer is one of the first breeds exhibited here in the United States. It is also a breed that has been depicted through the years by artists. It is interesting to note that many of the dogs painted by the masters such as George Earl, his daughter, Maude Earl, Thomas Blinks, Leon Danchin and Marguerite Kirmsey to name a few are not very different from the modern day Pointer.

In the General Appearance section of the Pointer Standard, terms like bred primarily for sport afield; impression of compact power and agile grace and hard-driving hunting dog are used. In evaluating the Pointer, one must keep in mind the purpose of the breed. Our dogs should have outgoing temperaments and be in excellent muscular condition so they could perform the duties for which they are bred.

For many years, the Pointer has been described as a head breed. There is no doubt that the correct Pointer head is the hallmark of the breed and distinguishes it from other breeds. I do feel that as a judge or a breeder, to put all of your emphasis on the head and forgive the traits that make our dogs capable of hunting all day is a disservice to the breed. That being said, the Pointer’s head is very well chiseled. The planes of the skull and muzzle can be either parallel or dished. The standard calls for the muzzle to give the impression of length. The nostrils are wide open to enable scenting ability. The eyes are rounded and the ear leather is so fine that the veins are evident. They are also short and when relaxed reach just below the lower jaw. They should be pointed at the tip and never rounded as in a scent hound.

The outline of the Pointer is a series of gentle curves from the neck blending into smooth laid back shoulders. The correct topline has subtle curves from the head to tail. There is a slight rise over the loin and a gently sloping croup. The underline is also an integral component of the outline. The tail should be carried straight when in motion. The correct Pointer tail is thick at the base and tapers to a fine point. It should be carried straight without curl and lash from side to side when moving. The tail should never reach below the hock. The ideal Pointer tail is often referred to as a “bee sting” tail. It is an extremely short tapered tail and is carried perfectly straight. One would never see the need to measure this tail as it would fall far short of the hock.

The Pointer’s chest is deep rather than wide and the breastbone is bold, but not unduly prominent. The bone of the Pointer is oval in shape. It should neither be too refined or too heavy as both would hinder the agility and endurance of the breed. The feet are oval with deep pads which are needed for speed and agility.

Our standard calls for muscular and powerful hindquarters. When one examines a Pointer, well defined musculature needs to be apparent. It is the rear strong hind quarter that will propel the Pointer in the field.

The purists in the breed will tell you that the two most important characteristics of the breed are the head and the tail. The correct Pointer tail is thick at the base and tapers to a fine point. It should be carried straight without curl and lash from side to side when moving. The tail should never reach below the hock. The ideal Pointer tail is often referred to as a “bee sting” tail. It is an extremely short tapered tail and is carried perfectly straight. One would never see the need to measure this tail as it would fall far short of the hock. William Arkwright in 1906 wrote in his The Pointer And His Predecessors that “while the head is the hallmark of the breed, for the certificate of blue blood apply at the other end.” It was at the turn of the last century in the development of the breed in England that Pointers were crossed with Foxhounds and Greyhounds. Mr. Arkwright was very vocal in his opposition to the crosses. He felt that the tail was an indicator of hound characteristics. The Pointer’s outline should show a well balanced dog devoid of exaggerations such as a sloping topline which is a result of a dog straight in shoulder and over angulated behind. This is not the correct outline for the Pointer.

The Pointer may be black, lemon (flesh colored nose), orange (black pigment) or liver either solid or in combination with white. The lemon Pointer will have a hazel eye as it is genetically impossible for them to have a darker eye. Unfortunately, many judges are often confused by this as they look at the lighter eye of our lemons as a fault.

Anyone wanting to see the American Pointer Club’s Illustrated Standard or our Power Point Presentation as well as several informative articles on the breed, please visit our website at www.americanpointerclub.org
It was late on Sunday evening and I had just returned from a show where I saw some incredible dogs being judged...well, incredibly!!! My four-legged girls were all tucked in for the night when the phone rang. It was my friend Joyce Mumford who implored—"You've got to help me!!!"—"With what?" says me, somewhat perplexed. "I need you to write an article on how to judge Pointers and I need it...now!!" I said that it was late and that I had driven a long way and I was somewhat fuzzier than normal so, of course, I replied OK. She is my friend after all and she needed help...now! So here I sit, pencil in hand, late on a Wednesday evening and I have finally realized that I don't have a clue on how to write an article on how to tell you how to judge Pointers. I will, however, try to tell you how I judge Pointers.

A good Pointer when he enters your ring has a bit of an attitude— a little bit of arrogance— with his head held high and his nostrils large and flared. A good Pointer is moderate in size— not too big and overdone— not too refined. From the tip of his somewhat upturned nose to the tip of his shortish tail, he fits. He has good balance. He is in proportion. I judge good Pointers on the premise that shorter is always preferable to longer— EVERYWHERE. Shorter backed is better than too long. Shorter loin is much better than too long. Shorter ears are way better than too long— and they should be somewhat pointed— never round— with thin, thin almost see through soft leather. Not Foxhound-like—not ever!

Our standard says that the tail is : “Heavier at the base, tapering to a fine point. Length no greater than to the hock.” I find this to be fairly self-explanatory. You would be amazed at those who miss this point. It does not mean that the tail must come to the hock. It means what it says— "...no greater than to the hock." Again, a shorter, or beesting, tail is better than a long tail and it will likely be straighter. Long gives a multitude of problems. They hang, as in an unhappy Bloodhound or, as they are often set on too high or level, they curl or worse, stick straight up at twelve o’clock. All are equally offensive. The standard says, "Croup falling only slightly to the base of the tail.” This clearly means that the croup falls off “only slightly to the base of the tail.” The tail therefore should not come off level with the back. As he stands there, the picture of what you believe to be a good Pointer, you become concerned about his topline. It isn’t level. Well, good!! It isn’t supposed to be. If it were, he couldn’t do the job he was bred to do. The standard says, “…slight rise from croup to the top of the shoulders. Loin of moderate length, powerful and slightly arched.” This “slightly arched” gives him his powerful drive and the ability to do his work effortlessly for hours on end. So, now we have a moderate sized dog who is compact- all over- and has an attitude! Now we pray that when he moves, he is basically sound coming, going and on the go around and doesn’t pick his front feet up too high, i.e.-hackney. The standard says “A good Pointer can not be a bad color.” This does not mean that he can be purple!!! He can be liver and white, black and white, orange and white or lemon and white, with associated points to match-black noses and eye rims on the blacks and oranges, self-colored on the livers and lemons. He can also be solid colored of any of the four colors listed previously.

For me, solid colored Pointers were once suspect in origin. I no longer feel that way as now there are solid colored Pointers being shown that are of good quality. In my opinion, they may never be tri-colored. Most of the oldest books now available warn frequently about tri-colored Pointers carrying “too much of the Foxhound blood.” Again, ears too long, tails too long. Now, look at his feet. This is a working dog. Oval feet, not round, with well arched toes allowing him to work all kinds of ground effortlessly. So, now what do we have?

We have a moderately sized dog that comes into your ring with his head held rather arrogantly. Your first impression is head, tail and attitude. Next, he appears to balance and he is in fit condition. We know now that the standard says he can’t be a bad color and he is one that is acceptable. Always look at a Pointer from all sides- coloring or patching can easily deceive and for some reason his “off-side” is often more pleasing to the eye. He moves around your ring with power and grace. His tail, we hope, will lash somewhat from side to side as he moves soundly on four good legs. When he stops, he looks at you with a soft, trusting expression. Lucky you...you’ve just judged a good Pointer. The others just won’t measure up. Enjoy.

Revised 12-17-2019
AN INTERPRETATION OF THE POINTER STANDARD

by WAYNE CAVANAUGH

The current breed standard for the Pointer is a clear and concise description of an Aristocratic gundog. But if it’s so clear and concise, why is there such a type variance in the breed? The answer is simple: as is true with any standard, there is room for interpretation by the reader. The standard is merely a guide that serves to help us form a visualization of the breed it describes. It should be used in conjunction with living and moving examples, artwork and sculpture depicting the breed, and studies of the Pointer at work in the field. All of this takes time to assimilate in the student’s mind. It is an ongoing process that, in the best of students, will continue for a lifetime. The mind may never grant us a perfect picture, with time and study, the focus of the picture will continually sharpen.

The following is an interpretation of the standard. It is a functional interpretation in that it describes a hunter, and it is a comparative interpretation in that it addresses the section of the standard that describes the undesirability of hound and terrier traits. The reason the standard mentions the undesirability of hound and terrier traits are simple: Pointers with hound and terrier traits not only look like hounds and terriers, but more importantly, they hunt like hounds and terriers. Anyone who quickly dismisses the particular mention in the standard may want to spend a hungry day hunting quail with a Foxhound or Airedale. Overall though, this interpretation is meant to expand the words of our standard as an attempt to help the reader form that every important mental picture of the Pointer.

The Head

The head of the Pointer is the hallmark of the breed. It is one of the most important distinguishing elements that sets the Pointer apart from its other breed cousins. But more importantly, as you will see in the description that follows, there is a much more functional value in their head as there is aesthetic value. The house all of it many parts, the Pointer head has extensive chiseling. For a sculptor to create the Pointer head, he would be with a brick of clay and add an almost infinite number of smoothly blended surfaces to create the intense look of a worker. The skull planes (that is, the top plane of the backskull and the top plane of the muzzle when viewed form the side) are parallel or dished. Many examples of the classic dished faces can be seen in sporting art. A true dished faces is not simply a turned up nose. It is an effect caused by the muzzle being lower at the stop that at the tip of the nose. This is not a simple case of aesthetics: the raised nose lets the dog work upland scents while keeping he eyes focused straight up field. A down-faced Pointer would be looking at the clouds if he were to use his nose up into the wind; more likely though, a down-faced Pointer would possess other hound characteristics and would hunt like a hound with his nose and eyes cast to the ground. Parallel skull planes are also permissible according to the breed standard. When accompanied by enough stop, the deep furrow between the eyes, the proper ears, nose, and eyes, this configuration also portrays the look of a sporting Pointer.

Just as it is important that the Pointer’s body pieces flow together smoothly, the same is true with the Pointer head. The head is a relatively small area filled with many important functional pieces: The nose, eyes, ears, teeth and brains all need to a place to exist. The head is best described in two blended and proportional sections: the muzzle, or foreface, and the backskull. The length of the muzzle should dictate the total length of the head.

Tail

A tail that is carried curled over the back, is again an indication of an overabundance of outcrossed blood; it is interesting to note that a Pointer without a bee sting tail will usually not exhibit the desirable side to side action on the move. Conversely, those with bee sting tails will exhibit such action. Tail action is an integral part of Pointer balance and rhythm in movement.
The Neck

From the tip of the Pointer’s nose, the neck is a continuance of the graceful series of curves that forms the Pointer’s outline. The neck not only serves to support the head, it is also the junction of the shoulders and is connected a part of the vertebral that ends in a tapered top of the tail. It must be long enough to allow the dog to pick up birds from the ground without contorting his front legs like a giraffe drinking from a stream. While this may seem to support the opinion that a Pointer’s neck can never be too long it most importantly must be in proportion with the rest of the vertebrae. A short-necked, long-backed dog is as unbalanced as a long-necked, short-backed dog; both combinations will show an imbalance while the Pointer is reviewed in outline or side-gait.

The important arch of the neck allows the Pointer to bend to retrieve birds and is essential for the correct high head carriage when moving. This arch and carriage keeps the Pointer working quickly upland into the wind rather than working extended and flat-necked.

The Shoulders

The Pointer’s shoulders are instrumental for efficient locomotion and endurance. When viewed from the top they are smooth and oblique; that is, they curve with the shape of the body without interrupting the transition from the neck into the body. If they are too close together on top, the dog will be narrow in chest and to narrow in rib. If they meet to far apart, they are often lumpy, do not blend properly into the body, and may result in a wide but shallow chest.

From the side, the shoulder blade and lower arm are the same length and form an ideal angle of 90 degrees. If either is shorter than the other improper movement results. The 90 degree angle allows the dog to reach properly with is front assembly while in motion. Straight terrier-like shoulders deny the extension and reach a bird dog needs to cover ground. Similarly, a show lower arm results in hackneyed gait and waste motion.

The Body

The body of the Pointer houses the heart and lungs, the collective engine of this noble hunter. Its basic skeletal elements are the vertebrae and the rib cage; as elemental as it may seem they are the pieces that give the Pointer its basic outline and shape. The topline of the Pointer is shaped by the spine. It is not perfectly flat or straight because it is an extension of the string of vertebrae that starts at the neck and ends at the top of the tail. The topline should be mostly level though, never exaggerated or overly sloped. It starts smoothly as the arched neck curves back over the shoulders, is fairly flat over the body cavity that supports the ribs, arches slightly to give strength over the loins, then falls off slightly at the croup into the tail.

The strongest topline has the most subtle curves from head to tail. Any exaggeration, such as a sag over the body cavity, too much arch over the loin, or a short, steep croup, destroy the outline and weaken the balance and efficiency of this hard working hunter. While a steeply sloped topline may seem pleasing to the eyes, it is a sign of imbalance caused by straight shoulders, overturned stifle, or a short steep croup. Short steep croups prevent proper extension of the Pointer’s hindquarters and destroy the portrayal of strength in the outline.

In visualizing the rib shape of the Pointer consider their function as a cavity for lungs. They must provide enough space in which the lungs can properly expand and contract without being so wide as to diminish efficiency and speed. While depth of brisket is important for speed, as is exhibited by the deep briskets in sighthounds, an exaggeratedly deep and narrow brisket in a Pointer may sacrifice endurance for speed. Another important element of the rib assembly is length of the last ribs, that is, the ribs closest to the loins. If the back ribs are too long the body will have a straight underline. If they are too short, the underline will be exaggerated and the lung area will be lessened.

The underline is another of the body’s indicators for Pointer type. The proper underline with sufficient tuckup sums up the graceful series of curves that describes the Pointer. It is not uncommon to find associated scenthound traits on exhibits with straight underlines. (These exhibits may also have a ‘skirt’ or excess of skin in the area where the tuckup should be.) Conversely, exhibits with an exaggerated tuckup often have a narrow fronts and exaggerated sighthound toplines. While the tuckup must be apparent, it must also be in proportion to the dog as a whole.
Feet and Legs

The legs and feet of the Pointer support the athletic body of a hunter. The bone is oval, never rounded, and is of a dimension in proportion to the overall substance of the dog. Bone that is too fine is too fragile for endurance. Bone that is too thick is too heavy for speed and agility. As with many of the other parts of the Pointer, the shape of the legs and feet are indicators of heritage. Large round bone with large round feet and thick pads, or thin bone and exaggerated hare feet, are indicative of a preponderance of questionable heritage.

The Pointer’s front legs are straight, not tuned in or out and have sloping resilient pasterns. Proper pasterns cushion the impact transmitted from the foot into the legs when running. Short straight terrier-like pasterns carry the shock into the leg causing a weakened action and increasing the possibility of injury. Pasterns with too much slope cause a broken-down action that creates an inordinate redistribution of stress. The Pointer’s rear legs are parallel when viewed from the rear and have short straight hocks to anchor the power of well-made hindquarters.

Front

When viewed head-on, the breadth of a Pointer’s front falls somewhere between a substantial scenthound and a streamlined sighthound; to hunt upland game, they need to be faster that a scenthound but more thorough than a sighthound. When viewed from the side, the forechest should reach just to the point of the elbow. A chest deeper than this, or an exaggerated forechest, is an encumbrance to a sporting dog. A shallow chest, or an inverted or pinched front, also leaves locomotion and lung capacity at a weakened disadvantage.

Hindquarters

The hindquarters propel the Pointer through terrain ranging from open grasses to heavy underbrush. Without a powerful push, the lungs and heart are as useless as a speed boat without a motor. Part of the power from hindquarters comes from its balance with the rest of the dog. In perfect examples, the angulation behind matches a perfect 90 degree shoulder. But in cases where the shoulder is not a perfect 90 degrees, it is better for the rear angels to match than to not match’ sporting dogs derive a great deal of strength from balance and harmony of parts.

But it is not only proper turn of stifle that makes a good rear quarters. The hocks are show, strong, and parallel and there must be ample muscle in the thigh when viewed from both rear and side. The entire assembly must be hung form a strong croup and not stuck under the dog’s body. A tucked-under hindquarter is only advantageous to racers (sighthounds) which have more arch over the loin to support such a configuration. But a Pointer runs with is nose to the wind and tail cracking; this requires, among other things, an extended rear assembly.

Movement

Movement is the best test of basic construction and conformation. Only a properly made Pointer with a correct arch of neck, shoulder assembly, body shape and running gear can have the proportion and balance to move like a Pointer with reach and drive, a slashing tail, and head held high to scent. A poorly made dog will move restricted like bad terrier, hackneyed like a gaited horse, or weakly and flailing; these are easily observable examples of poor movement. But a poorly made dog can fool the casual observer with sound action accompanied by the undesirable hung or extended neck a motionless tail. This kind of movement is reserved for scenthounds.

A Pointer that moves true coming and going, a Pointer that never puts a foot down wrong, a Pointer that is never cow hocked bowlegged, still has poor movement if he moves like a sound Fox Terrier, Bloodhound, Whippet, or any breed other than a Pointer. As is true in any sporting dog, the importance of sound and typical movement in a Pointer should never be underestimated; it is as important an element of Pointer type as the Pointer head and tail.
Coat and Color

As with all pieces of the Pointer puzzle, the coat is yet another breed indicator in offering protection from the specific elements of upland bird hunting. A coat that is too thick and coarse exhibits scenthound qualities. A coat that is too thin and too sleek exhibits Greyhound qualities. Both of these extremes would leave a Pointer with improper protection. There should be no sign of feathering on any part of the Pointer and the tail should never show any sign of bushiness as would be seen in a Foxhound.

Pointers come in four basic colors; liver and white, black and white, orange and white and lemon and white. Solids in each of these colors and solid white are allowable. Occasionally, a tri-colored Pointer may also be seen. The shade of color, amount of patches and ticking and placement of markings vary tremendously and bring no bearing to the quality of a Pointer. Since markings and color can be deceiving, it is best to imagine each dog as if it were painted solid gray. While black and liver marked Pointers are easily defined, there is occasionally confusion regarding the differences between orange and lemon marked Pointers. The script of the AKC breed video resolves this issue by saying that most breeders use nose color (black nose for orange and liver nose for lemon) and not the shade of orange or lemon patches as the determining factor; the reason for this concurrence is that the nose color on Pointers with these coat shades (and NOT the coat shade) genetically determines what colors these dogs can and cannot reproduce. To further confuse the issue, some orange and whites will get winter nose where the nose pigment lightens to a liver color in cold weather, a true orange, however, will always show black pigment on the skin of the body when wet or in thin coat.

General

While the terms staying power and dash may not be among those we often use today, they are certainly indicative of what our forefathers had in mind when developing the Pointer. Both refer not only to the physical design of the Pointer but also to the essence of the breed. This is foremost a specialist what can hunt eagerly all day long. Their intensity on point is unparalleled. This is an explosive athlete with clean outline and a clever character that makes them easily discernable form any other breed.
Sociology 101 teaches us that when humans are speaking, they are most often speaking about other people. Specifically, most of those human conversations involve describing some minor faults of friends and loved ones. The logic is that we focus on the faults of others to feel better about ourselves; we love to fault judge. It follows, quite unfortunately, that we have a natural proclivity to find faults in the dogs we judge both in and out of the ring. This natural human tendency, combined with the fact that it is easier to find faults than virtues, results in compound fault judging at dog shows.

Finding virtues is more difficult than finding faults for one simple reason: you actually have to know the finer points of a breed to find its virtues. Any fool can identify faults. It wouldn’t be difficult to take a person off the street and, in just a few minutes, teach them how to find a bad rear. It could take years to teach them how to find proper Pointer head type or correct make and shape. To be a competent judge, you have to know enough to pick out the positive type characteristics in each individual dog. Then, you have to prioritize those characteristics in your head and reward the dog with the most positives, not the dog with the fewest negatives!

Negative judging doesn’t work for a lot of reasons. The most obvious is because an absence of faults does not mean that a dog has a corresponding number of great virtues. (You might want to read that last sentence twice, it’s important.) Often, the dog that has an absence of glaring faults turns out to be mediocre and generic, a dog lacking in any outstanding breed characteristics. Accordingly, fault judging often rewards the most mediocre dogs in the ring - mediocrity is the drag of the breed! Mediocre dogs may not have many glaring faults but they are certainly the first ones we must learn to leave out of a breeding program to preserve breed type and character. Since judging is, or should be, an evaluation of breeding stock, the problem of rewarding mediocrity through fault judging becomes a serious problem in the breeding shed.

On the other hand, a truly great dog brimming in exquisite type details, the very things that define a breed, often may have one significant or easily observable fault. It is wrong to discard that dog on the basis of that one easily identified fault; especially if we really are evaluating breeding stock instead of a canine beauty pageant. (It’s even more pitiful when a dog is discarded for breaking stride for one good leap on the final go round, or squirming at just the wrong second, but that’s a topic for another day.)

It is said that great dogs ‘carry their faults well’; that is, the dog is so superior in other areas that his fault fades into the background when you recognize his virtues. When you see it, and you cannot see it if you are busy finding faults, it is a beautiful thing to behold.

It’s not so easy to recognize virtues. However, the more you know about a breed, the easier it is to judge that breed based upon the positives. Moreover, if you study a breed long enough and well enough, you may even begin to consider where a breed is currently weak and may reward dogs that have particular strength in that area. In doing so, you can actually have a positive impact on the future of a breed. Of course, the insecure judge can always just point to the flashy dog, the one who “nails the stack”, or the ones with the fewest faults. The fault judges at ringside will nod in approval and you can ride off in the sunset thinking you were brilliant … even though you just put one more nail in the breed coffin.

It won’t come easy at first. When you walk down a line of dogs the first time, it is too easy to say to yourself: I don’t like that head, I don’t like that topline, I don’t like that front, I don’t like those feet. When you get to the end of the line, you haven’t stored anything in your head that you liked. It’s all negatives.

Instead, walk down the line, and with a picture of the standard in your mind, begin to focus on the positive: beautiful body proportions, correct head shape, eye set and placement, wonderful legs, bone and feet, perfect tail shape for the breed. When you get to the end of the line this time you have already identified something positive about each dog in the class, and you haven’t even gone over them individually yet. This creates a positive mindset. It sets the tone to begin to celebrate the virtues that make a breed spectacular.

While you continue your examinations, if you make a catalog of positive points in your head and sort your placements based upon the way the standard prioritizes qualities, you will be able to see past the faults that every single dog world has. When in doubt, always look to the positives in the original purpose of the breed. Ask yourself, which of these dogs has the most functional characteristics? If it’s still real close, imagine you have one shotgun, one live round, and that you haven’t eaten in days. Then, simply ask yourself which dog you are taking to the field.

If we rely of finding faults in Pointers, we will end up missing those dogs which have the characteristics that define the breed. Like every one of us, not one Pointer is perfect. If we only award ribbons to dogs with the fewest faults instead of the ones with the most important virtues we are destined to destroy the fabric of the breed. Our forefathers created this breed by combining the most spectacular examples of the dogs at hand, NOT the ones with the least glaring faults. We owe it to the breed to do the same.
The Pointer is believed to be the first breed developed to locate and point game and whose name describes his very mission in life. Paintings and early writings document him throughout Europe, particularly in Italy, France, Spain and Portugal, centuries before his arrival in England around 1700, which marks the dawn of the breed we know today.

British landed gentry enjoyed a sporting lifestyle and judiciously developed their own strains of pointers for wing shooting as firearms improved in the 18th Century.

In 1974, sportsmen gathered in Tennessee to show off their dogs’ abilities (settle arguments) at the first American field trial, limited to pointers and setters only.

Two clubs formed by wealthy sportsmen to advance and perfect the qualities of the pointer in those times were the Westminster KC with their kennels at Babylon, L.I., NY and the St. Louis KC. They, plus other enthusiastic individual fanciers, imported many noteworthy dogs from England for stud purposes during the 1870s and 80s. Names like Sensation, King of Kent, Bang Bang, Croxeth, Sleaford, Bow, Faust and Graphic, to mention just a few, made their contribution here as sires to now mainly native stock bitches. With resourcefulness, breeders can trace their own pointers back to one or more of these famous ancestors.

Long before the Civil War, pointers from these early strains made their way to America with their masters coming to settle the new country. They soon became the native stock, and subsequent importations were then bred to these “natives” to satisfy the demand for purebred dogs.

Careful bloodstock records were kept individually for generations before the Stud Book Registry was created in 1880. There were no “pets” among hunting dogs at these great estates, each had to earn its keep or be eliminated. Some kennels tried crosses to other breeds such as Greyhounds, Foxhounds and even Bloodhounds, hoping to improve speed, stamina or scenting ability, but results were mixed, abandoned and bred out in succeeding generations.

It was during the early mid-part of the 20th Century in the U.S. that the diversion in field and bench types became apparent and irreconcilable. With our wide open spaces, many Americans wanted a wider ranging and faster running dog with the tail held high. It is here the bench people drew the line and came to agree with William Arkwright as he states, “There is nothing for a pointer more necessary than a tail of the right shape, of the right length, of the right carriage and of the right covering. It is more convincing...”

Early pointer fanciers formed the Pointer Club of America and joined the fledgling American Kennel Club in 1888. Some noted members were the Westminster Kennel Club, Hempstead Farm Co., James Anthony, Charles Heath and dog artists J. M. Tracy and Gustav Muss-Arnolt. They adopted the physical standard for Pointers as written by Stonehenge (Henry Walsh) in his “Dogs of Great Britain, America and Other Countries” in 1879, later amending the format and some terminology by the time it was published in the 1929 AKC Pure-Bred Dogs. They left the AKC in 1931 for lack of input for field trial judges’ selection and carried on exclusively as a field trial club for several decades. Pointers were without formal representation at AKC until the American Pointer Club, Inc. was established in 1938. Its members will be celebrating their 75th anniversary in 2013.

Online, inquiring minds can find a wealth of research and background information at Lyn Topinka’s website: englishtriverwebsite.com/Pointer-History/. Dorothy Johnson’s epic work A Century of Pointers, published in 2003, traces modern pedigrees back to many of those dogs and beyond to their renowned forebears, the "four pillars" (Whitehouse’s Hamlet, Garth’s Drake, Brocton’s Bounce and Statter’s Major) of the breed over 150 years ago.
warranty of pure blood and high breeding than reams of written pedigree.” Knowledgeable old-timers say that a good pointer cannot get his tail above his back.

Though not represented by an official, show-giving breed club for much of the 1930s, pointers flourished on the bench. Two imports during that time, Ch. Pennine Paramount and Ch. Drumgannon Dreadnought, themselves BIS winners on both sides of the Atlantic became legendary sires of bench champions in America.

The 1920s and 30s were to massive importations from all over the British Isles what the 1870s and 80s were to their predecessors. This second “golden age” drew from kennels of Stylish, Mallwyd, Ferndale, Ardagh, Nancolleth, Of Crombie, Pennine and Drumgannon, etc. all playing major roles in this cycle of mixing imports with the now American bred blood, again refreshing and compounding the qualities making up this handsome sporting dog. A case in point would be the first Pointer to win BIS at Westminster. Ch. Governor Moscow, the 1925 winner was the result of an imported Mallwyd sire with excellent field credentials and an American field trial-bred dam. “Govvy” was a splendid personal gundog, a quality his owner Robert F. Maloney insisted every pointer raised at his 100+ “Herewithem” breeding kennel near Pittsburgh possess. When full British (field and bench) Ch. Nancolleth Markable was imported for Mrs. Geraldine Rockefeller Dodge of Giralda fame he promptly won top honors at the Garden in 1932 before earning his American championship. Both of these grand gundogs as well as the symbol of Westminster KC itself, Sensation, are in the pedigree of the third and currently final Pointer BIS winner at Westminster in 1986, Ch. Marjetta National Acclaim. WWII took a devastating toll on kennels in Britain, many never to rise again. Those that were able to carry on or start over were aided by a grateful American breeder who had benefitted mightily from the stock he imported from them in the 1920s.

British Ch. Herewithem Royal Flush, grandsire of 1958 BIS Crufts, Sh. Ch. Chiming Bells. Photo: courtesy Cicely A. Robertshaw

The same Robert F. Maloney mentioned above sent (gratis) five of his best representative Bloodstock from those early imports back to Britain and Scotland to help the breeders reconstitute their own programs. Three dogs, Ch Herewithem General Mac, Herewithem Moscow’s Spirit, Herewithem Royal Flush and two bitches, Herewithem Widow Moon and Ch. Herewithem Old Glory were warmly received and began producing some excellent pointers when bred with their British counterparts, particularly Pennine, Dimas and Stonethorpe. Royal Flush (“Yank”) quickly became a full British Champion, and his granddaughter, Sh. Ch. Chiming Bells won BIS at Crufts in 1958. The bloodlines had come full circle. At one point, the United British and Scottish fanciers presented Maloney with the bronze Mene pointer from the famed Wm Arkwright collection as expression of their gratitude. Virtually every pointer in the UK from the mid-1950s onward carries the genes of one of those Herewithem exports and has spread them around the globe, including back to the United States.

The 1960s and 70s brought the next big wave of English imports to America (and Canada) via Crookrise, St. Aldwyns, Querdon, Cumbrian, Daviam and Pipeaway plus influential Scandinavian imports that had a very positive effect on field aptitude. Today, besides the United Kingdom, imports from New Zealand and Brazil in particular have made an impact as the quest for perfection continues in our breed.

Mrs. Priscilla (Prune) St. George Duke (later Ryan) of Prune’s Own kennel fame with puppies sired by her famous import Ch. Pennine Paramount of Prune’s Own in 1935. He won the inaugural American Pointer Club specialty in 1939 at Morris & Essex. Photo credit: DOG WORLD 1939

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A renaissance of interest in advancing the natural abilities of the pointer is apparent. Since 1984, eleven AKC registered pointers have achieved their Dual Championships, a feat long thought unattainable for ‘show’ pointers. Dedicated pointer breeders and enthusiasts are participating successfully in record numbers at AKC hunting tests and field events, stirring the genes in their pointers’ long and gloried past. Mission in life – Pointer -accomplished!