

POLAND

Ola leads the way

THIS has been a year of some significant successes for the Polish Kennel Club and for all dog fanciers in Poland.

March brought the first highlight in the form of a Polish girl topping the international junior handling competition at Crufts.

Aleksandra Szydłowska, 'Ola' to her countless friends, did us proud beyond words.

Ola has been a familiar face over several years, since she started as a tiny girl with a huge Borzoi in her first junior handling classes. Step by step she climbed to the top spot.

Her home club is Leszno, which is associated with a fistful of highly motivated people. They, starting in the middle of nowhere, managed to put both the place and the club firmly on the map of the Polish best canine events.

They started with a small all-breeds show which grew into two awesome events each year, the National Champion of Champions Contest in February, and the international show each summer.

One of the reasons for this club's success is chairman Janusz Betting, whose paternal care of his members helps to bring about their achievements, as does his involvement with the city council.

There was no decrease in entries at shows. Our national economy has been doing fine, and so has the dog scene.

June saw date changes for some clubs due to the World Show. Our kennel club and the organising committees did not plan much for the weekend, suspecting that many serious exhibitors would go to Denmark.

It still came as a surprise to realise how big was the Polish contingent at Herning and how kind were the Danes in providing Polish exhibitors with Polish speaking staff at the information desks. This fabulous show was responsible for another highlight of the year.

Our highly regarded Polish breed, the Polish Hunting Dog (Gonczy Polski), provisionally recognised by the FCI in 2006, made a modest entry of six black and tans and just one red which is a much less seen colour but perfectly within the Standard. The red male **Raban z Huculskiej Laki** made a spectacular showing in the group ring handled by a skilful handler, but who of us would have dared to dream the group judge would point him to the second place behind a gorgeous Dalmatian. The cheers during his performance assured us all we do not err in our admiration for this breed.

The interest in different breeds shows there is no tendency to rocket growth in numbers



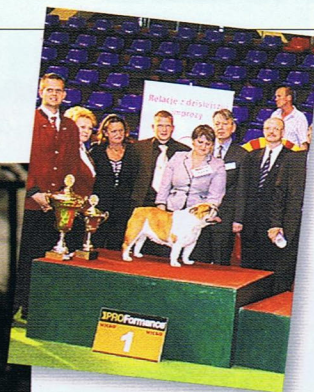
International Junior Handler of the Year Aleksandra 'Ola' Szydłowska competing at Crufts. photo HOTdog

in fashionable breeds, which seemed to be a problem over the last few years.

Breeds traditionally strong in numbers have stayed just that without further uncontrollable increase, probably due to the growing interest in the new and numerically small breeds.

Polish dog lovers seem to be chasing novelties, and successfully introduce them to our country. The latest is Russian Toys; so far, quality has been growing along with numbers.

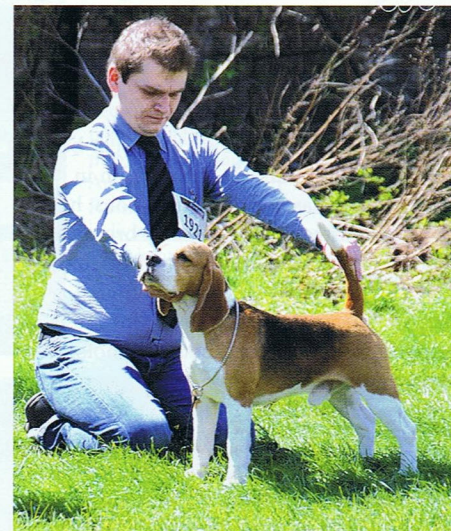
Registration figures are substantially higher, as are entries. The clubs earn enough to afford judges from far away which stimulates exhibitors to enter. We all remember how frustrating were the days of exclusively local judges repeatedly doing the same breeds.



BIS at Opole was the Bulldog from Russia, Velikolepnaya M X Iz Zvezdnogo Legiona at Mastiffhills, owned by Svetlana Golnikova. photo Monika Milian

Many clubs can afford their own permanent premises and each is equipped with the newest computer systems. Breeders and exhibitors, whose fees pay the bills, get a lot in return for their money. Nowadays we seldom have to wait more than a couple of days for registration papers to be returned and show entries are accepted two or three weeks beforehand, compared to two months in the past.

All in all, another good year for our fancy.



Poland's top winning Beagle is Szephegyi Szimat Woods, bred in Hungary, owned by Magdalena Szwałek. photo Monika Milian



The Gonczy Polski Raban z Huculskiej Laki, owned by Anna Pyra-Czernik, was second in group at the World Show under Kresten Scheel. photo Grzegorz Mrozinski