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## **DOGS SHOW THEIR STUFF AT LOMPOC SHOW**

By RYAN WILLARD, NEWS-PRESS

CORRESPONDENT

Ryon Park in Lompoc was a sea of RVs, tents, cars and dogs as the 55th annual Lompoc Valley Kennel Club Dog Show began Saturday.

More than 140 breeds entered the competition Saturday, from Pomeranians you could pick up with one hand to Great Danes larger than most children.

The judges looked at more than 1,100 dogs from around the world all day Saturday, while local residents tried to get caught up to speed on how the judging process works.

Of those dogs, only one is from Lompoc, Pete DeSoto, chairman of the dog show, told the News-Press.

Mr. DeSoto, the last original member of the club, said the judging comes down to a complex mix of attributes and standards listed by the American Kennel Club.

"It's based on how well the dog is built— eyes, ears, nose and sometimes the snout. Also, the bite and the teeth," he said.

The judges come from as far away as Finland, Australia and Mexico City, Mr. DeSoto said. While each judge follows the set American Kennel Club standard, each has preferences.

"Each judge has an idea of what that perfect dog looks like," Pomeranian handler Tish Cannon said while grooming her dog, Nelly Bliegh, before the judging began.

A lot of the judging process involves the dog's temperament and relationship with the handler.

Many of the handlers know one another and the judges. That familiarity builds into a mutual respect, making the atmosphere more friendly than adversarial, with handlers congratulating one another on a first-name basis after the judging.

The grouping process itself is complicated.

Each of the breeds has a sub-group based on age or sex. The winners from those sub-groups face one another before a winner for each sex is announced.



Dogs and handlers line up for the start of the Brittany competition Saturday in the 55th annual Lompoc Valley Kennel Club Dog Show at Ryon Park.

BILL MORSON/NEWS-PRESS PHOTOS

Handlers lead golden retrievers through the competition.

Tish Cannon grooms Nellie Bliegh, a Pomeranian, in preparation for the show.

Dog enthusiasts shade themselves during the show

After that, those winners face the "specials" in their own breed, dogs that have accumulated enough points in previous shows to go directly to the final "best of breed" competition. From there the Best of Breed is announced.

The best of each breed then goes on to one of seven groups— sporting breeds, hound breeds, working breeds, terrier breeds, toy breeds, non-sporting breeds and herding breeds— to face group competition. Those seven winners then face one another and a Best of Show is determined.

The process can be exhausting and nerve-racking, handler Korbel Munoz said after winning Best of Breed with his Australian shepherd, Gaitway Keep on Truckin, or Truck for short.

"I'm always nervous at these things," he said, describing how he felt when being scrutinized by the judge. The judge made Truck and another Australian shepherd run together twice before making a decision on the winner.

Mr. Munoz, 20, is one of a growing number of young professional dog handlers.

"It's pretty common," he said.

Many owners give their dogs to handlers to train with. Mr. Munoz has been with Truck for only five months, and says that "it take a while for us to click," which is the most important thing when handling a dog.

Best of Show went to Painting the Sky, the only wire fox terrier to enter out of the 1,100 dogs in the competition.

Painting the Sky beat out German shorthair La Vita E Belle, who won the Sporting Breeds group; harrier Hitech Innovator out of the Hound Breeds; Tor Ruby of Shadowrun, a Great Pyrenees from Working Breeds; Spencer, a Japanese chin from the Toy Breeds group; Rumor Has It, a Keeshonden from the Non-Sporting Breed group; and Army Shoulders, a German shepherd from the Herding Breeds group.