

I had a dream the other night. The whole dream took place at a dog show. It was a Bull Terrier show, no less. The weather was hot. It was a summer afternoon. The show ring was set out, and a soft breeze carried the excited chatter of spectators and owners. Old friends and adversaries greeted each other whilst owners prepared their dogs. The ring was surrounded with brightly coloured umbrellas and shade awnings. The scene was set, and a great contest between the best dogs on show was in prospect.

In the usual fashion and with theatrical flair the ring steward announced the start of the show and after the customary introductions and thank you's, the first class was called. At first I hadn't noticed but after a few seconds, it dawned on me as the first contestant entered the ring. What I saw made me blink, but sure enough it was true. The owner had a lead in his hand, which seemed to have a dog attached to it. The lead took the shape of the neck, and bobbed up and down as the dog moved. It even straightened as the invisible bully pulled to sniff something on the ground. My gaze moved from the first contestant to the next, and to my complete surprise, it was exactly the same, she too had an empty lead. It was only once all five entries were in the ring that I could see that all five leads were empty, and all five leads were behaving as if dogs were attached.

I looked from face to face, as the contestants filed past me on the first round of the ring, trying to see if I could read anything unusual in their eyes. Those that knew me just smiled and nodded as they went past. In desperation I began to look from face to face amongst the spectators around the ring, to find a hint of concern or surprise in someone's face. Nothing – nothing at all!!! Turning to the person sitting next to me in the shade, I said "Can you tell if there are dogs on the end of those leads, I just can't see the dogs!" to which came the reply "Oh, you must be new to the Bully game, it is always like this!" "What! Always like this?" I asked. "The Judge knows who the good breeders are. There is no need for the judge to actually see the entry"

With a look of disbelief I looked up at the ring steward to see if he was at all concerned by what was going on around him. He looked back at me, gave a wink, and knowingly smiled as if to say "Welcome to the Bully world". To his left the judge continued to go through the motions, asking the handler to demonstrate the movement of his entry.

The judging continued in this way until the results of the first class were about to be announced. The person next to me leaned across and whispered the result in my ear. Then followed the announcement by the ring steward. My mouth fell open as the prediction I had just heard seconds before proved to be correct, and the placings were exactly as predicted. Turning to the person who had made the prediction I said "You really know your dogs!" "No" he replied, "I really know my judges"

The afternoon continued in this fashion, with class after class being judged, until the grand finale, the awarding of the CHALLENGE CERTIFICATE. In my dream I was sure that at last the dogs would appear on the end of the leads, but once again the dogs on the end of the leads became invisible as the handlers crossed the threshold of the ring entrance. For the final time the judge went through the motions, and in due course the winner was announced, only seconds after the usual prediction from the seat next to me.

After the show was over and everyone had begun to busy themselves with packing up, I approached the owner of the Dog which I thought would take the CC. Still confused I said to him "Bad Luck, I thought you should have taken it today".

It was his reply that woke me from my dream in a cold sweat. He said "Don't worry, next week the judge is one of ours!"

Lying awake after having been woken by my dream, I began trying to make sense of it all. After much soul searching and deep thought, the greatest moment of clarity came to me when I completely changed my perspective. The perspective I took was to try and view the situation through the eyes of the dogs themselves. What would they make of the in-fighting, the vested interests and the inconsistent judging? How would they feel if they were up there today and nothing tomorrow?

Thinking of it in their way certainly opened my eyes, and I hope yours too!!!!

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