

sickle, or open ring; there is no preference. The tail should not curl within itself nor lie on the back.

Tail carriage is not just a fashion statement. The purpose of the tail in hunting is to indicate the intensity of the hunt—the tail telegraphs to the hunter how close the rabbit is. When in a show stack, most Ibizans let the tail hang. This tail should reach at least to the hock, preferably longer. Old Spanish standards called for passing the tail between the hind legs to reach the spine. This spoke of both condition of the dog and tail length. The tail is an extension of the topline.

One fine point now lost to the present standard was the slight backward sweep of the ear in profile. This makes for that lovely, flowing line from ears to tail-tip.

Breeders, fanciers, and judges alike will benefit from watching the many wonderful videos taken of Ibizans hunting in their native Spain. I remember the first time I saw this. It really opened my eyes to the reasons for the beautiful shape of the Ibizan. The Ibizan was bred to hunt all day in extremely rough conditions. The Ibizan is shaped by function. His many unique characteristics have purpose. No other breed makes such spectacular leaps. Anything that compromises this ability is a detriment to the heritage of the Ibizan.

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Irish Wolfhounds By the Numbers

Throughout the history of dog shows there have been occasional attempts to judge competing Irish Wolfhounds by a point system. Although this method was found to be cumbersome, and the hound eventually awarded the top prize through such a system was not always necessarily the most typical animal, these point scales are worth noting because they were drawn up by some of the leading

stalwarts in the breed.

Unlike the extremely important “List of Points in Order of Merit” that appears at the end of our standard drafted by Captain Graham, I can find no disclaimer where judges were instructed that in case this scale of points appeared at variance with the standard, it was the latter document which is always correct.

The merit point system first appeared in the book *Dogs* published in England in 1906, 20 years after the standard was written. Judges of Irish Wolfhounds were told they should never approach their work without a copy of these comparative values, which added up to 100 for the perfect specimen.

The point scale was as follows:

12 points for head; seven for ears; three for beard and brows, and three for eyes; for a total of 25 points;

12 points for height at shoulder; 12 for substance and girth; and six for length of body and symmetry, for a total of 25 points;

Nine points for loin and hocks; nine for forelegs; and seven for feet, for a total of 25 points;

10 points for coat; seven for neck; five for tail; one for nails; and two for teeth, for a total of 25 points.

As you can imagine, while the system was in use there were a number of comments regarding it, such as those of well-known breeder and author A. J. Dawson, who wrote at the time:

“There are probably some judges and breeders who would like to see a couple of points taken from coat and given to height, and a couple taken from ears to give to substance and girth, with possibly a couple each from feet and tail to be given to length of body and symmetry. But there is no double that this scale of point values has been carefully thought out by those who really have made a careful study of the Irish Wolfhound; and it is probable that no conceivable scale would appear perfect in all eyes. This writer has bred a number of Wolfhounds, including the biggest of living dogs, and he would

always be prepared to accept and abide by the scale given above.”

In a footnote the editor, Harding Cox, lamented that more points were not given to the chest, ribs, and shoulders, and he went on to write how he would have described those points:

“Chest very deep and not too broad; fore-ribs long and comparatively flat, allowing free action to elbows; shoulders lying well back to the withers, flat in position, but showing hard muscle in action; back ribs fairly well sprung, giving free play to lung and heart power, and so well contained as to preclude any inordinate length or weakness in couplings.”

Then, in a very telling sentence that demonstrated his knowledge of the breed, he goes on to say:

“The Irish Wolfhound is much vaunted for his activity, sweeping action, and stamina; but such could not exist in the case of a specimen lacking the conformation which we have described and what has been so unaccountably neglected in the Club scale.”

In today’s ring it would be rare for a judge to allot one quarter of his or her selection to the headpiece, and more often than not there is only a cursory examination of the bite. Few judges spend any time examining the planes of the skull and the strength of the jaw, which are key points in the hound’s function in life.

The merit point-system for judging Irish Wolfhounds remained in place only a few years at the turn of the last century, but the comments regarding it at the time make for fascinating reading, as the writers were well versed in the breed’s purpose as an outstanding hunter of large game.

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Irish Wolfhound Club of America
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Otterhounds Please Don’t Say It’s a C-Section!

When we took our pregnant bitch to see an associate veterinarian