On the 11th April 2015 I had the honor to judge at the SVK- Bulldog & Pug Club Specialty in Budca, Slovakia.

In the early morning prior the show I noticed that a team of enthusiastic committee members and volunteers were setting up the ring and price table. It looks very nice and there were lots of gifts and trophies to win.

I had a nice entry of 154 dogs in total: 90 French bulldogs, 44 Bulldogs, 20 Pugs.  Quite a large number to judge with written critiques had to be however I felt it would be important to try and provide the exhibitors some feedback in regards to their dogs. Personally I prefer judging with written critiques because I feel this is the only way to properly express your thoughts and opinion in regards the dog in question and I always try to include weak & strong points of the dog in question.

By writing a proper critique one can address the strong and weaker points in order to try and give the owner a (better or another) view/idea on the dog in question. One can only hope that this critique helps the owner to understand which are the stronger and which are the weaker points and what I as a judge (and the standard) am looking for.

All dogs were in time the handlers were polite and friendly. Most of the owners handled and presented their dogs very well. The great sportmanship between the handlers present that day was remarkable and a joy to witness. Everyone congratulated each other after the placements in a proper way an example too many.

I asked a few of them not to handle their dogs on a (too) tight leash. This “developing trend” is something I am not fond of in general and I do not encourage this at all. The Frenchie & Pug (in fact in my opinion any breed) should be able to walk freely in order to show itself the most “natural” way possible. Besides the fact I consider it not very dog friendly it is the distinct character of the Frenchie which is not compatible to such strict handling. Again, just a few had to be corrected and all the handlers complied sympathetic and friendly.

There were some very nice dogs available that day and it was a joy to judge them. To me the males were of a higher quality level then the bitches. To be honest I had the feeling that the role of the bitches was slightly underestimated because I found the quality in the bitches in overall a bit lower. Please do not forget it ‘takes two to tango’ and both partners are 50% responsible for the end result.

It is not only the male adding his part to a combination the female also has her share as well of course. Some females were a bit longer in body shape which probably makes them great brood bitches (in the future) but I would desire them slightly shorter overall.

In French Bulldogs I had some very nice bitches with lots of great characteristics to offer however many of them lacked the breed typical layback, fill under the eyes (wider muzzle required), sweep of under jaw. Also the position of the ears is of unmistakable importance and should be attended too as well. It is so important to obtain the intelligent and attentive expression.

So few points that I would like to address which I find important to draw attention too:

* top line French Bulldog & Bulldog - not that many dogs had the correct roach backed top line a hallmark of the breed -
* another hallmark - correct placement of the ears - mostly size and shape of the ears were ok however the ears were set too wide apart which totally destroys the typical French Bulldog expression. Some Bulldogs and Pugs had ‘ fly away’ ears, too high placed on top of the head. In Pugs I had a strong desire for smaller and tighter carried ears.
* Some more delicate topic is the layback of the nose, also a typical FB and Bulldog feature. I noticed a few dogs had lack of layback and missed the necessary amount of 'fill' under the eyes so they seemed a bit ‘nosey’ this destroys the typical expression in both breeds. The Bulldogs often lack the ‘sour expression’ in that case and that is a pitty.
* tail placement and length is also a point of attention however this is a 'universal' problem in French Bulldogs and Bulldogs. French Bulldogs were often a bit short and Bulldogs sometimes inverted. In Pugs the tail curl could be tighter sometimes.

Overall I was pleased with the quality of the dogs which I placed however if you check my qualifications they speak for themselves. I have written the most important point of improvement in my written critiques and I hope it helps the owners a bit with evaluating their dog(s). Sometimes it was a very close call and then it is all about the (small) details.

In some unfortunate cases there were dogs present which I would have definitely chosen to be placed 1st because they were the overall best however, unfortunately they showed poor, non fluent movement at the decisive moment. Clearly I can not take such specimen as a winner how nice the dogs may have looked at first and whilst in stance.

There were some very interesting young dogs which I expect to have a bright future. The winners in the classes were pleasing and a pleasure to judge. My final line up all had lots of the desired breed specific characteristics. Needless to say that I was happy to pick all my “best of” and finally the apotheosis of the day the selection of the Best in Show.

It was a pleasant day and I hope the committee, members and French- ,English Bulldog and Pug lovers present that day had the same memorable experience that I had. I wish to thank the very competent committee for the great event they put together. Furthermore a big thank you for all exhibitors, owners and handlers for presenting their dogs in such professional manner and exposing such great sportmanship.

With much pleasure and kindest regards,

Dimitry van Raamsdonk