

# AKC Gazette Column - by Grace Cartwright

## About the AKC Breed Columns:

The Breed columns are a time-honored feature of the AKC Gazette. Each columnist is appointed by a breed's national parent club, which preserves the breed's standard and helps to educate breeders, judges, and the public about the breed's history, function, and possible health issues. A national parent club comprises dedicated breeders and fanciers, and it represents many years of collective experience in the breed. Columnists are asked to write about topics of interest to the fancy in general as well as those of specific interest to judges and devotees of the breed.

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## Sportsmanship Is Not Just Being Nice

Sportsmanship, according Wikipedia, *“expresses an aspiration or ethos that the activity will be enjoyed for its own sake, with proper consideration for fairness, ethics, respect, and a sense of fellowship with one’s competitors.”* In other words, being a good sportsman is about how you play the game... inside and outside the ring.

If you have been showing long enough, then you have had plenty of times where you think to yourself... “What did the judge just do?” That dog with smut in his coat, the one that is just WAY too big, just beat your very correct sized and coated dog. OK, so the other dog does move like a dream, is correctly proportioned and has a head to die for, but come on... he’s so big, he looks like he’s been fed Miracle-Grow.

Or maybe you were on the winning side of the deal. You can’t believe you just beat that dog that has been doing all the winning. He has the perfect Aussie silhouette! His eye might be really round, and his movement isn’t the best, but the judges normally pick him because he is always perfectly groomed, superbly handled, and just begs the judge to “pick me” with his animation. But hey, maybe this judge does recognize good movement, and that’s why your dog won today even with his faults. Then again, it might be because the judge prefers a blue/tan Aussie, and that is why yours won over that beautiful red one. Either way, your Aussie is the winner of this class on this day...even if you feel he didn’t really deserve it.

So, what do you do when you lose? Do you stomp off ranting about the stupid judge being so blind he couldn’t find a good dog even if it was posted on the dog’s forehead? Or do you thank the judge for the ribbon you did win and go up and congratulate the winner? How about when you win, do you gloat and act like it’s your due? Or do you thank the judge and let your competitors know that you recognize how good their dogs look today... they didn’t make this win easy.

If you took the “nice” approach to the win or loss, then you are being a good “sport”. But you need to remember, as Stephanie Diebler put it so eloquently in 2002: “Sportsmanship is not just about being nice. It is much more important than that. It’s about realizing that you could not compete without an opponent, and that she has the same goals as you.” Sportsmanship goes beyond how you win or lose.

Think about it...Do you converse with your opponents and share grooming and handling tips? Do you help evaluate litters? Do you discuss the finer points of the breed standard? Do you go clap and make noise when the Aussie goes around in the group ring? Do you contribute to the Australian Terrier Breed as a whole? Or do you only concentrate on your little part, worrying about only your wins and losses? A good sportsman realizes that it takes mutual support (sharing information or bait, holding a dog outside the ring, etc.) for all involved to realize their greatest potential. With everyone at their best, the wins are more meaningful, and the losses are easier to bear.