

The Importance of the List of Points in Order of Merit

by: Anthony Killykeen-Doyle and Elizabeth C. Murphy

"We do not own the breed but hold it in trust for future generations."

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The Importance of the List of Points in Order of Merit

The Irish hound is built on giant sighthound lines, in addition to hunting large game it also needed the strength to hunt its quarry. The dog described in the Standard has: size, strength, balance and great freedom of movement.

Graham gave us a lovely description of the Irish Wolfhound shape, *"a nice set of curves beginning with the crest of the neck and finishing with the curve of the tail."* A proudly carried head, nicely arched neck, well laid back shoulders leading into a good topline with adequate rise over the loins and well set croup produces this gently curving outline. The head should be *"as powerful as is compatible with the greyhound shape."*

Betty Murphy stressed that the important point to remember is that the Irish Wolfhound is a sighthound, and a sighthound is a fairly long legged animal. I suspect that this *"short legs"* problem is being accepted by breeders and rewarded by judges because it is usually accompanied by good, sometimes even over-angulation. Short legs are a fault against both type and conformation in an Irish Wolfhound

Tony Doyle (AKD) and Betty Murphy (ECM) then went through the individual points.

Typical

1.) *Typical: The Irish Wolfhound should not be quite so heavy or massive as the Great Dane, but more so than the Deerhound, which in general type he should otherwise resemble.*

AKD: Ours is one of the few breed Standards that include reference to other breeds, the Great Dane and the Deerhound. These two breeds are used as reference within the text to keep our Wolfhounds from the extremes of type which the other two breeds represent. The Standards of all three breeds were written within a few years of each other. It is of interest to note that Mr. Adock and Mr. Bolton both worked on the original Dane Standard and Mr. Hood-Wright, who helped to write the first Deerhound Standard, were all breeders of Irish Wolfhounds. Capt. Graham was a founder member of the Great Dane Club and his influence can be seen in the similarity between the Dane and the Wolfhound Standards. These men knew all three of these breeds and valued their similarities and differences. When studying the original contemporary Standards,

it is possible to see more exactly what was intended when we were asked to compare the Irish Wolfhound with the Dane and the Deerhound.

ECM: The Irish Wolfhound should give the impression of strength. A hound that looks heavy in build is probably too coarse or has heavy bone. The heaviest bone is not the strongest bone, the strength is influenced by its density. On the other hand, a hound that gives the impression of fleetness is probably too finely built for an Irish Wolfhound. The reference to these other two breeds were included to prevent the breeders developing lines that were too heavy or too light.

Great Size and Commanding appearance

2.) *GREAT SIZE and Commanding Appearance.*

AKD: As stated earlier, size is an integral part of the Irish Wolfhound, yet it seems to have become a dirty word in the breed today. Why? The first thing that attracted all of you to the Irish Wolfhound, I am sure, was the size of this beautiful big dog. Size is belittled in many quarters ~ usually by people whose hounds are lacking size. Don't fall for the fallacy that the big ones have straight shoulders or the big ones haven't got angulation. A lot of them do if you know what your at. The Wolfhound has always been the tallest hound. I don't apologize for having big dogs and you shouldn't either, provided they are in proportion and have balance.

ECM: Great size is what we are aiming for ~ provided the balance is right. If a tall dog owes his additional height to lack of angulation, this is a faulty conformation. Size, accompanied by good balance, good fronts and rears, is the ideal. Great size in well made strongly built hounds.

Movements Easy and Active

3.) *Movements Easy and Active:*

AKD: NOTE, it is not movement but movements, incorporating every single part of the hound. They don't run around the ring like an Afghan. Easy ~ active. This is a dog who is a hunter, so they don't have quick bursts of speed and exhaust themselves. They are meant to go out and work all day with their owners and with the pack. Easy and active until the time comes when he has to do his work. Now I am not advocating that they should kill every sheep in the area but remember that this describes the historical hunting dog.

ECM: When watching hounds move, the good mover looks as though he is not working very hard, he just seems to be ambling along. Try keeping up with him and you will just how much ground he is covering with his easy movement. The hound who looks as though he is making great effort and is all busy and active as he moves, is usually the one with short strides or high energy and time wasting action.

Head

4.) Head, long, level and carried high.

AKD: I am fed up looking at square heads, aren't you? How can it be square when the Standard says long? It also says muzzle long and moderately pointed. You want a long head, a powerful head. This dog grabs, he holds. He must have a long head with a strong jaw, a powerful muzzle.

ECM: As I said earlier, he should have a strong powerful greyhound head. It is not square, it is not blocky, the skull is not narrow at the rear like a Borzoi. We are seeing quite a few heads now with a high frontal bone, the skull rising too high above the stop, something to watch out for and breed away from. The head is the first individual point mentioned in the list of points in Order of Merit, but follows type, size and movement.

Forelegs

5.) Forelegs, heavily boned, quite straight; elbows well set under.

AKD: This is self explanatory.

ECM: In a well constructed front, it is the length and angulation of the upper-arm that places the elbows "*well under.*" If the upper arm is straight the elbows will be too far forward.

Thighs

6.) Thighs long and muscular; second thighs, well muscled, stifles nicely bent.

AKD: Due to a typographical error the UK Standard says slightly bent which has been in use for the past 40 years. It is meant to be nicely, not slightly bent. Note that it refers to thighs, second thighs, not thigh. The wording in this is very good, it was written by people who knew animals. It is not a very long Standard but for people who think it is very clear.

ECM: I would like to underline the fact that it asks for muscular second thighs. This is extremely important because if the lower thigh is not well muscled. it means that the muscles are not strong enough to work the hock joint. The greatest movement of any joint in the body is in the hock joint.

Coat:

7.) Coat, rough and hard, especially wiry and long over the eyes and under jaw.

AKD: Ireland is a wet country, it rains a lot. We need that rough wiry coat as protection. It also gets terribly cold, not the cold you have here on the Continent but a damp cold. What the Standard does not say is that we also have an undercoat, a soft protecting down under that rough coat. So there is a functional reason for the coat. Over-grooming can remove the undercoat.

ECM: A good hard rough coat is just that and nobody can argue with it. A problem sometimes arises when people put extra emphasis on facial furnishings which often go hand in hand with a soft coat. In order to keep excessive furnishings, they tend to tolerate a soft coat. This is a mistake. Remember the photograph in Graham's book, of Colin showing wiry furnishings. The Standard says that on the head the hair should be especially wiry and long over the eyes and under jaw. How often do we see wiry furnishings today?

Body:

8.) *Body, long and well ribbed up, with ribs well sprung, and great breadth across hips.*

AKD: Nothing square here, we are talking length. Head long, body long, back rather long than short.

ECM: The dog should not be cobby or square, this is a fault against type. Well ribbed-up means that the ribs reach well back and down to a deep chest leaving plenty of room for the heart and lungs to expand when the hound is galloping. If the hound is herring gutted ~ the underline goes too sharply into the tuck-up, heart and lung room is reduced. Over stripping the tuck-up makes the hound look herring gutted,

Great breadth across the hips. Well constructed, well muscled hindquarters are necessary for power and propulsion in the gallop.

Loins:

9.) *Loins arched, belly well drawn up.*

AKD: You don't want a flat or straight back. Too many hounds are so flat you could use them as a table. A flat back means that the animal is not properly built. The arched loins are there for a reason and the belly is well drawn up.

ECM: It is interesting to note that the vertebrae of the loin are slightly wedge shaped to give added strength to the loins which have no skeletal structure underneath for support. Muscle adds to the arch. One often sees a flattish back on a young hound up to 18 months or so, he has not yet developed the muscle which will contribute to the arch.

Ears:

10.) *Ears, small, with greyhound-like carriage.*

AKD: That means small and rosed. That is also mentioned for a purpose. Lots of breeds used for hunting that did not have this small ear were cropped. In hunting the first place to be attacked usually is the head, the first thing to be caught is the ear. You can see it with any of your puppies fighting, a scream goes up when the ear is caught.

ECM: I don't think there is any ambiguity here. Is there anything that detracts more from a nice typical hound head than a large flat ear? The small rose ear sets off a good head.

Feet:

11.) *Feet, moderately large and round; toes close, well arched.*

ECM: It is generally said that the round cat foot is less subject to damage in the field than the longer hare foot. The weight of the Irish Wolfhound means that there is a greater danger of injury to his feet than with more lightly built hounds. The well arched and well padded cat foot has less chance of injury to the Irish Wolfhound.

AKD: Well arched means well up on those feet. They are not flat, they are not camel feet, they are not Afghan feet. The nearest foot to it is a good Great Dane foot which is very similar. They don't wear shoes and they go over very rough terrain, not like the inside of a show ring. I live in the mountains and the countryside is very rough - unless you have good feet they would be cut to bits.

Neck:

12.) *Neck, long and well arched and very strong.*

ECM: A long strong neck is an essential requirement in a hound that was bred to hunt and kill large game. It is not a case of the longer the better, when one does see an overlong neck, it is like that of a swan ~ lacking power and strength. Graham himself said that too long a neck gives the impression of weakness rather than strength. Well arched, strong and long in proportion to the body. Hounds of the past were often depicted with the head looking directly behind them "*looking into the past.*" Hounds can still do this today.

Chest:

13.) *Chest, very deep, moderately broad.*

ECM: As we said with the ribs you need depth of chest to give space for the lungs and heart to breathe. Well placed forequarters also contribute to capacity. If a dog is very narrow in front, capacity is reduced ~ it should be moderately broad. The Wolfhound should not have the very broad chest of a Mastiff, this would not be in keeping with the greyhound shape.

Shoulders:

14.) *Shoulders, muscular, set sloping.*

AKD: The Standard covers that by saying shoulders muscular, giving breadth of chest. So you have got your moderately broad chest but what makes it seem even broader is these muscular shoulders. Not flat shoulders, not straight shoulders ~ muscular shoulders giving breadth to the chest.

Tail:

15.) *Tail, long and slightly curved.*

AKD: In the original Irish Wolfhound Standard of 1879 which was Graham's first it said "*.. it should be carried with an upward curve only and not be curled as is the case with many greyhounds.*" A curve, not a curl.

ECM: A nice long strong tail, slightly curved. The slight curve should not be used to excuse a gay tail. The tail is used as a rudder in galloping.

Eyes, dark:

16.) *Eyes, dark.*

ECM: This was added later on, I think in 1932. Graham used to say that the eyes should at least harmonise with the coat, in other words they should not look light in the head.

AKD: Dark eyes were added in 1930.

NOTE ~ *The above in no way alters the 'Standard of Excellence' which must in all cases be rigidly adhered to; they simply give the various points in order of merit. If in any case they appear at variance with the Standard of Excellence it is the latter which is correct.*