

### The Mysterious Man in Black

Living close to Central Park in New York City, I have both the pleasure of and disdain for co-existing with numerous city dogs and their owners. There are a large number of purebred dogs in the city, and surprisingly I sometimes see several lesser-known breeds, such as German Pinschers, Spinoni Italiani, and even Glen of Imaal Terriers. One dog in particular, however, has haunted me for months now. While finishing my morning run, I regularly see the same Bearded Collie entering the park.

Regulations allow dogs in the park to be off-lead before 9 o'clock in the morning. As you can imagine, at this time there are dogs running every which direction. Fights break out, and in the distance you hear exasperated owners calling dogs they don't have control of. However, you also see grassy valleys where the same dogs return every day to play nicely as their owners stand on the sidelines as if at little league practice, holding their morning coffee and chit-chatting.

My goal in the morning is to run, and as you runners know, this time is precious because it is dedicated to inner thoughts. Over the past few months, however, my quiet thinking time has been invaded by a reoccurring vision: that Bearded Collie I see proudly sauntering into the park every morning with his owner in tow. Week after week, I see him as I'm completing my run. I'm tired and want to finish the mileage, so I don't stop to speak with his owner. Instead I let my mind wonder.

The critique: The dog is a medium-sized male, of nice length, with balanced movement but not a lot of reach and drive. He is older, and I only see him at a slow trot, so it's tough to truly judge. He is in excellent, hard condition, with a solid topline and strong, sound gait.

His head looks very nice, but it is hard to confirm its quality without touching, and the hair between his eyes has been clipped, changing his expression. He has lovely, dark-brown eyes, and his coat (that always looks freshly brushed) appears to be harsh, and it follows the lines of his body and allows plenty of daylight.

Overall he is a very balanced dog who reminds me of a more “traditional” Beardie—not as elegant as some, but a typy dog of substance who moves with a slightly overconfident tail in the air.

The burning questions: *What kennel is this dog from?* His conformation makes it clear that he is the product a reputable breeder, but which one? *What dogs are generations behind him? Whose hard work and dedication to the breed has placed this dog here in the middle of New York City, to haunt me on my morning runs?*

After weeks of our passing one another on the sidewalk, I finally stopped my run to introduce myself to his owner. (Ah, the dog does have an excellent head, I was able to confirm.) His pedigree includes dogs from noted kennels Tamevalley, Classical, Fox Lane, Windfiddler, Sheiling, and Nonesuch. Ziggy is a 9½-year-old dog whose owner Ted grooms him every morning before their one- to two-hour walk and ball-chasing ritual in the park. Ted describes Ziggy as a smart and arrogant boy who has been herding-instant tested and left a show career needing just a major to finish. Ziggy’s registered name is Meadows Ultimate Sensation, and his breeder is Claudia McNulty. —Gail Miller Bisher, New York, N.Y.; [gailmillerbisher@me.com](mailto:gailmillerbisher@me.com)