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Bulldog tries for bite of Big Apple

Zionsville couple takes dog to prestigious Westminster dog show

By Ben Woodson



Zionsville — Every time Doug and Mindy Welk's champion show dog Spice wins a show, she wiggles and jumps around. Spice must be hopping wildly because just like the Indianapolis Colts she is going to the "super bowl of dog shows," or at least that is what Doug Welks calls the Feb. 12 and 13 Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show.

In February, the Welks of Zionsville will take their English bulldog, Spice, to the dog show at Madison Square Garden in New York City to compete with 2,500 other champion dogs from around the country.

According to the Westminster Kennel Club Web site, Westminster is the sole champion's-only dog show in the United States. A champion is a dog that has won at previous shows and accumulated 15 points in the dog show circuit, Welks said.

The Welks have only been showing dogs for three years, Doug Welks said. The Welks' path to pageantry began when Mindy's sister bought a bull dog puppy.

"We just thought he was

adorable," he said.

Mindy decided she wanted to show off her "adorable" bull dog after she attended a dog show, she said. She kept thinking how much fun it looked. It was also a way to spend time with her husband, she said.

"We each have our own hobbies, but it was really something that we could do together," she said.

The couple contacted dog show mentor Faye Richardson, who sold them Spice. And now, with Richardson's guidance, Spice is living up to his proper name — Ch. Empire's Legend Spice Girl. Ch. stands for Champion and Empire and Legend are the names of the breeder of Spice's mother and father. Spice is the sister of the No. 1 bulldog in the country, Welks said.

"They are wonderful students," Richardson said. "They have done everything right. That has made them get as far as they have."

The Welks bought another show-quality bulldog from Richardson and started breeding their own show dogs, Doug Welks said. They had their first litter last year, and two of the eight bulldog puppies will be show dogs.

Doug Welks may be is a professional at showing dogs now, but at his first show he wouldn't go into the ring to show Spice, Richardson said. Instead

she had to show Spice, she said. But she forced him to go out there for the final round. Spice didn't win best in show, but did win in her group, Richardson said.

Judges make their decision by comparing the dog to the breed-standard. For bulldogs, that means having a large head compared to the size of the body, a wide jaw, and ears far back on the jaw. Judging is the most nerve-racking part of dog shows, Doug Welks said.

It is worth those tense moments though to see the way Spice loves to perform, he said. Spice is focused once she gets into the ring, he said. Other people who have handled her have commented on how easy she is to work with.

"I'll say 'Spice its your turn', and she turns on immediately," Doug Welks said.

While he is showing Spice, Mindy Welks watches from the sidelines feeling proud of her champion bulldog, she said. She sometimes tells random strangers at the show that Spice is her dog because she is so proud.

Her favorite part is how excited Spice gets when she wins, she said. "She wiggles and jumps around knowing she is the best dog in the ring at the time."

The Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show will be at Madison Square Garden in New York on Feb. 12 and 13. Portions of it will be televised on the USA Network from 8 p.m. to 11 p.m.



Doug Welks of Zionsville shows off his champion English Bull Dog named Spice after a win at a dog show.