

Using the Litter Evaluation (LE) to Help Make a Good Puppy Match--Frank Rescigno and Scout



The *Puppy Potential Evaluation* (PPE) is a tool that can be used in a litter evaluation. It focuses on the individual puppy's reaction to certain stimuli. The breeder of Scout from the Artie/Chewie 2003 litter, Christi Yonavick, used the PPE to evaluate Scout and his siblings (6 males 2 females) at 7.5 weeks old.

There are 17 tests included in the PPE. The PPE was developed by Marlette as part of her Puppy Selection Process. The PPE is part of Phase III of the Puppy Selection Process. Phase III also includes the *Litter Interaction Form* and the *Conformation Evaluation for Shiloh Puppies*.

The PPE is designed to be customized to meet the needs of prospective buyers. In our case, Christi determined only 14 of the 17 tests were necessary. This was the first puppy evaluation I ever attended. I had viewed videotapes of other evaluations and also read about several other evaluations and criteria. I did have the opportunity to extensively review the forms prior to the actual litter evaluation. This was very helpful, and I would encourage others to do the same.

There were four categories that were very important to me (what Marlette calls "critical criteria") concerning this evaluation. #1 Human Interaction; #2 Food Motivation; #3 Touch Sensitivity; and #4 Forgiveness. The reason these four are important can be explained in this way. **Human Interaction:** There are seven people in my household with plenty of visitors and guests coming and going. So the pup would have to be confident around people. **Food Motivation:** All the dogs I have had have been trained with treats. If a pup was not food motivated, I would have to use a different training method. Not a big deal but my job would be much easier if the pup was food motivated (a little selfish on my part maybe, but why not put the odds in my favor). **Touch Sensitivity:** Again seven people in a small house and the chances of the dog being bumped into or stepped on accidentally is a possibility. This is not necessarily a good thing, but I have to be realistic when assessing my criteria for a puppy. So the dog needs to have a medium pain tolerance for our lifestyle. **Forgiveness:** I wanted a pup that would know that if it was corrected for something that it was still loved. And I needed a pup that could forgive mistakes I might make during training. These were criteria that I had that I selected ahead of time, and the pup I would pick had to score in a certain area on these four items.

I also had the opportunity to observe this litter when they were 4-weeks old. I watched them interact with each other and also with the older dogs the breeder had in her home. My daughter was allowed in the puppy pen with them, and I could see how they interacted with her. I knew the puppy would be around young adults ages 13-16 years of age. The puppy would go to baseball and softball games and practices and interact

with the players on the teams. On the day of the evaluation, prior to our arrival, all the puppies were checked for structure using the *Puppy Conformation Form for Shiloh Puppies* that is another part of the Puppy Selection Process.

It was decided that two males had the potential for show or breeding. That meant that four male pups were available as pet quality, and I would have first pick of these four. Knowing that three other people could not pick until I did kind of put me on the hot seat. But I did not let that bother me. I took my time to make a decision. I watched all the puppies being evaluated, made my notes, and also asked my 14-year-old daughter for her opinion. I also knew what my wife was looking for in a pup. When all the puppy evaluations were done, we sat down for lunch. This was a great opportunity for me to talk to the breeder, the tester, and the owner and breeder of the sire. I also talked to the breeder's daughter who had interacted with the pups on an almost daily basis since they were born.

Then after collecting and analyzing all the data, it was time to make my pick. I knew that my wife wanted a cuddly dog, my kids wanted a playmate, and I knew the pup had to have enough spunk to put up with Storm, our 18-month-old Shiloh. It was a lot to ask of a 7.5-week-old puppy. I put together my notes, thoughts, feelings, emotions, the breeder's and her daughter's comments, the tester's comments and picked the orange male, whom we named "Scout."

I must have done something right because Scout is living up to my expectations based on the results from the LE. Because I attended the LE, I was able to observe certain traits of the pups individually and also compare the traits of the pups as they interacted as a litter. One of the things I really liked about the LE was that it was in an area out of sight from all the other pups, and that the person who brought the pups to the tester had very little contact with the pups prior to this day. He would bring a pup out of the pen, give him a potty break, and then bring him to the tester. I felt by doing this the breeder was trying not to influence the test results in any way. The breeder did a good job of making the LE as fair as possible.



In closing, I would recommend that everyone attend the LE if possible. Take time to research different puppy temperament tests and get familiar with what the results mean. Know what you are looking for in a pup and use that criteria during the LE. Talk to the breeder, he or she knows his or her puppies and can explain why a certain pup tested the way he did. I would require a full litter evaluation on any pup I get in the future. I appreciate the opportunity to express my thoughts regarding Scout's Litter Evaluation.