

The Inaugural Dealers Challenge Cup

Bernie Woollands reports on the success of the first Dealers Challenge Cup, held at the South East International Koi Show



Presenting A4Koi with the Friendship Trophy

There are provisions within the BKKS show rules for a dealers' section, whereby dealers can enter koi and compete against one another in isolation from the main hobbyist entries.

The last time this was attempted was at the BKKS National in 2003. I don't know the reason why it's never been repeated, but I do remember a source of confusion created the last time it was run. A reason I recalled when our Show Chairman decided that we would attempt a version of this notion at our 2009 show.

Our current Show Chairman, Alan Archer took over the reins after our 2007 show. Alan is a contributor to the Koi Chat (www.koichat.com) forum and, shortly after taking up the job, became aware of a thread regarding dealers exhibiting koi. Like most threads on forums it contained a lot of ideas, notions and opinions and it also got side-tracked, moving off topic onto something else.

Intrigued by some of the comments and the positive contributions by some dealers, Alan ran a thread of his own specifically seeking ideas from dealers that would

contribute if the option was made available. There were several, but undertaking koi show management for the first time was not the right time for introducing too many changes, so he shelved the idea for the 2008 show. But once that one was consigned to the history books he set about conducting a feasibility study for our 2009 show.

not as easy as it sounds

Setting up a dealers' section sounds easy. It is if you are just thinking of filling empty vats, but at the South East Show such a notion required additional investment in extra vats and equipment, as well as modifying the show ring – for example, extending air conduit as well as waste water disposal. However, these were deemed to be affordable and doable, so the next thing was to construct a format and get some dealers to make a commitment and get involved.

By shifting our Benching Tent from the perimeter to within the centre ring we were able to make space for between eight and ten new vats. We decided, however, that for the inaugural show we would restrict that number

About the author:



Bernie Woollands bought his first koi in 1969. He is a member of the South East Section and a BKKS and NVN Judge, having had articles published in Australia, Holland, Japan, South Africa, USA and the UK.

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Winner of the Koi Eagle Trophy



A4Koi's stands

to a maximum of eight. We also decided that we would only allow dealers that were vendors at the show to compete. Having initially received commitment from four such dealers we set about trying to establish a format for this element of the show. This involved sending a series of round-robin e-mails to each dealer to garner information and ideas about how we could make the best from this concept.

From our point of view we wanted the event to be more than just another competition; we specifically wanted it to be educational, and asked the dealers to figure out a way of utilising the exhibits to provide information to our visitors. This was one area where they were quick to come

back with ideas, and if you look at the photos of the displays they put up they didn't let us or our public down. By this stage we were down to three participating dealers – A4Koi, Nippon Nishikigoi and Yume Koi – and, furthermore, we would only be needing five vats.

determining show classes

With what would obviously be a smaller number of koi the standard sizes and show classes used in the hobbyist section would not be suitable and an alternative had to be found. Mindful of the confusion at the 2003 National where a size four meant different measurements depending on whether it was in the dealers or the hobbyist sections, we knew we'd have to come up with something different to avoid that.

Originally I had the notion of separating the exhibits by age, for example Tosai, Nisai etc, but on further discussion that was deemed to be impractical. Eventually we settled on three sizes and decided that to avoid any confusion we'd refer to them as A, B and C:

- Size A: under 45cms
- Size B: between 45 and 60cms
- Size C: 60cms plus

From the very beginning we never looked beyond having more than four show classes. It seemed generally accepted that they would be Kohaku, Sanke, Showa and Non Go-Sanke.

It was pure coincidence that at the time of sorting this out I was in communication with Yuko Shirako, the secretary of the ZNA in Bepu Japan. I asked her what the Japanese term for non Go-Sanke was and she said it was Go-Sanke Igai. Igai means 'except'. So I casually dropped this into the messages going back and forth hoping that somebody would query it and give me the chance to show off, but nobody did!



Runner Up

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Yume Koi's stand



An example of the educational information that was provided by Yume Koi



A week before the show I was out at the Holland Koi Show where several Japanese were in attendance and I dropped it into conversation to see if it really made sense. It did, but my pronunciation was a bit off and they politely corrected me. I noticed that Mike Snaden pronounced it correctly, but maybe that was just his West Country accent!

For awards we kept it to a 'Best in Class' per size, a 'Best in Show' which equates to the Dealers Grand Champion, a 'Runner up' and a 'Best Tategoi'. Normally a Tategoi award is not favoured by judges as it involves a large degree of speculation and goes against the norm for a koi show where we judge on the day. However, we felt this award was necessary as the three dealers involved spend a lot of time selecting koi with a future for their more demanding clients and we wanted to acknowledge this. Luckily we knew we

could deal with it by selecting judges with a bit of experience in this area.

finding the right judges

With sizes and classes organised it was just a matter of sorting out those judges. We use hobbyist judges to judge hobbyist fish, so our first thoughts were 'trade' judges to judge the dealers' section. It seemed logical but the more we looked into it the larger the possibility of perceived favouritism appeared likely, so in the end we settled for a compromise. Our show uses international judges and we felt that it would be in keeping doing the same here.

For continuity's sake we asked our Senior Judge, Mike Harvey, if he'd oversee this team as well, and then we made up the rest of the team with Hongman Leung, a ZNA judge from China who seriously dabbles in breeding koi, and Rene Gerritzen, a part time dealer (Vijverfun) from Holland who's been a regular at our show since 2002. Rene has been the provider of many of the photographs that ▶

The judges of the dealers' section



Our show uses international judges and we felt that it would be in keeping doing the same here



Best Tategoi



Nippon Nishikigoi's stand

have accompanied my show reports over the years, as well as being a regular helper at the NVN and Belgian Koi Society shows.

let the show begin!

We decided to let the dealers bench and photograph their own koi. The penalty for incorrect benching being castration and confiscation of beer money along with the shame and humiliation I would wreak upon them in this and subsequent reports! Therefore I am happy to state that our participants were found to be of good character capable of honest measuring.

Judging was carried out on the Sunday morning prior to the judging of the hobbyist section. I accompanied them to record their results. All went very smoothly with all decisions being unanimous after some serious discussions and examining of the koi. Then came some genuinely innovative Benching Admin – I had overlooked the need for having a reference for each fish and the photographs were on the display boards facing the public. So I hastily drew a picture of the winning koi on the paperwork noting particular pattern details etc until I could reconcile them against the photos.

With just 28 entries to look over the judging didn't take too long, in fact I'm sure the judges strung it out a bit. Some

of their conversations had little to do with decision making and sounded more like a trio of koi-kichi on a day out. And why can't judges have fun too? But it had to come to an end eventually and they finished off with the selection of the Best Tategoi and called it a day.

While judging was underway I was drawn aside by a visitor from Holland. Friendship trophies from foreign koi societies are a recognised part of an international show and amongst our visitors were members of a European Internet Forum called Koi Eagle (www.koieagle.nl) who had decided that their trophy was going to an exhibit in the dealers' section. These enterprising hobbyists had got one of the representatives of House of Kata (a Dutch food manufacturer) to transport their trophy across the channel. Somewhere on the journey House of Kata had filled the trophy with koi food.

It's an unusual state of affairs for a dealer to win a friendship trophy, but coming as it did from one of our international guests with an added gesture from a foreign dealer, it somehow fitted in with the ethos of the South East International Show.

with thanks

We'd like to take this opportunity to thank Darren Maughan (A4 Koi), Simon Austin and James Sharpe (Nippon Nishikigoi), Mike Snaden (Yume Koi), our judges, the Koi Eagle members and House of Kata for contributing to the success of our inaugural Dealers Challenge Cup competition. 鯉

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Dealers Challenge Cup Results

Best in Show: Kohaku exhibited by Yume Koi

Runner up: Utsuri exhibited by A4 Koi

Best Tategoi: Kohaku exhibited by Nippon Nishikigoi

Koi Eagle Friendship Trophy: Gin Matsuba exhibited by A4 Koi

Best Kohaku size A: A4 Koi

Best Kohaku size B: Yume Koi

Best Kohaku size C: Yume Koi

Best Sanke size B: Nippon Nishikigoi

Best Sanke size C: A4 Koi

Best Showa Size C: A4 Koi

Best Go-Sanke Igai size B: A4 Koi

Best Go-Sanke Igai size C: Yume Koi