



First-Generation U.S. Breeders Strive To Compete in Global Market

PART II EVENTING

By Kim MacMillan

Is there an all-U.S. bred, trained and ridden team of Olympic horses in our future? Can our American breeders beat the Europeans at their own game? *Horse Sport International's* Kim MacMillan asked a group of up-and-coming American sport horse breeders about their experiences and how best to bring on a fledgling U.S. breeding industry. Second in our three-part series covering the efforts of those breeding for the Olympic disciplines, are event horse breeders, Michael and Nathalie Pollard, Andrew and Tiffany Palmer and Tim and Cheryl Holekamp.

Historically there have been all-U.S. bred Olympic teams but they existed only in the early days of equestrian sports, when all team riders were military officers. By the 2012 London Olympics, our U.S. riders in all three disciplines were mounted on horses bred in other countries.

Eventing was the final stronghold for North American-bred Olympic horses, with the 2004 and 2008 U.S. teams each having some: Poggio II (Thoroughbred by Polynesian Flyer) in 2004 and 2008; Jacob Two Two (Thoroughbred, pedigree unknown) in 2008; Carrick (Canadian Sport Horse by Cozy's Commander) in 2004, and Courageous Comet (Thoroughbred by Comet Shine), in 2008.

NEW SPRING FARM - TIM & CHERYL HOLEKAMP

Since 1983, Timothy and Cheryl Holekamp have produced about 100 foals by various stallions at their 160-acre New Spring Farm in Columbia, Missouri. So far their most successful progenitor is the German Trakehner stallion Windfall (by Habicht – Madruzzo xx) which they imported in 2000. Ridden by Darren Chiacchia, Windfall won the individual Pan Am Championship and was USEA Horse of the Year in 2003. The following year he won Rolex Kentucky and was a member of the Athens Olympics bronze-medal winning U.S. event team. From him, the Holekamps have bred no fewer than four USEA Young Event Horse champions or reserve champions. Most successful to date is Hanno (Windfall – Caprimond) who was national champion in 2006 as a four-year-old and in 2007 as a five-year-old.

The Holekamps also stand the ATA-approved Baron Verdi by Monteverdi, and own or manage three other stallions including the recently imported German Trakehner Songline (Summertime – Exclusiv), leased from Gustav Schickedanz. Songline was not only champion of his approvals but also of his age group at the Bundeschampionat. He currently stands at Chatsworth Stud where he is being trained by Michael Pollard.

Tim, 66, is very active in the United States Eventing Association (USEA) serving on a number of USEA committees, including the USEA's Young Event Horse (YEH) Task Force, which is charged with developing, monitoring and perpetuating the YEH program. He is also the current president of the American Trakehner Association.

While Tim doesn't think that the USEF is a breeder-driven organization (most of the sport horse breed



Tim and Cheryl Holekamp of New Spring Farm with their homebred three-year-old Trakehner filly Sina NSF by Windfall out of Scarlett by Biotop.

organizations in this country are daughters of their European counterparts and therefore not likely to collaborate in a “go-domestic” breeding campaign), he does see some unique potential in American breeders.

“One of the greatest assets of American culture is its lack of ‘order,’” he says. “People go their own ways here, and that leads to much greater variegation of breeding theories and directions, with the resultant improvement in genetic variation. What is needed is accurate measuring of breeding outcomes.”

Tim believes this would allow for more rapid adjustments in breeding decisions, and bring out the “fast adaptability to changing circumstances that the American culture and economy enjoys, in general. That leads to one important area where national equestrian leadership (USEF and others) can help in – the fast, accurate, and open collection and sharing of competition

the FEI lacks the use of what is called the ‘n’ number, meaning quantity can overshadow quality. Having large numbers of progeny that only include a few successful offspring unfortunately earns a better rating than consistently siring high quality offspring from just a few well-chosen breedings.”

Tim does see the potential for U.S. breeders to produce international competition horses, but pointed to one major factor that needs to be corrected in this country. “There will be U.S.-bred team horses, though not likely in the next cycle or two. The matter is controlled by the numbers, which create the odds of that happening. Because there are easily ten times as many sport horses bred in several European countries than are bred here, the chances of an all-domestic team is low.” However, he notes that the additional tariff or “acquisition cost” of roughly \$20,000 which Americans

“What is needed is accurate measuring of breeding outcomes.”

results, at all levels, of horses bred in this country.”

The USEA and USEF are not the only ones who can aid in the success of breeding international sport horses in the U.S.A., adds Tim. Breed associations can improve their use of competition results in analyzing pedigrees and individual breeding animals. “The current state of FEI breeding ‘ratings’, which in my opinion are very flawed, leaves us with an open door to step forward faster. This is a lengthy topic, the short version is that

pay to import a horse from Europe, should be incentive to buy at home.

Tim says there is also the problem of the “missing link “in the domestic market; the link being the person who takes an un-ridden three-year-old up to the ‘ready-to-compete’ five or six-year-old. “We are quite short on such trainers/riders, and until we correct this lack, the great potential market advantage that domestic breeders could enjoy is being lost.”



PHOTO BY BEATE LANGELS



PHOTOS BY ALLEN MACMILLAN

Michael Pollard and Shoensgreen Hanni, team gold medalists at the 2011 Pan Am Games. Chatsworth Stud is expecting an embryo transfer foal out of Hanni this year.

Songline (Summertime – Exclusiv) and Andreas Dibowski competing in Germany. Songline was Champion stallion at his Trakehner Verband inspection in 2006 and went on to win his age group at the Bundeschampionate. He is now standing at Chatsworth Stud in Dalton, Georgia, where he is ridden by Michael Pollard.

CHATSWORTH STUD – MICHAEL & NATHALIE POLLARD

International eventers Michael and Nathalie Pollard started Chatsworth Stud in Dalton, Georgia, five years ago. Chatsworth is currently home to three stallions and a number of broodmares. Standing at Chatsworth are Denny Emerson's Irish Sport Horse stallion Formula One (by Beau Royale xx, out of Crokoon Lady (ISH) by Tresco xx) and the Trakehner stallions, Halimey Go (by Askar (AA) -Pardon Go), and Songline. In addition, the couple owns breeding rights to Querdolan Vitarel, a French Anglo-Arabian stallion currently being campaigned at the international level by Bettina Hoy in Germany.

Over the first five years the Pollards bred about 20 foals and expect six more in 2013, five by Querdolan Vitarel. They are especially excited about the 2013 embryo transfer foal coming from their mare Shoensgreen Hanni, Michael's 2011 Pan American Games team gold medalist. "Most of our mares are two-star, and up, competitors in their own right," explains Michael. "We are very excited about our two-year-olds and yearlings, as they are fantastic examples of our vision of athletic sport horses with large quantities of blood."

Michael spent a short time at Bruce Davidson Sr.'s Chesterland, and three years as a working student at Denny Emerson's Tamarack Hill, both farms with long-established breeding programs. It was during that time

he learned to manage stallions, mares and foals and developed an interest in sport horse breeding.

Michael, 32, has a clear-cut plan for what he wants to achieve at Chatsworth Stud and for the future of sport horse breeding in the U.S. He wants to breed horses not only with good jumping ability, but also who can gallop and turn and are quick with their head and their feet. "While I want three good gaits and soundness, I don't have to have extravagant movement; in fact, I would take athleticism over pure movement. The canter is very important, but the trot you can train in quite a bit."

In Michael's opinion, it is certainly not inconceivable that breeders in the US could breed an Olympic team of event horses. "We've done it many times in the past and there's no reason why we shouldn't be able to do it again. We've got an excellent base in the



PHOTO COURTESY CHATSWORTH STUD

The Chatsworth Stud's Quinn, by the Anglo-Arabian French stallion Querdolan Vitarel and out of Belair. Querdolan Vitarel is currently competing in Europe with Paul Tapner and Bettina Hoy.

Denny Emerson's Irish Sport Horse stallion Formula One (by Beau Royale xx, out of Crokoon Lady (ISH) by Tresco xx) stands at Chatsworth Stud. The Pollards have bred around 20 foals at Chatsworth and were expecting a crop of six in 2013.



Thoroughbreds and we already have a lot of very, very good Warmblood stallions in the United States. I think it just requires a consistent, coordinated effort going forward."

He thinks that if in the U.S. a national breeding effort was planned with even as few as 70 horses per year – maybe five to ten breeders breeding five to six horses per year – it would get us most of the way there. "If we bred our top three and four-star mares to top stallions with someone coordinating some lineage information and the results gained from three and four-year-old classes, then in fifteen to twenty years you could make a major difference. This may seem like a long time, but if you don't start, it is always at least twelve years away," he said.

Michael would like to see the creation of a North American stud book and the creation of a national breeding coordinator. "Someone to find out where sport horses are being bred in this country and talk with those breeders to find out what they are trying to achieve. Someone to find

out where good mares are and to make sure that good competition mares aren't falling through the cracks, but are being used for breeding; someone who could work on putting good mares and stallions together, perhaps using grant money or through forming partnerships. In my opinion this position needs to be full-time and it needs to be at the USEF level."

He is also a proponent of yearly Young Horse Championships and encourages some regional competitions leading up to the championships. He thinks the USEA has taken a lead in this area. "There are now USEA grants so that American-bred young horses can be sent to Europe to compete at Le Lion d'Angers. This is a way for breeders to showcase their horses and it is also a way to encourage owners to buy a younger horse. As it stands today, the biggest thrill for an owner is for their horse to go to a top competition like Rolex or the Olympics – this may encourage horses to be pushed along too quickly or for the owners to buy an older horse to begin with. So, if they buy a young horse and there is a Young Horse Championship for them to go to, then it gives the owners something to look forward to. Having a good Young Horse Program can substantially change the dynamics of our sport."

"Having a good Young Horse Program can substantially change the dynamics of our sport."



Royal Palm Farm's new season colt by the Trakehner stallion Tatendrang, out of Trakehner mare Nachi by Donaufürst.



Andrew and Tiffany Palmer, of Royal Palm Farm, with their 2013 filly by Incantare, out of Fervent, a Swedish Warmblood mare by Martini.

ROYAL PALM FARMS – ANDREW & TIFFANY PALMER

Andrew Palmer is a young event rider who worked for Jean Brinkman at Valhalla Farm for six years before starting his own Royal Palm Farms with his wife Tiffany in Eufaula, Alabama, in 2010. Their 150-acre farm consists of rolling hills and pine forest trails. Their long-term plan is to operate Royal Palm as a breeding farm and stallion station and to continue to develop the performance careers of their stallions.

They currently have eight warmblood breeding stallions in their care. Their current competition string includes seven stallions, including their first-home-bred, the six-year-old Swedish Warmblood stallion Fuego (by the Trakehner Hailo out of the Swedish Warmblood mare Fasta by Master 850).

Besides owning the Trakehner stallion Incantare (Enrico Caruso – Martini), bred by Valhalla Farm, Andrew and Tiffany also recently purchased another Trakehner stallion Cardinali (by Tradition - Impulsivo xx). “What is most interesting about him is that his quality is recognized by upper-level trainers in all three disciplines,” says Andrew. “I have ridden him with Grand Prix dressage trainers, Grand Prix jumpers and four-star eventers and all have been impressed with him,” said Andrew.

Recent success with Anissa Cottongim's, Tatendrang (Onassis - Avignon II), also proved Andrew's faith in this young stallion. “He has really found his stride in eventing. He just won the Area III Preliminary Championship and then followed it up with a win at his first CIC1* at the CHC International Horse Trials. He



PHOTO BY PATRICIA HENDRICK/ROYAL PALM FARM

Royal Palm's Irish Sport Horse mare Irish Destiny (a maternal half sister to Ringwood Cockatoo) and her 2013 colt by the Trakehner stallion Incantare.



PHOTO BY ALCIA FRESE KLENK

Andrew Palmer and his first home-bred stallion, the Swedish Warmblood Fuego.

is an eventer through and through and really reproduces himself. His foals jump everything they see in the pasture.”

The Palmers have a herd of about 10 broodmares with five foals expected in 2013. This will be their largest foal crop to date with three foals by Incantare, one by Christina Potter's German Trakehner stallion Inamorato (E.H. Buddenbrock - Fontainebleau) and one from Tatendrang. While most of their horses are of Swedish Warmblood and Trakehner bloodlines, they also incorporate Irish Sport Horse, Thoroughbred and Arabian blood into the mix. Andrew's Irish Sport Horse mare Irish Destiny, a maternal half-sister to four-star eventer Ringwood Cockatoo, had her first foal (by Incantare) at age 22 this year. “It has taken

a rider wants and needs to make it to the top. Since we are professional trainers, we have the resources to train them and turn them into marketable riding horses. This is exactly why I think that riders should be breeders!”

The 29-year-old said he learned a most valuable lesson from working at Valhalla where he had the opportunity to ride multiple offspring from the same mare. “My experience at Valhalla gave me a perspective on breeding that would have been nearly impossible to replicate in this country. I feel like I absorbed decades of breeding experience in the six years that I worked there just by paying attention to what I was riding and making the connection from the broodmare field to the training barn.”

There is a huge lack of knowledge on the riders' part about how their horses are produced, and a pretty big lack in the breeders' department on what a rider wants and needs.

four years for this colt to hit the ground and I have a lot of expectations for him to say the least,” said Andrew.

He thinks a disconnect between riders and breeders in this country is stalling progression of any national breeding initiative. “I think that there is a huge lack of knowledge on the riders' part about how their horses are produced, and a pretty good lack in the breeders' department on what

Andrew thinks US breeders are capable of creating internationally competitive horses here in the U.S. with some provisos. “In this country if breeders would disconnect somewhat with the purely emotional attachments, get feedback from the riders and focus on improving the overall mare quality, we could compete with the rest of the world on our own home-bred horses.” **HSI**