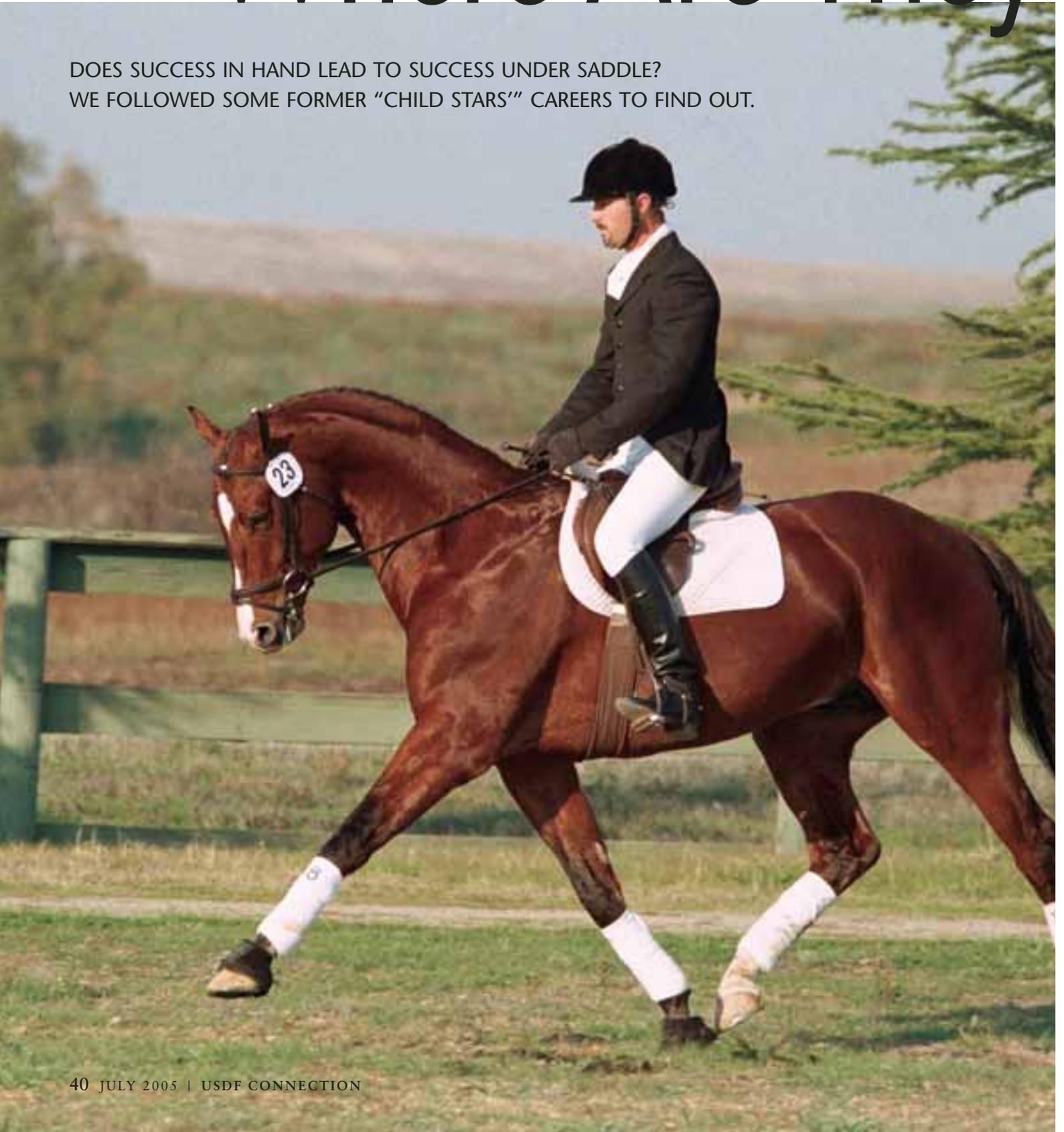


Where Are They

DOES SUCCESS IN HAND LEAD TO SUCCESS UNDER SADDLE?
WE FOLLOWED SOME FORMER "CHILD STARS'" CAREERS TO FIND OUT.



Now?

BY BARBARA CARROLL

THEY DAZZLE IN THE SPORT-horse breeding classes: well-bred dressage babies making their first forays into the show world. They are beautiful, even breathtaking (and sometimes explosive); but how do they hold up over the years? Do they fulfill their competitive destinies, or are they just eye candy?

If the following sampling of dressage's early bloomers is any indication, good in-hand showings can be a predictor of future competitive success. Many young stars of the Cosequin/USDF Breeders' Championship (USDFBC) Series and similar competitions have gone on to varied careers. No matter where they've wound up, their breeders are justly proud of their "kids" continuing accomplishments.

Ken Borden Jr., of Little Bit Farm, Wilmington, IL, bred Opus (Idocus x Elite J. Adelian/ Admiraal Ferdinand), as an upper-level dressage prospect. "I was looking at the correctness of [his sire's and dam's] gaits and conformation and felt it was an ideal cross," Borden says.

The stallion, registered Dutch and approved Oldenburg N.A., has placed second at Dressage at Devon (PA) four times, twice in hand and twice under saddle. Opus also holds the third-highest dressage index in all U.S. stallion testing with a 140.59, receiving a unanimous score of 9 for his gaits and a 10 in ridability from one Olympic guest rider, Borden says.

"For most of 2004 (until December 7), Opus was the leading dressage breeding sire with the United States Equestrian Federation," says Borden. "Unfortunately, several of his qualify-

ing get were not correctly listed with USEF, so Opus slipped to third. He also is one of the top 45 hunter breeding sires." Opus's name has also appeared in USDF's statistical summary as one of the top 20 sires of Cosequin/USDFBC finalists.

Opus has also proven himself as a jumper, winning several events and a reserve championship in a USEF conformation-hunter division.

"Opus is more versatile than I expected," his breeder notes, "and he's more honest to the fences. The dressage ability is definitely there, too. He's so expressive in the gaits and so much freer in the front end than I expected."

The stallion had been shown up to Fourth Level by the age of seven, but Borden felt he was pushing him too far too fast, so today he is focusing on promoting Opus through his foals.

"The first year, I bred him to a variety of mares, and he improved every one in terms of correctness of the leg and type. He modernized them," Borden says. "Every foal has the canter and exquisite head and neck." Three Opus offspring—Isolde, Chloe, and Tashka—ranked high in several USDF dressage sport-horse breeding (DSHB) HOY categories last year.

Borden would "like to get him out at Prix St. Georges" eventually, and "I want him to win at Devon," he says of his star stallion. He adds that he expects Opus to produce international-quality foals. One, Tashka (out of Bashka), has earned year-end USDF DSHB HOY awards every year shown, the breeder says. Tashka was the 2004 USDF DSHB bred-mare HOY champion and has earned other USDF titles as well. ➤

VERSATILITY: The Dutch stallion Opus (by Idocus) and owner/breeder Ken Borden Jr.

SHERI SCOTT PHOTOGRAPHY

When Tashka cut herself as a three-year-old, Borden decided that he wouldn't push her training while she recuperated, so he bred her to his homegrown Holsteiner stallion Raymeister. The resulting foal, the Hanoverian Rashka, was the 2004 USDF DSHB reserve-champion HOY weanling colt/gelding.

Tashka and Rashka are both for sale, but meanwhile Borden plans to continue to work with the mare, bringing her out at Training Level. "I plan on her winning at Devon under saddle for four-year-old mares and older," he says. If Tashka stays at Little Bit Farm, "I will breed her every other year, but she is headed for a dressage career. Her walk scored a nine at about thirty-two of thirty-six shows. The gaits are there, and her mind is really safe."

Child Stars: Donarweiss ggf and Marielle ggf

The Hanoverian Donarweiss ggf (De Niro x SPS Highlight, by Hohenstein) helped owner/breeder Rachel Ehrlich earn the title of 2004 USEF Dressage Sport Horse Breeder of the Year.

Shown lightly as a youngster, the colt placed as a weanling at both the New England Dressage Association (NEDA) Fall Festival and Dressage at Devon in 2001. Back in the show ring in 2003 after a hiatus, Donarweiss won every two-year-old class he entered and took third place in the Cosequin/USDF Breeders' Championship Northeast Series Finals and was NEDA's reserve-champion colt behind his full brother, Donarlicht ggf. Last year, he topped every three-year-old colt class he entered and earned a host of other championship honors as well.



THOROUGHLY MODERN: Donarweiss ggf has the refinement breeders and buyers seek

FOR BREEDERS... AND BUYERS

Of course, if you're a sport-horse breeder, participation in the Cosequin/USDF Breeders' Championship Series is a great way to expose your youngsters to the show environment and to earn recognition for your successes. But these competitions aren't just for breeders. If you're in the market for a dressage prospect, what better way of viewing many talented horses, all in one place?

Many of the horses exhibited in Cosequin/USDFBC shows are for sale. Young horses may be shown in hand or in Materiale classes, which are under-saddle competitions for three- to five-year-olds. Watch the classes, make some notes, and then speak to the breeders, who can tell you everything you need to know about the horses' bloodlines, history, and temperament.

The Cosequin/USDFBC Series is open to all horses and ponies, both registered and grade. Judges evaluate entrants' movement and conformation in terms of dressage suitability. For more about the series, see "Breed by Number" on page 19.



Ehrlich, who owns and operates Greengate Farm in New Braintree, MA, and is a member of USDF's Sport Horse Committee, admits that she rematched De Niro and SPS Highlight following Donarlicht's success with hopes of a filly as the founder of a mare line. However, the resulting colt did not disappoint. Smaller and more modern-type than his brother and "very, very elegant," Donarweiss "can be bred to the older-type mares we have in this country with fabulous result," Ehrlich says.

Last September, Donarweiss completed his initial licensing for the German Rheinland Pfalz-Saar Verband and was fully licensed for breeding in Studbook 1 of that registry.

"We have a test crop of eleven foals being born this year from this wonderful, now four-year-old stallion," reports Ehrlich. Donarweiss is also "going nicely under saddle in the basics and can do the jumping chute with athleticism, scope, and great technique. This past winter, we also put him into the combined-driving harness and hooked him into the cart to give him a change of pace." This month, the stallion will resume his under-saddle training "and will go out to a few hunter shows on the flat and over fences, and on the line. We think that varied training is the best for the

young stallions, and we don't like to drill them only on the flat." Light dressage training begins in September to ready him for the 30-day stallion testing, which commences in November.

One of Ehrlich's goals as a breeder is to produce eminently rideable horses. Pointing out that most U.S. dressage riders are female adult amateurs, she says, "We're breeding bloodlines that are going to put good horses for American riders on the ground"—mounts with lightness and good temperaments.

Marielle ggf (Maronjo x Away You Go xx, by Court Open xx) is an example of a good ad/am dressage type, says Ehrlich, who loved her dam's look and mind and her sire's work under saddle, temperament, and type of his previous get. Marielle "was all you could dream of. At her inspection they called her 'the black swan,'" Ehrlich says proudly.



CAROLE MACDONALD

THE BLACK SWAN: Marielle ggf

Marielle was reserve champion in her filly class at the NEDA show. At Dressage at Devon, she placed fifth out of 30 in the open weanling-filly class, third in the Hanoverian IBC class, and first in the Performance Horse Registry class. "It was a great day," says Ehrlich.

Ehrlich was determined to keep her star filly, but adult-amateur rider Lynn Shaw, of Petersham, MA, convinced her to sell Marielle as a long yearling.

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After a couple of years off while her new owner learned about in-hand showing, Shaw presented the mare for approval at ISR/Oldenburg N.A. Marielle was the high-scoring mare of the day and gained main-mare-book approval. In 2003, at the American Hanoverian Society's mare approval and performance testing, Marielle was the champion Hanoverian mare. Also in 2003, Shaw's trainer rode the mare to six wins at her first two dressage performance shows.

Shaw plans to move Marielle up to First Level, "and I don't see why I wouldn't keep going." She praises Marielle's all-around excellence and levelheadedness. "She's even a horse I can take out on the trails."

Child Stars: Arcadia and Ghita

Another USDF Sport Horse Committee member, Judith Hedreen, speaks with pride of two youngsters bred at her Sylvan Farm, Arlington, WA, who have gone on to successful dressage careers with amateur riders.

The Oldenburg mare Arcadia (Agincourt x Felice, by Wanderbursch II) "was bred as a jumper and turned out to be everything you'd expect in a dressage horse," says Hedreen.

Although Arcadia demonstrated jumping ability, Hedreen "decided to see what would happen if we took her as a yearling to local breed shows." Arcadia responded by racking up scores of titles from USDF, the Northwest Sport Horse Breeders Association, and in materiale classes, among others.

Started under saddle as a three-year-old, "she was so easy and sensible to back that there was no question she

BREEDERS ON BREEDING CLASSES

Ken Borden Jr., Little Bit Farm, Wilmington, IL: "I never thought I would get into the 'lead 'em and feed 'em' divisions, but it's a great showing vehicle for babies. Opus was shown as a baby, and it really helped in his training. In-hand is a great barometer for what the horse's future will be. Every one that I've shown [in hand] that has done well has gone on to be a successful USDF horse. My main focus was as a rider, but I found this was a good way to get exposure."

Mary Lou Winn, Home Again Farm, Waldo, FL: "Breed shows didn't appeal to me tremendously. I was a dressage rider and leaned toward showing under saddle. But I do think breed shows have trained my eye because they are a place where I can go see a lot of babies. They help people get their horses out and seen by other breeders."

could be an amateur's horse," Hedreen says. In 2003, Wendy Duhaime, at that time an adult client of Canadian Grand Prix-level competitor Evi Strasser, bought Arcadia and took her home to Michigan. Although family commitments have prevented Duhaime from showing "Cadie," "so far, she has met my expectations as a talented, willing partner, and my trainers are wild about her," Duhaime says. "She is wonderful to train and be around and enjoys her work. She had a major growth spurt (from 16.1 to seventeen hands) right after I bought her, so I had to go slow with her training initially."

Although Duhaime says she's not sure whether Cadie's future includes shows or breeding, the mare is "a keeper" regardless. She adds that Swedish trainer Anders Ericksson, who spent time at her farm last year, is thinking about including the mare in a planned book because of her good conformation and temperament.

Another Sylvan Farm-bred mare, the Hanoverian Ghita (Gold Luck x EM Pikante, by Pik Solo), from a combination of "grand old lines," "was bred as a dressage horse—and it worked," says Hedreen.

Ghita was just 15.3 hands (her name is a Greek diminutive meaning "little pearl"), but she was also "beautiful, well-conformed, and a good mover," according to her breeder. Evidently the judges agreed, placing Ghita at



COURTESY OF WENDY DUHAIME

KEEPER: Arcadia, bred by Judith Hedreen and now owned by ad/am Wendy Duhaime



MOVING UP: Ghita with her teenaged owner, Taryn Briones

the head of the line in numerous futurities, Cosequin/USDFBC Finals, and breeding classes at Dressage at Devon,

and earning her several USDF DSHB HOY titles in 2002 and 2003.

“She was a show horse from the day

we took her to her first competition,” Hedreen says of Ghita. “That ‘look at me’ attitude is invaluable, and she had it. I truly believe that this is a mare that can do the FEI levels.”

Today, Hedreen says, Ghita is receiving “excellent coaching” while in the care of her new owner, fifteen-year-old Taryn Briones, of Snohomish, WA, who began studying dressage at age eight with instructor Leigh Cochran. Briones and her family went East to see the mare at Devon and bought her as a horse that the girl could move up on.

“Rather than bringing her home right away, Ghita was sent to Bonny Bonnello, in Calgary, Alberta, Canada, for training,” Briones explains. “Bonny is a past Olympic competitor for Canada. I joined Bonny and Ghita for the summer of 2004.”

At Briones’ first show with Ghita, at Dressage at DevonWood (OR) last August, the pair won all three of their First Level classes as well as the show’s high score, 77.407 percent.

“My future plans include a few shows this summer at Second Level,” Briones says. “Ghita has the potential to do well at higher levels, and I hope to show at Juniors when we are ready.”

Child Star: Wintermaske

Hanoverian breeder Mary Lou Winn’s Home Again Farm is aptly named. After a stint as a performance horse with another owner, one of Winn’s “child stars” is back at Home Again, in Waldo, FL, beginning a new life as a broodmare.

Wintermaske (Weltbekannt x Rubizza, by Rubenstein I) was a late-comer to the show world. Winn, who has been in the breeding business only for a decade or so, explains, “I didn’t show a lot early. Breed shows didn’t appeal to me tremendously. I was a dressage rider and leaned toward showing under saddle.” She decided that if

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she bred a foal “that was really special, I would wait until it was coming two or three. At this age, they’re coming back out of the ‘uglies.’”

From the Weltbekannt-Rubizza breeding Winn expected a great temperament, superior ridability, and a good work ethic; and she got exactly that. The resulting filly, Wintermaske, “has three excellent gaits, great beauty, absolute willingness, is quick off the leg, loves to work, and is not afraid of the devil himself. Her reaction to busy show environments is to puff up and show off, but not be silly.”

“Winter” soon began cleaning up in the show ring. In 2001, as a three-year-old, she won the title in the Southeast Cosequin/USDFBC Series Final and also was the site champion at her American Hanoverian Society (AHS) inspection. The following year, she won mature-horse and materiale



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WINNING UNDER SADDLE: Wintermaske at Second Level in 2003

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USDF titles and also began competing successfully at Training and First Levels, Winn reports. In 2003, at age five, Winter won extensively at Second Level and earned the AHS’s Elite Mare Candidate title.

“You can’t continue to keep mares in training indefinitely if you’re a breeder,” Winn says. “I had bought a new mare, and so I thought, well, I have to make a decision.” She decided to sell Winter, who headed north to a trainer and the goal of competing in the FEI Six-Year-Old class at Dressage at Devon.

When the transaction fell through, Winn “did a list of pros and cons on paper—and I just couldn’t do it. I couldn’t face losing her.” The breeder agreed with Maryland-based trainer Fred Weber, who had called Winter a horse of a lifetime. She also “had been through so much with her,” nursing the filly back from a severe leg laceration as a foal that led to a systemic in-

fection and landed Winter in a large-animal hospital for 40 days. (“She came out fine except for a huge scar,” says Winn, who affectionately calls Winter “my million-dollar baby.”)

Winn’s heart won out, and Winter came home. She had already produced *Ballerina*, an embryo-transfer filly by *Hilltop Bugatti* whom Winn calls “a near-clone of Wintermaske herself,” thereby fulfilling the final requirement for the Elite Hanoverian Mare title.

Winn realizes that Winter’s riding days are probably behind her. “If I were to breed her a couple of years and then put her back under saddle at Third Level, it would be as a ten-year-old,” she says. “That would be fun for me but not realistic. If I were the person doing the riding it might be feasible, but it’s tremendously expensive to have a trainer.” And, of course, “I want to see what she can produce.” ▲

New Jersey-based freelance writer Barbara Carroll specializes in equine subjects.