

WARLANDER

The Logical Breed

By Kate Hodges

WITH THE REBIRTH IN POPULARITY OF THE “BAROQUE” HORSE AND A REVIVAL OF ARTISTIC EQUITATION, THE 21ST CENTURY COULD NOT HAVE BEEN A BETTER TIME FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A CROSS BETWEEN THE FRIESIAN AND PUREBRED IBERIAN HORSE.

Known during the Middle Ages as a solid war-horse, the Friesian horse (due to crosses with the Andalusian horses during the Spanish domination of the Netherlands in the 16th century) became a magnificent, high-stepping, luxury carriage horse, with the breed developing nowadays as more of a riding horse.

Elsewhere, the Iberians breed's natural propensity for collection made them the favourite of classical masters over the centuries.

With these features in mind, it was only a matter of time before someone thought to cross these complimentary breeds together.

That time came in 1990, when West Australian woman Karen-Maree' Kaye started the first dedicated breeding program. Karen, of the Classical Sporthorse Stud in Perth, named the breed the 'Warlander,' and went on to develop the first breed standard.

A devotee of classical equitation, Karen pioneered the Friesian as high school candidate when she purchased and began training a young stallion in the early 1990's (a horse that she still rides today.) It is this stallion that was to become the founding sire of the Warlander breed.

Over the past two decades, Karen has bred horses that have become world famous movie horses, breed champions, and award-winning performance horses, who have reached the level of representing and winning for Australia in official competitions.

"I could see that the Friesian crossed well with certain types and breeds, but to add maximum 'rideability' to the equation, I don't think you can go past the Iberian," she said.

"After training and breeding both the Friesians and the Andalusians, what really sold me was each breed's trainability. Both are highly intelligent; the Friesian is totally

WARLANDER

The Warlander is a horse of Baroque type, produced by crossing Andalusian and Friesian breeds. The ideal Warlander combines the Andalusian's intelligence, facility for collection, flexibility, and powerful hindquarters, with the Friesian's tractability, dramatic leg action, "bone", and strong forequarters.



World Champion Warlander stallion Hummer bred and owned by Vaquero Ranch. All photo's of Hummer by April Visel

generous and placid, while the Iberians are friendly, brave and sensitive."

"Adding that together and maximising the even nature of the Friesian, you get a horse with a big heart that is fun to train!"

I asked Karen where the name "Warlander" first came from. "There was a vet who was very helpful when I first developed the breeding program, and his name was Warwick, so that is where the 'war' came from," she said.

"Historically both breeds were 'war' horses, so it just made sense!"

Twenty-two years after the breed's inception, the mother Studbook (the International Warlander Registry and Society) is now celebrating its 10th anniversary in 2012, and Warlander horses are now registered in over a dozen countries world-wide.

Black Warlander's are also being accepted into the Baroque Pinto Studbook, and the breed holds titles at world, national and state levels in both performance and breed, including

gold premium rating at European standards.

Warlander's are also prized for extreme sports, movies, television commercials and exhibitions.

The Warlander in Competition

In recent years, the Warlander in the USA has been dominating national part-bred Andalusian (IFSHA) and part-bred Friesian classes. This domination began with the entrance of the metallic buckskin stallion Storm Shadow, owned by Chip and Kellie Davis from Mannheim Steamroller.

Bred from a Friesian mare and a Lusitano stallion, Storm Shadow paved the way in showing the breeds versatility across a number of disciplines such as dressage, western and saddle seat; in his first year under saddle at the age of three, Storm Shadow had 14 'Horse of the Year' Championships under his belt.

In 2010, the classically-trained stallion Hummer also demonstrated the Warlander's

excellence during several highly successful appearances in the show ring. Hummer won the IFSHA World Grand Champion Part-Bred Stallion, the 2011 Fiesta of the Spanish Horse Champion (Half Andalusian), and the Champion Half Andalusian Best Movement prize.

Owned and bred by Ramiro Mejia and Marnie Hoffman of Vaquero Ranch in California, Hummer has become a poster child for the Warlander breed.

In the true tradition of experimentation of the Renaissance period, Ramiro has always been interested in horses that can perform and perform with style, in both the competition arena or high school/alta escuela exhibitions. "I wanted to experiment with breeding my Friesian stallion to one of my Andalusian mares, because I wanted the fire of the Andalusian, tempered with the calmness of the Friesian," Ramiro said. "The result was Hummer, and our continued passion for the Warlander."

A national award-winning classical trainer, Marnie Hoffman said that the Warlander has a natural charm. "The Warlander's we have bred have the presence, substance and calm nature of the Friesian, combined with the beauty, style, lightness and energy of the Andalusian," she said.

"In our experience, the mind of the Warlander is priceless, and we are now moving into breeding second-generation Warlander's, with future generations on the horizon."

"There is a bright future for the Warlander. They embody what Friesian and Andalusian lovers want in a horse, and more and more people are learning about the Warlander, and seeking them out."

Hummer himself has a huge fan club, with accomplished trainer Sabine Schüt-Kery saying that she thinks Hummer "is one of the most beautiful Warlander horses I have ever seen."

World renowned horseman Bruce Howard is also an admirer, stating that Hummer was one of the most impressive Warlander stallions he has seen in his 60 year career with horses.

"He exudes charisma, quality, and brilliance. Definitely my kind of horse!" he said.

The Warlander has also been embraced by Australia's revered animal trainer Evanne Chesson, of Australian Movie Livestock.

Chesson, an AFI Byron Kennedy award winner, has been training and breeding baroque breeds for performance and movie work for decades, from Shepherds Hill Farm in Victoria in Eastern Australia. Chesson works with her daughter Jodie McKeone, who herself is a Level 2 Carriage Driving Coach and EA



"Hummer" photo by April Visel

Carriage Driving Future Squad member

The mother and daughter team are now concentrating on the Warlander breed, in collaboration with Karen-Maree' Kaye.

Shepherds Hill has become a name synonymous with national title driving horses. Their oldest Warlander (a gelding called 'Larry') has made a name for himself in open competition with wins under several different drivers, including with 10 out of 10 Australian four-in-hand Champion Rachel Haslau at the prestigious Barastoc Horse of the Year show. Haslau also achieved the fastest marathon time with Larry at his first official single event, the Victorian Championships.

Since 2006, Jodie McKeone has been training with Australia's own dual world champion driver Boyd Exell. In 2011, Jodie was asked to supply a team of horses for the EA Judges and Technical Delegates Clinic, with international dressage rider/trainer Brett Parberry and Boyd Exell.

After winning the Australian Pairs

Combined Driving Championships with Larry in 2009 and a National Cup in 2010, Jodie said Larry had to be in the team.

"Boyd asked Brett [Parberry] to identify which horse, out of the four horses in the



pic: IF Michaelangelo Second Generation Warlander

team, which would be the one he would like to ride," she said.

"Brett pointed to the Warlander, saying that he had not broken rhythm the entire time, and the consistently looks relaxed and is always

listening. That shows trainability, and trainability is paramount when looking for a potential dressage horse."

Larry will be driven at Equitana by Jodie, so make sure you hunt them to meet a Warlander horse in the flesh!

Cow Sense

Janet Lee Parker of Nampa USA is an instructor in Working Equitation and Cowboy Dressage. She is the owner of the five year old, second generation Warlander (3/4 Iberian, 1/4 Friesian) named IF Michaelangelo (affectionately known as Mick.)

A national champion in versatility, Ranch Trail and Sortin, Janet has been riding for 50 years, and Mick is her first Warlander.

Determined to see if Mick could carry a western saddle competitively, Janet enlisted Steve Kutie from Bowie TX to train him.

"I was originally looking for an Azteca when I came across Mick, but he was simply so stunning and athletic that no matter what his breeding, I had to have him!" she said.



"Hummer" photo by April Visel

In recent years, the Warlander in the USA has been dominating national part-bred Andalusian (IFSHA) and part-bred Friesian classes



Warlander stallion Storm Shadow - 14 Horse of the Year titles -



Jodie McKeone driving Warlander gelding Larry (nearside) to win the 2009 Australian Championships - Horse Pair



Hummer photo by April Visel

"He turned out to be one of the best decisions of my entire horse-life."

Steve Kutie has nothing but praise for Mick, the first Warlander horse he worked with. "Mick has to be one of the most talented and versatile horses that I have had the opportunity to ride, by far," he said.

"He was shipped to me from Washington, where the weather was still cool and damp, and had to start his training career just as the state of Texas was starting the hottest summer in recorded history."

"What better way to determine the heart and desire of a horse (or person for that matter) than to expose them to extreme elements and conditions, and see if they have the stuff to become a champion."

"I literally got to ride Mick for only ten minutes a day, five to six days per week, due to the extreme weather - so

we could only work on the basics for getting a 'broke' horse. Janet was aiming at having him ready for a reining class at the nationals," Steve said.

"Come show time, Mick did well and won the Reining, so we added him to other classes - every class we entered him in he ended up winning!"

"By the end of his first national show, Mick had won multiple half Iberian National Titles in various disciplines such as Reining, Western Pleasure and Open English Show Hack, as well as the High Point All-Around National Title, plus two gold medals for Movement."

"With the amount of training he had, I think he is the true example of the heart and desire of a true champion."

Janet says Mick has the short-coupled cattle-working power build of the Lusitano, and a lot of cow sense. His Friesian blood has lent itself to a great shoulder and reach, plus substantial

bone and good-sized hooves - something she values for durability of an athlete.

"As far as 'rideability' goes, he is the most comfortable horses you could ever ride. His trot, while floaty with great reach, is extremely smooth to sit, and his canter is a glorious rocking horse gait you can ride all day," she said.

"Importantly his walk is so ground-covering he could keep up at gaited horse, and he scores 'nines' in Dressage for this gait."

Next edition: We will investigate the Warlander horse in the movies, exports, extreme sports and breeding ideals. 🐾