

The ATA's Palmenblüte Award winner in 2006:

Horalas *Pg*

by Maren Engelhardt

“Go Henry!” were the words Diane Rushing used to finish a great story about her beloved Trakehner stallion Horalas *Pg* in the ATA's 2003 Spring issue. “Go Henry” for a stallion, who has competed at a level like almost no other Trakehner horse ever since the days of Abdullah *Pg*E*. Words that also stand for the enthusiasm, dedication, and love that Diane Rushing had for the sport of show jumping in general and this stallion in particular. It is hard to accept that Diane is no longer with us, and that she can no longer celebrate the horse she found - literally in the middle of nowhere: a 2000+ acre pasture in windy Lithuania only a few years after the iron curtain was lifted off Eastern Europe and allowed her to return to her family's homeland. Diane's knowledge and her obvious ability to find outstanding performance horses had earned her a spot at the top of the American show jumping world. Horalas was a perfect extension of that career.

The bay Trakehner stallion was bred and later approved at the Lithuanian State Stud, where he was born in March of 1992. Ties between this farm and the main stud Trakehnen reach back to the early days of the 20th century, and Horalas' pedigree is a perfect example of this connection. His heritage includes some of Trakehnen's most-famous foundation sires like Pythagoras and Pilger (whose offspring ended up as Russian war booty in Kirov, and eventually spread into other parts of the then-existing Soviet Union). His pedigree is loaded with names that stand for the perfect synergy of genetic heritage and performance excellence, and the bay stallion lived up to that during his performance career. Horalas had already won several important events in Lithuania, for example, he was the National Show Jumping Champion and won the Grand Prix of Vilnius (a World Cup qualifier).

It took Diane and her husband Jim almost 4 years, the foundation of a company, uncounted phone calls and endless patience to bring “Henry” home. It took Horalas the better part of one week in a sealed truck, a ferry ride and a flight from Amsterdam to Los Angeles to be able to stretch his legs again. Finally, in 2002, the impressive and very gentle stallion came to be with one of the US' top show jumping riders Hap Hansen and his team close to San Diego. It was the beginning of a great partnership, since not only did Hap train Horalas for the top in the sport, but Horalas ended up being the horse that put Hap in reach of his 100th Grand Prix victory in the US (Hap rode Horalas to his 98th Grand Prix in Summer 2006 in California!). Just to list a few of this stallion's achievements, Horalas won the \$25,000 Oaks Spring Classic Grand Prix, the \$35,000 Oaks Blenheim Summer Festival Grand Prix, and the \$25,000 Memorial Day Classic Grand Prix in Los Angeles; he placed in numerous Grand Prix (11th in the \$175,000 Cargill Grand Prix of the U.S.; 8th in the \$75,000 Bayer/USET Grand Prix, 12th in the \$150,000 Ford Grand Prix, and was 6th in the ATB Financial Cup 1.6m Jumper at famous Spruce Meadows in Calgary/Canada), and finished in the prize money at the \$1 million Canadian International.

Horalas was the ATA Horse of the Year Grand Prix Jumper Champion 4 times in a row (2003-2006), and is one of only 8 ATA stallions with a *Pg* - Performance Gold - designation.

His life-time earnings exceed \$120,000, putting him in rarified Trakehner company – only a handful of Trakehners have managed winnings like and higher this in past years (Almox Prints J and Waitaki come to mind). The fact that all these recent top earners (with the exception of the younger Schneesturm TSF in Germany) are from Russian or Eastern European breeding is testimony to the outstanding knowledge and hard selection in that particular “daughter-organization” of the Trakehner Verband. In fact, I can’t help but to conclude that in the East, beauty did obviously not trump performance, unfortunately, that did not hold true for the rest of Trakehner-land, and certainly contributed to significant loss of performance abilities in the past. In the renewed focus on finding and preserving performance bloodlines, Trakehner breeders – both here and in Europe could easily consider Horalas and his fellow Eastern Trakehners a “way out”.

Granted, a few very good Trakehner jumpers have emerged over the past few years, but none has (yet) done what Horalas has done for several years now: compete against the very top horse and rider combinations in the world at the top events like Spruce Meadows and its famed CN Grand Prix, the richest and most prestigious show jumping event in the world, where the prize money is \$1 million! Horalas’ career has taken him all over North America, and now at the age of 15, he has *easily* earned a spot on the ATA’s list of the most frequented breeding stallions yet to date, only two foals have hit the ground in North America. This fact is almost impossible to comprehend, and with the renewed interest in jumpers – evidenced also by the jumping bloodlines bought at the Neumünster auctions by Canadian and U.S. citizens over the past 4 years– Horalas should be one of the “new foundation jumping sires” in the U.S. Luckily, before his trip to America, Horalas had been a well-regarded breeding stallion at his home stud in Lithuania, producing some high quality offspring, including the 2005 Lithuanian Trakehner Approval (held in conjunction with the German Trakehner Verband) Champion, Vikis.

In 2006, Horalas was awarded the ATA’s highest honor, the Palmenblüte Award. This breathtaking statue was given to the ATA by the late Eugen Wahler of Klosterhof Medingen in remembrance of the great East Prussian mare Palmenblüte by Bulgarenzar, born 1924. She lived at a time when Trakehnen was at its operational peak. Horalas follows great performance horses like Peron TSF, Special Memories *Pg, *Abdullah *Pg*E*, Larissa *Pg*, Leonidas *Pg* and Windfall *Pg*. He has clearly done a great deal of public relations work for Trakehners simply by being the only Trakehner in most of the Grand Prix classes in which he was entered. Diane once told me that it was a special treat for her to not only see her beautiful stallion excel in the sport, but to help spread the word of the Trakehner performance horse, and look into the eyes of people that had a hard time even pronouncing the word “Trakehner” correctly ...

Diane, Jim and especially Horalas have done a tremendous service to the breed. Henry carries all the traits of a world class performer: tremendous athleticism, an impeccable will to win, soundness of body & mind and the eagerness for his job, yet at

the next moment, can be turned towards a group of children and will behave like the perfect gentleman that he is. Horalas is an exceptional ambassador for the Trakehner horse, and now that his performance career nears its end, I can only hope that his qualities will finally be recognized by breeders around the world. There is only one like him! And while it is a sad note that Diane is not here anymore to see this new chapter open in the life of her Henry, I am certain that she knows. There is no Horalas without her ...