

Stachowski Farms

What A Week In Freedom Hall!

by Leeann Mione



Ava, Shawn and Jim Stachowski had an amazing week at Louisville including one world's grand championship, two world's champion of champions wins, five world's championships and two reserve world's championships.

Trainer James Stachowski, wife Shawn and daughter Ava had a dream week at the World's Championship Horse Show and it was a direct reflection of years and years of hard work, passion for the American Saddlebred and dedication to the industry.

This is a story of a family that has made it a mission to excel at everything they do and fortunately for the saddle horse industry that includes breeding, training and showing American Saddlebreds. Ten-year-old son Jim Jr. likes horses but his real passion is sports and he's the first example of how every member of the family strives to be the best. He plays football and soccer but his main focus is baseball; he's a great pitcher and has made All Star three years in a row. In addition, he made two different travel teams this year and will be playing in the Little League World Series when he's 12.

James is an Ohio native and got involved with horses through 4-H. His advisor and parents liked Arabs and passed that interest on to him. Eventually he knew he wanted to become a trainer and began training Arabs and Half Arabs. Shawn, originally from New Jersey, also showed Arabs because her parents loved the breed. She and Jim met at Arab Nationals when she was 12. Jim's success at the show led her parents to put their horses in training with him and they were clients for many years. Eventually Jim and Shawn began dating and were married in 1995.

Jim's training operation was dedicated to Arabs but he also had many half Arab/half Saddlebreds in training and both he and Shawn liked the Saddlebred breed. When Shawn was a kid she loved equitation and was told that the only way to be successful at it was to have a Saddlebred instructor. She was fortunate to be able to work first with Babs Santarelli and later with Liz McBride Jones, both well-known proven professionals in the Saddlebred industry. Those years only served to make Shawn even more captivated by the "ultimate" saddle seat horse - the American Saddlebred.

In the early 2000s, Jim and Shawn began buying Saddlebreds and attending shows. They sent the horses out for training to other professionals before eventually deciding to do it themselves. These last almost 15 years have been a learning curve that they seem to have mastered very well and have led to the kind of success this week that many can only dream of.

"For me, there is no difference in training the two breeds," said Jim about what it's like to train different breeds to be at the top of their game, no matter the division. "I take the same approach. The gifted horses always rise to the top."

Fortunately for both Shawn and daughter Ava, Jim's long list of accolades and Shawn's affinity for breeding a nice horse means there's no shortage of top horses in his training barns, whether Arab or Saddlebred, so both have had the opportunity to ride and show a lot of great ones. Mother and daughter concentrate mainly on the Saddlebreds so they show far fewer Arabs.

The Saddlebreds are trained at the Mantua, Ohio facility and the Arabs reside at the farm in Ohio and also at their farm in San Marcos, Calif. They will take approximately 75 head to Arab Nationals in October and when they show so many in Scottsdale [Ariz.], they also set up a sales barn. It takes a staff of 50 to do what they do and keep things running smoothly. "We've managed a large number of training horses for decades. We have a great system and outstanding employees," said Shawn.

Ava was the 2015 Youth National Champion Half Arabian English Pleasure 13 and Under Junior To Ride on a horse bred by Shawn named Lady Ava Isabela (her second dam is CH Heir Style) in honor of Ava. The win came in only her second time to show at Arab Nationals. In fact Ava has only shown at about seven Arab shows in her life.

But it's the success of Stachowski Farms in the Saddlebred industry that has drawn the attention of owners, trainers and exhibitors in our industry. Their success at Louisville has been tremendous in the years leading up to this one. Who could forget The DaVinci Code bringing down the house at Louisville in 2009 with Jim driving to win the Fine Harness Mare World's Championship and then coming back in the world's grand championship to finish reserve and leave the ring to a huge ovation.

Who can forget the start of CH Wild Carrissima's unbelievable run in the fine harness division when Jim drove him to the 2010 Reserve World's Championship in the Fine Harness Stallion/Gelding class? Shawn bought him as an almost-untouched two-year-old in 2007. "He was wild," she said. "Hence his name." Carrissima's success in the division has been nothing short of spectacular with three World's Grand Championships for Dr. Robert Pugh, who bought him in 2011 from then-owner Golden Creek Farms. Bret Day has piloted the popular bay gelding to his Saturday night victories.

The first time Jim showed a Saddlebred was in 2007 at Louisville when he won the Three-Year-Old Harness Mare World's Championship with Callaway's Local News. In 2012 he won the Three-Year-Old Fine Harness Mares - Sec. II World's Championship with Isabella Davinci, a daughter of The Davinci Code. They were reserve in the mare stake last year and she is the dam of Empyrean who became the third generation this year to earn a world's title at Louisville with Jim. Another champion, On Higher Ground, was the 2013 ASR National Three-Year-Old Park Pleasure Futurity World's Champion.

It might have been last year however, that many in the industry sat up and took notice when Jim drove that coal black, powerful, fine harness machine named Nutcracker's Nirvana, the stallion son of Undulata's Nutcracker and Kingwood's Harlem Harlem to the 2014 World's Championship Fine Harness Stallion/Gelding title and then brought him back Saturday night where he took command of the ring and surveyed the crowd that screamed their support every step as he headed to the winner's circle as the world's grand champion. Their reserves in 2013 and the stud's reserve in the junior stallion/gelding class in 2012 were the start of the handsome stallion's huge fan base which did nothing but grow every time he went in the ring.

In fact Jim, Shawn and Ava have shown that just as Stachowski Farms is a force to be reckoned with in the Arab world, so too are they making their presence felt in the Saddlebred industry. Not to say that they're an overnight sensation. Far from it. They've been at this for years now and each year the Saddlebred numbers in their barn get a little bigger and their win count at shows around the country gets a little bit longer.

Shawn loves the breeding side of the industry and this year marked the first year that Nirvana's first foal crop earned world titles at Louisville.



Shawn met Ava and Callaway's Nachelle after they won the roses in the Three-Gaited Show Pleasure Junior Exhibitor 13 and Under Championship out of 16 entries.



Babies sired by 2014 Fine Harness World's Grand Champion Nutcracker's Nirvana showed at Louisville this year and earned reserve world's championships for owner Rhyann Stables and owner Brian Ferguson.



Lady Mandolin MS, owned by Helen Lacey Reed and bred by Linda Shelor, gave James Stachowski his second consecutive Fine Harness World's Grand Championship.

Nirvana's Nevermind, who's dam is Aurora's Annie, was the Three-Year-Old Three-Gaited World's Champion with Jim showing for James and Bev Beebe and their Rhyann Stables. To say the Beebe's were thrilled with their beautiful mare is an understatement. Customer Brian Ferguson also had reason to celebrate. His two-year-old colt, Empyrean, sired by Nirvana and out of Isabella DaVinci was the section two three-gaited reserve world's champion.

"It felt great to get Nirvana's first babies in the ring and for them to do so well. I feel this year represents just a glimpse of what's to come for horses sired by Nirvana," said Shawn.

Rango Tango, sired by Tango's Parting Kiss and out of the mare Supremacy's Melody, swept the junior park pleasure division to earn the World's Champion of Champions tricolor and blue for Hagan Saddlebreds. Scott Hagan purchased the gelding as a two-year-old. While Rango wasn't a product of the Stachowski Farms breeding program, he sure is a product of their training program and another example of a young horse's talents being brought out to their best ability by Jim's training skills.

Shawn and her beloved Use Your Illusion, a world's champion at three and four with Jim in the irons, took the victory pass this year in the Ladies Three-Gaited 15.2 and Under class. Sired by Mountainview's Heir To Fortune and out of My Prom Night, the beautiful young mare was shown and bred by Shawn and is truly a favorite of hers. She's proven her talents already and seems destined to have a long career in front of her. Her wins and the great success that daughter Ava had was what meant the most to Shawn this past week. She's always seen the potential in her daughter's abilities on a horse and she has seen the potential in this mare from the beginning.

"There are hundreds of variables that go into a successful breeding program but if I were to stress one factor it would be to breed only quality to quality," said Shawn. "To me quality equals only an outstanding individual with an equally outstanding pedigree. It is very difficult to breed great show horses. Nirvana represents an outstanding individual with an impeccable pedigree. His temperament and trainability have been outstanding. All this makes me think he's going to be a great breeding stallion by creating beautiful and athletic horses with temperaments that a lot of people can enjoy." Indeed, the future for this charismatic stallion looks bright. He bred 70 mares this year, both Arab and Saddlebred so there are babies coming in 2016!

Ava may decide that her future includes horses whether that be training, showing or breeding or all of the above. She has turned into a talented young horse-woman and her mom attributes that to the fact that Ava has been riding all kinds and types of Saddlebreds since she was a young girl. "She rode three- and four-year-olds, and sometimes two-year-olds at a very young age. It shows in her riding today and she can handle almost anything. She's got great showmanship abilities.

Shawn continued, "She never had an easy horse to show. We always mounted her up and she's worked with Melissa Moore and Jenny Taylor in addition to her

dad. She's got her dad's abilities and could certainly become a horse trainer but we're encouraging college all the way. She's a straight A student and we are proud of everything she does. She has been dreaming of a gaited horse and we are going to make that dream come true for her."

Ava's hard work and dedication were certainly obvious all week at the World's Championship Horse Show. She and Callaway's Nachelle, a daughter of Blue Norther and out of Callaway's Return Engagement, went two for two under her dad's direction. They were the World's Champion of Champions Three-Gaited Pleasure 13 and Under and won the world's championship blue in the section one 13 and under qualifier. She and Prince Of Prowlin', sired by Callaway's Guy Park and out of Prowler's Pagan Princess, won the Junior Exhibitor Three-Gaited 13 and Under World's Championship. All of that and she just entered the ninth grade.

Jim accomplished the incredible feat of winning the Fine Harness World's Grand Championship for the second year in a row with two different horses. No doubt coming into Louisville, many were asking the question "Where's Nirvana?", anxious to see him put on a show for the crowd again. They didn't know Shawn had decided last year after his last class that she was going to let him concentrate on breeding mares.

By Saturday night, we were saying "Wow, he did it again!" There was a new lady in the house and her name was Lady Mandolin MS.

Last year Lady Mandolin, a Nutcracker daughter out of Suddenly Summer and bred by former owner Linda Shelor, won the Three-Gaited Three-Year-Old World's Championship with Allison Walker showing. When Helen Lacey Reed bought the mare she put her in training at Stachowski Farms and she closed out the year with a reserve at Kansas City in the UPHA Three-Gaited Classic Grand Championship.

This year, Louisville was her first stop on the show circuit and when she came through the gate in the Junior Fine Harness Mare class it was obvious she loved the blinkers. She had the crowd in her corner as she left the ring with the unanimous world's title. When she came back Saturday night, it was like last year all over again. Jim Stachowski in his tux sitting behind an outstanding fine harness horse that absolutely belonged in the open ranks and took command of the ring. He cemented his reputation as a trainer who always strives to be number one when they were called out as the World's Grand Champions and left the ring accompanied by the roar of the Freedom Hall crowd.

"I feel very fortunate to have had two great horses to show back to back in the Fine Harness World's Grand Championship class," said Jim. "Both were equally exciting."

Stachowski Farms and the Stachowski family now have to turn their attention to All American Horse Classic, Arab Nationals and Kansas City and they've got a lot to be excited about. An amazing week at Louisville with wins in multiple divisions, a bright future for the babies by Nirvana that are starting to display their talents in the show ring and the show string that now have several world's titles to defend when they head to Freedom Hall in 2016.