

# The 2007 Year In Review Is Dedicated to Swish

by Bob Funkhouser

In all sports there are individuals who step up and have a fantastic, maybe even an explosive season or two and then return to mere mortal status for the rest of their careers, many of which are short lived. Then there are those warriors who are blessed with the right combination of talent, heart, physical build and a good dose of luck in the health department to perform and compete at the highest level over and over, year after year. These are the athletes that are revered by all. Stories are passed down from one generation to the next of their remarkable feats.

In the sport of show horses, namely American Saddlebreds, Swish is one of the current day champions that would certainly fit the latter description. He's won world's championships since 1999 when his owner/breeder, Redd Crabtree, made the victory pass in the Two-Year-Old Five-Gaited World's Championship. From that point on the son of Supreme Heir and Frosty Miss has never looked back, winning a total of three world's champion of champions titles, five world's championships, one reserve world's champion of champions title and two reserve world's championships.

Crabtree Farms has bred and raised many great horses over the decades including Yorktown, Harlem Globetrotter, New Yorker and Swish's sire, Supreme Heir, and Swish belongs right up there with those names for his record in the show ring. If you look at his pedigree he has a right to be a great horse beginning with his sire. Besides being a world's champion as a two and three-year-old walk-trot horse with Crabtree, Supreme Heir went on to greatness in the breeding shed being the number one sire of world's champions for several years.



*Swish puts a smile on Carol Hillenbrand's face every time she shows him.*

His get, including Swish, are still dominating the show ring.

On the bottom side, Swish is out of the Harlem Globetrotter daughter Frosty Miss. Her dam is the Broodmare Hall Of Fame matron Carol Lynn who is also the dam of the sensational world's champions According To Lynn and Lynn Williams. Swish's third dam, Donna Sutton, is a full sister to Five-Gaited World's Grand Champion Cora's Time.

"Swish's dam was as great a trotting Harlem Globetrotter mare as I have ever seen," said Crabtree. "She was born in March and unfortunately foaled outside and one of her ears froze off so we never got to show her, but she was meant to be a great one. She had a different way of moving from most Globetrotters. Her dam's side was bred exceptionally deep. Frosty Miss has something like five crosses to Wing Commander. Swish

was her second foal; the first was by Time Willing."

When bred with another Crabtree icon, Supreme Heir, Frosty Miss produced Swish while Crabtree was in Georgia on the DuPree job. He started training him the fall of his yearling year and had him racking by the first of the year.

"Swish looked nice as a baby, but nothing exceptional," explained Crabtree. "He had a nice, open way of moving. Once we started working him he was very, very talented with a wonderful attitude. He was a little testy at times, in fact, he ran off with me twice. I only worked him in a smooth bit and one day when I took him outside he got too big for himself and I didn't want to jerk on him on anything.

"We've raised and shown five Two-Year-Old Five-Gaited World's Champions here at the farm and he ranks right up there with the best of them. Some people want to say we shouldn't show two-year-old gaited colts, but all of them we had went to on to long, successful careers. If you start them and take care of them the right way, they will last and Swish was no exception. He was an awfully nice and exciting horse."

Crabtree debuted Swish at the Shelbyville Horse Show, winning the Two-Year-Old Three-Gaited class but on his victory pass he racked from the ring, giving everyone a preview of what was to come. Just a few weeks later he wore the crown of Two-Year-Old Five-Gaited World's Champion.

There had been much talk about the young star and following his Louisville triumph the queen herself, Donna Moore, purchased Swish for William Shatner.

"Mom bought him as a two-year-old and then as a three-year-old he developed a throat issue and was turned





*Redd Crabtree bred and started Swish, winning the Two-Year-Old Five-Gaited World's Championship with him. They made their debut at Shelbyville to win the Two-Year-Old Three-Gaited Class.*

out for most of that year," said Melissa Moore. "That might have been the best thing to happen to him. As a four-year-old he started working again and Jerry [Hutson] showed him. Then I showed him as a five-year-old."

Hutson won the junior stake with Swish at Asheville and then was second in the junior stallion/gelding class and reserve in the Junior Five-Gaited Championship at Lexington Junior League before taking fourth in the junior stallion/gelding class at Louisville. Tigerlee, Caramac's Bogart and Callaway's Banner Headline were the horses ahead of him.

The next year William Shatner debuted with a reserve in the amateur gentleman's class at Asheville before Hutson won the open and championship at Rock Creek. He would be third in Lexington Junior League's amateur gentleman's class, again with Shatner.

Melissa Moore took over the reins and claimed reserve in both the ladies gelding class and the Ladies Five-Gaited Championship at the 2002 Kentucky State Fair. She went on to win the Ladies Five-Gaited Championship at the American Royal that year.

Maturing into a beautiful, powerful horse, Swish was shown at Asheville by Liz Shatner to win the ladies class the next spring. With Melissa Moore back in the irons, Swish defeated 10 other contenders in Lexington Junior League's Ladies Five-Gaited Gelding class and eight others to win the ladies

championship. They would be second out of 11 in the ladies gelding stake at Louisville and then were tied a disappointing fourth in the Five-Gaited World's Grand Championship. The disappointing part to those on his team was not being part of the workout.

"He was amazing. One of the best I've ever ridden," said Moore. "He is why they invented the show horse.

"He just knew what to do, how much to give. He was such a surprise the first time I showed him because I had never had that much horse. At home he is nice,

but nothing like he is in a class. You knew you had a horse that wasn't going to quit or get tired. At Louisville that year I was so mad they didn't put me on the workout. I didn't ask anything of him during the regular class because I knew he would have so much more for the workout but we never got the chance."

The habit of just giving so much at home and then delivering at the horse show is something that has stuck with Swish throughout his career. In fact, it may very well be the reason his career has been so long – he knows how to take care of himself.

"When John [Biggins] started calling me about him I wouldn't let them look at him at home," said Melissa Moore. "I made them wait to try him at the Horse Park."

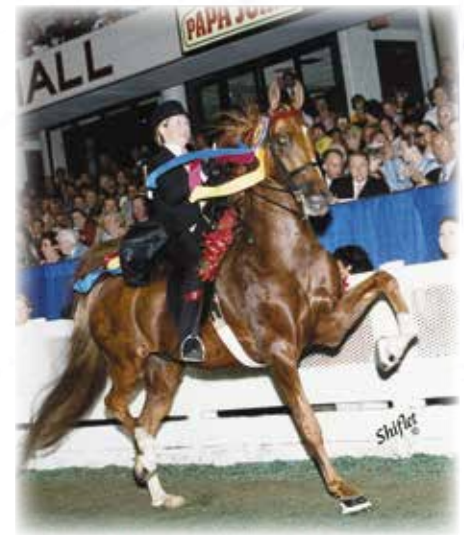
"Melissa told me she wouldn't show him to me at home," confirmed John Biggins. "We talked about a price and that was fine so we made an appointment to see him at the Kentucky Fall Classic. We bought him and Melissa [Moore] was absolutely right about him. He wasn't much at home but at the show he was all business. I had had a few horses like that before so I was fine with it. In fact, The Groomsman was like that for Carol. He was one of those horses who knew how to take care of themselves.

"Swish is just a really nice horse, very kind. He's so athletic and what you see is what you get. The great thing

about him is you didn't have to worry if he was going to rack or if he was going to canter, or anything like that. He does everything well. It gives your rider a great amount of confidence not to have to worry about those things."

"I first thought about him when I saw him as at two-year-old at Shelbyville and Redd racked him out of the ring after winning the two-year-old walk-trot class," said current owner Carol Hillenbrand. "I thought, 'What a cool horse.'

"In 2003, I kept watching him and thinking I wanted him, but I didn't know if I would be able to ride him.



*Current owner Carol Hillenbrand has won the World's Champion of Champions Amateur Five-Gaited title three times.*

I kept talking to Mrs. Robson on the phone about him and just a couple of days before she died she told me, 'Carol, go buy him. You never know what will happen in your life so go for it.' I also have to credit John [Biggins] for encouraging me that I could do it. He worked really hard to make us a team."

Make them a team he did. Hillenbrand had already had some nice gaited horses like Miss Lillie O'Lee and Specialty Item, but none were like Swish. Just a little over a month after purchasing the grand gelding they debuted at the 2003 American Royal and were reserve in the amateur stallion/gelding qualifier before coming back to defeat 10 other teams to win their first Amateur Five-Gaited National Championship.



The next two years they would go undefeated, winning amateur stallion/gelding qualifiers and championships at Rock Creek, St. Louis, the American Royal and Louisville, among others. John Conatser took over training the high-powered team in the summer of 2005.

Hillenbrand and Swish continued to dominate one of the largest and toughest divisions. Each time they went to the ring they had several high profile teams breathing down their necks, but each time they would handle the pressure with extreme confidence and power. So many times over the years we've seen grand horses that slowly began to fade away as most athletes do. The fact that he hasn't faded is what makes him not just a good horse, but a great horse. To this day he looks like he is a forever five-year-old.

Through the end of the 2007 show season Hillenbrand and Swish have four consecutive Amateur Five-Gaited Stallion/Gelding World's Championships in four tries; three World's Champion of Champions Amateur Five-Gaited titles; four UPHA Amateur Five-Gaited Horse Of The Year Awards; four Amateur Five-Gaited National Championships in as many tries; and four American Royal Amateur Five-Gaited Stallion/Gelding wins. These of course go with titles from Midwest Charity, Rock Creek, Bonnie Blue, St. Louis, the Kentucky Fall Classic and Shelbyville.

"One of my most memorable performances was that first championship at Kansas City in 2003," said Hillenbrand. "Biggins had me change a lot about my riding and Melissa [Moore] helped me tremendously over the rail. I'm proud that we came together as a team. He [Swish] had a ball in the championship. He loves competing and he rises to the intensity level of the class.

"I'm most proud of our four consecutive amateur stallion/gelding titles at Louisville. I feel very lucky. He is such a unique horse. In the stall he wants his space; he's not one that likes to be loved on or pampered. Once you're on him, however, he is the most trustworthy horse I've ever been around. At home he does his gaits correctly, but with no energy. At the shows he is 110 percent a competitor. He has so much power without sacrificing form. He can also



*Swish has many great fans, including one of his former trainers, Melissa Moore.*

turn on a dime. He's a better horse in a large class because he likes to feel the other horses around him, coming at him. He loves the challenge.

"I'm so lucky and privileged to own him. I think the best word to describe him is gallant. You just treat him with respect. You're not going to teach him anything. He'll teach you if you just leave him alone. I can't thank his past trainers enough for preparing him so well. John Conatser is a master at keeping a horse happy and fit and that's what Swish needs."



*This classic look has been a familiar scene over the past four years.*

"There's only one way to put it: Swish is a horse trainer's dream," said current trainer John Conatser. "He has the best mouth of any five-gaited horse I've ever trained. He has the best manners of any gaited horse I've ever trained. He has the most ability of any gaited horse I've ever trained. You ask this horse to slow gait and his knee is as high his first step as it is five steps later. On the rail, off the rail, it doesn't matter where you want to put him.

"The tougher the going, the better it suits Swish. He responds stronger. He's very gifted and lightly shod. Carol [Hillenbrand] and Swish really click. She's willing to go with him. He's so good off the rail in those big classes. They're a lot of fun to watch.

"Another thing, Swish has had the benefit of a great horseman to take care of him throughout his career. He has had the best of care beginning with Redd [Crabtree] and continuing with Melissa [Moore] and Jerry [Hutson] and then with John [Biggins]. This horse has had a lot of really good care."

It's hard to tell who's happier, Swish's trainer or his owner. They both feel very privileged to have him in their lives.

"He's on the 'Better Feeding Program,'" explained Conatser. "The better horse you feed, the better you look!"

"It's incredible to have that much power under you and be able to put him where ever you want him," said Hillenbrand. "He puts a smile on your face every time you show him."

Swish will turn 11 this year and after having won practically everything there is to win for an amateur horse, what lies ahead for this great ambassador of the American Saddlebred Horse?

"He'll tell us what he wants to do," said Hillenbrand. "We will stop when he tells us he's had enough."

Until then, the much-loved son of Supreme Heir and Frosty Miss will continue to turn up the intensity level when the gate opens and the organ music begins to play. He was a born entertainer who happens to be able to crank his legs and correctly do his gaits with ease. With those big, bright eyes, sharp ears and beautiful way of going, his fans hope he's ready to light up show rings for the next several years.