



GERHARDT ROOS,

Rising To the Forefront of the Saddlebred Industry

BY SARA PIZZUTO

During a trip to Alliance Stud in early 2012, Saddlebred exhibitor Aubrey Lambert had the opportunity to speak with the late Dr. Scott Bennett. It was during their discussion when Bennett praised a particular trainer who was working at his facility.

“Doc told me that he had never met a trainer so young who possessed such an astute ability to get inside a horse’s head,” Lambert said. “To me, his statement spoke volumes.”

That highly touted young trainer that Bennett spoke of was Gerhardt Roos. Fast forward nearly a decade later and Roos has developed a reputation as one of the leading trainers in the industry. His sheer talent coupled with his keen instincts and work ethic have propelled Roos’ Rose Stables into the forefront of the equine community.

Gerhardt Roos grew up in his homeland of South Africa. His involvement in horses began early on with Roos participating in jumping, dressage, and gymkhana. For Roos, a future career as a horse trainer was a natural progression.

“I just had a passion and a love for horses ever since I was a small kid,” he said. “Like most kids, who would say they wanted to be a fireman or a

policeman or what not, I wanted to be a horse trainer ever since I was a little boy.”

The South Africa based Chamonix Farm was the location of Roos’ saddle horse beginnings. He eventually made the long voyage overseas and arrived in the United States alongside Gene van der Walt. Roos’ first horse related job in America came at Singing Hills Stable, working with Bill Blacklaw.

The road to the opening of Rose Stables also included Roos’ time spent working with Melissa Moore as well as the aforementioned Dr. Scott Bennett. He additionally leased stalls from David Crockett, Jim Koller, and Jo Cornell before purchasing his property in Shelbyville Kentucky, officially opening the doors to his own training facility, Rose Stables, alongside his wife Sarah.

Since its inception eight years ago, Rose Stables has become a premier training destination in Kentucky with Roos as well as Cobi van den Berg now at the helm. Though Rose Stables prides itself on catering to a variety of show horses in all divisions, they have become particularly successful with young horses. Roos has developed a knack for succeeding with these youngsters, beginning with his first personal world’s champion, WS Call

Me Catty, the 2011 Two-Year-Old Fine Harness Mares World’s Champion. This success has continued throughout each show season. Just last year, Roos was on the lines of Festival Calypso LF to be crowned the Three-Year-Old Fine Harness Mares World’s Champion and presented Red Letters to the title of Yearling Breeders Open World’s Champion. Roos explained the importance of making a young horse feel comfortable when beginning their training.

“It is all about how you start them as far as introducing them to stuff the right way,” he said. “I have always said teach them their ABC’s before you do anything else. Never push a young horse too hard. Some just come on quicker than others and develop faster than others. It is very important that you pay attention to your animal and

1 Gerhardt Roos and his wife Sarah’s Rose Stables has quickly developed a reputation for greatness. Roos was most recently honored with the John Biggins Memorial Trainer award earlier this year at Rock Creek.

2 Junior horses have excelled under the training of Gerhardt Roos. His first personal world’s title came on the lines of the 2011 Two-Year-Old Fine Harness Mares World’s Champion, WS Call Me Catty.



The "Squid Squad" cheered as the Rose Stables trained team of Aubrey Lambert and CH Get Crackin', affectionately known as "Squid," were crowned the 2019 Adult Country Pleasure Section One World's Champions.

listen to what they are telling you. If they are ready, they are ready. If they are not ready, they are not ready."

While some of the horses in training with Roos are just beginning their careers, others have reached the pinnacles of success within their breed. Roos was charged with the training assignments of Horizon Saddlebreds' former gaited contender Not Giving Up in both 2019 and 2020. Not Giving Up was twice the winner of the Five-Gaited Gelding Stake at the Lexington Junior League and just last year earned a coveted green shaving victory pass in Louisville as the Kentucky County Fair Five-Gaited Grand Champion, all with Roos in the saddle. Roos explained that this powerful entry was a horse that developed quicker by going to the show ring rather than he did by simply working at home.

"He was one of those horses where he was so game at home and you can get him to a certain point at home, but he really surprised me when I took him to the ring and started showing him," Roos said.

"He was the kind of horse that actually came along faster when I put him in the ring. His training was done in the show ring. At home I couldn't get him to do what he did at the show. He was just a pure show horse. He had a lot of heart. Usually we get them prepped and work them at home, but he was actually the complete opposite. He just got better and better when we took him to the show."

From young horses, to open gaited contenders, to amateur mounts, Gerhardt Roos has succeeded in the development of a myriad of quality competitors. Client Aubrey Lambert first joined up with Roos in 2012 at Alliance Stud and has remained with him ever since.

"What I love most about training with Gerhardt is his drive and determination," she said. "It's contagious and it makes me want to be a better rider and exhibitor. Determination is the chief element of success."

The connections of Lambert and Roos were behind CH Get Crackin', with whom Lambert teamed up with



Rose Stables is responsible for the success of a myriad of horses showing in a variety of divisions. Roos was aboard Not Giving Up for the victory pass in the 2020 Kentucky County Fair Five-Gaited Championship in Louisville.

to be named the 2019 Adult Country Pleasure Section One World's Champions.

"The day 'Squid' stepped off the trailer, Gerhardt called and said, 'Aubrey, I have the perfect horse for you,'" Lambert said. "The rest, of course, was history. Apart from being exceptionally kind and athletic, 'Squid's' presence and demeanor embody all the best elements of an American Saddlebred show horse. My success with him was just a small part of his story."

The "Squid Squad" comprised of Rose Stables fans was in full force for Lambert and CH Get Crackin's Louisville victory pass in 2019. The country pleasure entry has since found a new owner in young Olivia Langdon and now excels in the junior exhibitor ranks, still under the Rose Stables banner.

"I am overjoyed to be able to walk alongside 'Squid's' new owner, Olivia, as she takes his journey forward," Lambert said. "Horses like 'Squid' just make you thankful for the ride."

This process of selling horses to fortunate new owners is quite common at Rose Stables. Gerhardt Roos has been known to successfully market horses for sale and move them quite quickly onto a new home.

"We just kind of fix them up," he said. "Usually the way I work horses, I kind of pick up and know which program they will fit in. I can work one and it won't take me long to figure out who needs this horse or where it needs to be placed."

Whether selling horses, training world's champions, or developing young talent, Gerhardt Roos has put his stamp on all facets of the equine world. He has become a familiar face in the show ring with a myriad of competitors from a victorious fine harness performer to a swift speedster in the roadster division. Roos advised other emerging trainers to learn from other professionals and take the time to hone their skills before starting their own business.

"I would say the biggest thing is to just pay your dues in the sense of to work for people long enough to learn from someone that actually knows what they are doing," he said. "It's just like college or anything you do in life. We go out and we try to pick people's brains and learn and watch and get polished through somebody that has been successful in the industry for a long time. I think I did my internship for 12-13 years, working for people and grooming and walking the hard knock road and that's it. There is no other way to do it. Learn from the best and pay your dues and stick it out. There is no quick way to success. There never has been."

When asked what she loved most about riding with Roos, Aubrey Lambert was quick to emphasize the trainer's work ethic, which she believes is why he has risen to such prominence in the horse industry. Others have taken note of Roos' achievements as well, as he was most recently awarded with the John Biggins Memorial Trainer award last month at Rock Creek.

"As the saying goes, 'There is no substitute for hard work,'" Lambert said. "Without a doubt, that is the single greatest contributing factor to Gerhardt's success. He's an aspirational thinker by nature and he sets big goals for himself and for each individual horse in his barn. Couple that with exceptionally keen instincts and knowledge and there is no question why he has been so successful."

Based on the success of Gerhardt Roos and his Rose Stables in the equine industry, it is clear that Dr. Scott Bennett's praise of Roos had merit when he first spoke so highly of the trainer nearly a decade ago.

"As usual, Doc was right," Lambert said.



Top roadster horses often make their home at Rose Stables, including Zenyatta, a reigning world's champion from the roadster under saddle division.



Reigning Three-Year-Old Fine Harness Mares World's Champion, Festival Calypso LF, is another youngster to excel under the direction of Gerhardt Roos. She continued her stellar career with Gerhardt Roos at Rock Creek this season.