

A Special Mare

TEMPT ME

by Bob Funkhouser



Susan Bartlett enjoyed two world's champion of champions titles with the (SA) Dorian Wild Temper daughter.

"She was nothing like I've ever had. Just a special mare," said Tempt Me's trainer for the past three years, Chuck Herbert.

Bred by Sally Jackson, the daughter of reserve world's champion (SA) Dorian Wild Temper and Marty Jones, a CH Belle Reve's Renaissance daughter out of Jackson's former top gaited mare, Aisling's Treasure, won enough titles in her short time with us to earn "special status," however, it was her courage, which made her an all-time favorite for many, especially her trainer and her "person."

Tiffany Wheeler brought Tempt Me out for owner/breeder Sally Jackson, winning her first time out at the Southern Saddlebred Fall Finale before taking 3rd in the UPHA Classics Championships and reserve in the open three-year-old class at the American Royal, ironically behind Chuck Herbert and Amanyara.

The next year Wheeler and the big going mare took three wins into Louisville where they were reserve to Tory Burch in the junior mare class and HS Baby Steps in the Junior Fine Harness Championship.

Tempt Me's first world's title came in 2014 when Wheeler drove her to the Ladies Fine Harness blue defeating a great cast of competitors, including CH Our Brilliant Belle, Happy Boy, CH His Supreme Reflection and Alde-Mar's Crystal Pistol. In the championship round, CH Our Brilliant Belle wore the roses, with Tempt Me in reserve. Tempt Me also won the Fine Harness Mare Stake at the UPHA/American Royal that fall.

The first of three lifetime surgeries took place in 2015 and even with this history of colic, Susan Bartlett purchased the grand mare that fall.



Tiffany Wheeler drove Tempt Me to her first world's title as well as several three and four-year-old wins.

Bartlett and Herbert had already teamed up winning many previous harness titles with CH Preferred American and CH Harlem's Santa Fe. There was just a little pressure on to find the next harness horse that would be in at least the same league with the previous two.

"I don't really compare them," said Tempt Me's owner and show ring partner Susan Bartlett. "Preferred American was my first and Ellie [Harlem's Santa Fe] I showed for 12 years so there's really no comparisons. We like to say that Ellie was the Princess and Tempt Me was the Queen. She didn't really care for a lot of people.

"I loved her. She was easy to drive. Even when she was full of herself she wasn't head strong. I have been lucky that all three of my harness horses have loved what they were doing. As soon as you checked them up it was show time."

"We had actually looked for two years to find what we were looking for," said Herbert. "I was surprised to find an ad that this mare was for sale and I called Steve and Tiffany immediately to try her.

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Chuck Herbert and Danelle Howser poured their hearts and souls into Tempt Me, both in and out of the ring. They are pictured with owner/driver Susan Bartlett.

"It's funny, we liked her enough to buy her but it wasn't, 'wow, look what we just bought.' She is not outstanding at home. In fact, that winter I called Tiffany a couple of times and asked, 'are you sure she's going to be different at the show?'"

Thankfully, to Herbert's and Bartlett's delight she was just what Tiffany and Steve Wheeler described at the show.

"In her first class (the 2016 IASHA Spring Warm Up) I was literally jumping up and down in the lineup heading Susan," remembered Herbert. "Debbie Foley was judging and when she walked by she leaned over and said, 'Should I know her? I don't think there's one out there that can beat her.'"

"She's all about showing. She would scare you to death in the warm up ring that she wasn't going to fire but as soon as you put that check on and hit the ring she was a totally different horse. When Susan won the amateur championship with her in 2017 she warmed up as bad as I've ever had a horse warm up."

In 2016, Bartlett and Tempt Me followed up their winning debut at IASHA Spring Warm Up going undefeated at Indy, Midwest and Blue Ridge before sweeping the amateur ladies qualifier and the World's Champion of Champions Amateur Fine Harness class at Louisville, defeating such greats as CH Caraway's New York Minute, Costa Nostra, Kalarama's New York Lady, Magical Promises and Take Me Home Tonight, among others. That would be her last show of the year as colic hit again and a second surgery was required.

After a mesh surgery in April, Bartlett and Tempt Me came back out in June of 2017, winning at Midwest and Blue Ridge as well as a reserve in the amateur ladies qualifier at Louisville before returning to garner yet another world's champion of champions amateur title, going on to be named the Roode & Riddle Comeback Horse Of The Year for her triumphant return from colic surgery.

"2018 was the first time we really got to enjoy her, not just keep her alive," said Herbert. "We felt like we finally had a handle on her health issues and I had the opportunity to show her. Susan's in-laws showed horses in the 50s and 60s. Susan's husband Jeff had always wanted to have a horse that could show on Saturday night at Louisville and Susan had already won two amateur titles so we thought, 'why not give it a shot?'"

Herbert got three warm up classes before the 2018 Kentucky State Fair rolled around. His week began with a victory pass in the Fine Harness Mare Stake only to come back Saturday night with unanimous reserve world's grand champion honors.

There would be two more classes for Bartlett, winning the Amateur Fine Harness qualifier and championship at the All-American Classic

before tragedy would strike one final time. The grand mare was laid to rest in the ring at the Herbert's Cedarwood Farm beneath two beautiful Willow trees.

Throughout all of this Cedarwood assistant Danelle Howser was by the mare's side. The had an instant connection that deepened with every day they spent together.

"Danelle was her person," said Herbert. "Every once in a while, I could catch her, but usually I would just say, 'Danelle, go get your mare.'"

"If love could have saved her, she would have lived forever," said Danelle Howser. "She was 'my mare' and I was 'her person.' She hated flies, preferred only the soft brush, and LOVED her mane combed. She got one peppermint when I got her ready in the morning - always the first one to work. She got her second peppermint when it was time to be turned loose.

"Her nicker is what I will miss the most. She always let you know when it was time for feeding, sometimes insisting you were late to feed her, sometimes trying to convince you she hadn't been fed. The trials and tribulations she went through and overcame only show how truly amazing she was.

"She was quirky, but all the great ones are. There will NEVER be another one like her."

Herbert and Howser did a great job of taking care of Tempt Me as well as putting her together for Bartlett.

"It was easy to put them together," said Herbert. "The hardest part was trying to emulate a horse show at home. We really didn't have a clue until we went to that first show.

She was so good in the bridle and would put herself in a frame and stay there. In fact, when I showed her I was afraid I wasn't doing enough because it was so easy for her. You just kind of checked your speeds and stayed out of her way.

"After her second surgery it took us a little while to adjust her harness to where she was comfortable but other than that, it was pretty easy."

Losing any horse is hard but this hit Herbert particularly hard as he spent many, many hours in the care of Tempt Me.

"You spend so much time together you can't help but get attached," said Herbert. "Three times I put her in a trailer and hauled her to the clinic in Lexington [KY] not knowing if she would be alive when I got there.

"I just can't describe what this mare meant to me. She was so special."



The mare's last victory pass in Freedom Hall came this past August as the World's Champion Fine Harness Mare with Chuck Herbert.