

DRESSAGE Selten HW: A Breeder's Dream

By Cathy Cottrill

Selten HW has fulfilled the dreams of his breeder, Irene Hoefflich-Wiederhold, and then some.

Wiederhold hoped a good match (Sandro Hit X SPS High Princess) would produce a dressage superstar. HHHe guessed right, and has been watching the pair's talented progeny win everything in sight. A fancy black Hanoverian stallion, Selten HW not only won this year's 4-year-old Markel/USEF National Young Horse Dressage Championships in Kentucky, he also took the blue in both of his USEF 4-year-old classes at Dressage at Devon, with trainer Michael Bragdell of Hilltop Farm in the irons.

Now, with a new owner, he appears destined for international competition at the upper levels.

Irene, who owns HW Farm in Cape Coral, Florida, is originally from Germany. She imported SPS High Princess in foal after being dazzled by the scores from the mare's inspection and mare performance test.

"Her breeder said the mare has a test score of 8.22 and was entered in the Hanoverian Studbook with an overall 9," said Irene. "She also mentioned that her full sister managed to have multiple 10s at her inspection and her grand dam, SPS Batavia, has, among other winners, produced the 1997 Bundeschampion (National Champion of Germany for Dressage), Duvalier by Davignon. This info and her scores absolutely impressed me and I could not even believe it until I saw them in writing."

Irene credits her trainer and former partner, Michelle Gerlach, with helping her decide to make the purchase. They talked after watching a tape of SPS High Princess and her daughter, Lilofee.

"We reviewed it and we discussed the mare," she said. "It was obvious that her daughter was nearly a clone in movement of her dam, a very good indication that this mare can not only move and rely on a really strong dam line, she can also produce the same quality."

Irene was elated when the foal was a pitch black colt who was a "super sweet boy, easy to handle and train, not a mean bone in his body."

Named Selten, the colt had an idyllic first year, cavorting with his full brother, Sagenhaft HW, and his dam, who was bred again at the time. Irene wanted "the boys" to learn discipline from their mom and also have a buddy to play with.

"Socialization is a very important point in the upbringing of the foals, especially the colts if they stay intact," she said. "All my colts stay intact as long as possible, up to three years if circumstances allow, to leave all options open and to ensure they develop as nicely as possible." Knowing she had a truly promising young horse on her hands, Irene began to think about his future. That led to persuading Hilltop Farm into taking him for training. "It was very hard to get him accepted by Hilltop," she said. "They told me that they will only take colts from their own



A beaming Michael Bragdell aboard Selten HW after this year's victory at the Young Horse Championships.

All photos courtesy of Irene Wiederhold

stallions and production lines and that they are not interested in raising or presenting outside stallions. After I discussed the details of his dam line with Hilltop, they agreed to at least look at a video of him. I had high hopes that this sensational moving horse would wow them and would be able to change their minds. My plans were to have him brought up by professionals with stallion experience in order for him to show off his full potential. Hilltop got the tape and Selten HW was invited to come up for evaluation. They fell in love with him and he was allowed to stay."

Irene cherishes a comment from Hilltop's Scott Hassler, "Do you hear anything? No? He is so light on his feet, that you can't even hear him touch the ground!"

Selten's first appearance at Dressage at Devon was a memorable one. Irene was thrilled when the colt was named Reserve Grand Champion at the prestigious show in 2006. He was also the USDF Breeders Champion for Colts and Geldings, handled by Marten Walters.

His debut under saddle was equally impressive. At The Fair Hill Breed Show in 2007, the young stallion's fancy gaits created a buzz at the show as he won the 3-year-old Colts & Geldings Materiale class. Selten won the class with a huge lead over the second place — another Sandro Hit son — and scored a 7,8 for walk, 8,3 for trot and an 8,5 for canter, which is an overall score of 8,2.

With Selten's success came an unexpected offer. Although Irene had planned to keep the young stallion, she got an offer she couldn't refuse last December. "He was not really for sale," she said. "He was not advertised and not on the market at all. I got a call about somebody who was very interested in him and was asked if I would be willing to sell him. He already had all his Devon successes and had just received the Oldenburg champion title at his inspection with high scores. The call came in December 2007, completely unexpected. He was supposed to be a keeper, but for the right price and under the perfect circumstances, nearly everything is for sale, no?"

After listening to the plans of his prospective owner, the Pan Am rider Elizabeth Ball, who is training with Günter Seidel and Klaus Balkenhol in California, it was clear that the sale would be in the horse's best interests.

"One person at Hilltop argued that, no matter what, I will

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