

The Renaissance of the Polish Arabian in the North America

By Jeffrey Wintersteen

On a cool New Mexico evening in October 1999, a dappled gray stallion trotted to a National Championship against a background of thunderous applause in Tingley Arena. The announcer commented to the enthusiastic crowd "it is fitting this horse will be the last national champion of the millennium." To a small Arabian breeding nation in central Europe, the close of the millennium also marked the return of the Polish Arabian to North American, and specifically US National, Show Ring prominence. This high trotting, charismatic stallion was, of course, the Michalów bred Emanor (Wojslaw x Emanacja)– the first US National Champion Stallion for Poland since El Paso won the title in 1976. Emanor was also the first of what has proved to be a tidal wave -- the explosive return of the Polish Arabian on the North American show scene, the likes of which have not been seen since the "Polish Invasion" of the 1960's.

A discussion of the return of Polish bred Arabians to the national spotlight in the US show ring cannot be made without mention of George Zbyszewski. "George Z", as he is affectionately known in the US, is a Krakow born American who facilitated the negotiations for the lease and eventual purchase of Emanor by Ron and Mila Hart of Wind Horse Farm, California. Emanor marked the beginning of a multi year run in which Zbyszewski brought together many of Poland's finest show stars with America's most prominent owners and breeders.

While the US Nationals was the culmination for Emanor's year and clearly established Poland's return to breeding dominance, in fairness the renaissance really began in Scottsdale earlier that year. Emanor's much heralded arrival in the stallion halter arena saw him trot to the Champion Six Year Old Stallion title. Crowds of admirers and knowledgeable breeders showed up to see his presentations and sign contracts for breedings. Emanor, however, wasn't the only gray Michalów stallion at Scottsdale. Arriving somewhat under the radar was the first of the Michalów/Monogram get, El Mundo (Monogramm x Emigrantka).

While Polish produced Monogramm get were gaining widespread recognition on their native soil and across Europe, the first of these Michalów bred phenoms had yet to make an American show ring appearance. Their first arrival on US soil, while unannounced, certainly did not go unnoticed. In a stunning Scottsdale performance rivaled only by Emanor's, El Mundo (Monogramm x Emigrantka) handily won the 5-year-old Stallion Class handled by his amateur owner Cori Sampson against the industry's finest professional trainers. Later in the week, the two Emigracja grand get -- El Mundo and Emanor -- shared the championship line up. This left people asking more about this "other grey stallion from Poland". Later that year, El Mundo sailed to his own US National Championship in the AOTH division, again with owner Cori Sampson.

Scottsdale 1999 also saw Janów Podlaski jump into the fray, as well, in the Hunter Pleasure Division with Unanimous Open Champion Pilaster (Europejczyk x Pipi), a recent purchase by Meadow Wood Farms. Pilaster was bought off the track for the purpose of demonstrating his sire Europejczyk's prowess at producing top National performers under saddle for then owner Meadow Wood Farms. Pilaster would end the year with a dazzling performance as US Top Ten Hunter Pleasure. The previous show season saw Pilaster's debut resulting in Top Tens as a Hunter Pleasure Junior Horse at Scottsdale, Canada and at US Nationals as well as a Region Championship in the same division.

It wasn't, however, just Polish stallions that were making their mark. In 1999, Polish bred mares were represented for the first time at US Nationals since 1993 when the Michalów bred Kawalkada (Penitent x Kabala) was named National Champion Mare. This time, however, it was the Kurozweki bred Eksedra (Brokat x Ekplozja) who made a respectable showing with a US National Top Ten in both the Open and AOTH competition, a feat she equaled the following year at both the US and Canadian Nationals.

2000 saw the return of Emanor to the show ring, this time under saddle in English Pleasure. By this point, the big grey had amassed a substantial following of elite breeders and horsemen and women, eager to see his prowess in performance. He didn't disappoint, netting a Scottsdale Championship – his first show under saddle. Emanor then stormed the National Championship rings with a Reserve National Championship in Canada and Top Ten at the US Nationals in Louisville. The Canadian show ring also saw Hajder (Arbil x Hajnowka) gain National recognition, name 2000 Canadian Top Ten Hunter Pleasure. Mr. Z. imported the Janów bred stallion.

2001 saw El Mundo repeat his US performance, this time in Canada being named Canadian National Champion Stallion AOTH. Meanwhile, the second of the Zbyszewski managed leases was the 2000 Polish Nationals Best in Show Eula (Arbil x Euterpe). The bay Janów Podlaski bred mare made a brief swing through North American show circles where she netted a Top Ten at the 2001 Canadian Nationals. This proved to be only a minor foreshadowing of unparalleled Polish mare power that Zbyszewski was about to unleash on the US National show ring.

In 2002, the expected arrival of Kwestura (Monogramm x Kwesta) to American soil had Polish aficionados smiling in anticipation. She was, with out question, the cream of the Monogramm crop in Poland. This ultra exotic mare had already amassed a stunning array of show credentials on the continent, including: Polish National Junior Champion, European Senior Champion, All Nations Cup Senior Champion, World Reserve Senior Champion, and twice Polish National Reserve Senior Champion Mare. Kwestura quickly made her presence felt in a prelude to a National appearance as she was named Buckeye Champion Mare. The 2002 US Nationals in Louisville Kentucky proved to be the coronation of the Kwestura as US National Champion Senior Mare – a feat unequaled by Poland since the aforementioned Kawalkada. An interesting point is that these two mares both represent the dam line of Gazella through Carmen via Kometa and Kabala. Kawalkada is daughter of Kabala and Kwestura is her grand daughter.

Kwestura, however, wasn't the only Michalów/ Monogramm sensation to hit the ring in Louisville. The other Zbyszewski managed star was the reigning Buckeye Champion Ganges (Monogramm x Garonna), an immensely popular stallion for the last several years at the Polish Nationals. At the 2002 National Championship in Louisville, the former Polish National Champion and All Nations Cup Reserve Champion Stallion netted a strong Top Ten in the Senior Stallion Division. Ganges had arrived in time for Scottsdale eight months earlier and his entrance in the aged stallion class created a nation wide buzz despite his second place finish, so much so that bookings some of the industry's top mares poured into lessee Nichols Arabians over the course of the Scottsdale show.

Also in 2002, the much beloved Emanor was back, this time in Park where he earned Canadian National Champion Park and US Top Ten Park with his regular rider of Joey Canda in the irons. Also, Janów bred Ordynek (Europejczyk x Organtyna) sailed to a US National Top Ten English Pleasure AOTR 18-39.

While 2002 saw the 3rd National Championship for Polish bred horses in as many years, the undeniable combination of Monogramm and Michalów under the direction of Zbyszewski were just getting warmed up for American show ring dominance. In 2003, Zagrobla (Monogramm x Zguba) upgraded her Reserve Senior Mare Champion title from Scottsdale to extend the winning streak for Polish Mares at US Nationals, in Albuquerque. Zagrobla brought with her the title of "Winningest Mare in Polish Arabian History", a statement difficult to dispute as she has been honored as World Champion, All Nations Cup Champion, European Reserve Champion and twice Polish National Reserve Champion. Her win in the Senior Mare division, while not a surprise to those following her career, was an important milestone in an exemplary career. The achievement also marked unprecedented back-to-back National Champion Mares for both Michalow and Monogramm.

Another important mare in the 2003 US National Senior Mare Final was the 2000 Polish sale alumna Edina (Egon x Etylina) who had captured the Canadian Champion Mare title a few

months before. The 11-year-old mare was simply electric in making her entrance to Tingley arena – for those that were fortunate to see it, it will remain an unforgettable memory of those Nationals. Edina finished with a well-deserved Top Ten.

The next day, all eyes turned to the Senior Stallion class, one of the deepest in recent memories. Ganges had delayed his return to native Poland in large part to have another chance at American show laurels. In the end, the extension of his lease bore fruit as he was named Reserve Champion Stallion with a performance that made clear why the bay stallion had won fervent following on two continents. Greg Gallun remained as handler for new leasee Marsha Parkinson, still under the direction of Mr. Z. While Ganges's departure, while disappointing for American breeders, the foals currently on the ground and those expected should preserve his brief, but extremely important legacy for breeders in North America. Just as important, is his return to chief sire duties in Poland. His brief stint at sire prior to his departure from Poland has already left an indelible mark in Poland, one can only imagine what a more sustained effort might bring.

In the end, it is becoming apparent that this "Renaissance" is showing a staying power of being with us for some time. Some of North America's top trainers have added Poland as mandatory stop for finding their next show stars, just as European trainers have been doing since early 1990's. This, coupled with Poland's ability to continue to produce some of the best bloodstock in the World, makes the future of the Polish Arabian in North America, not to mention the rest of the world, very bright indeed.