



EFTBA Veterinary Newsletter 20



Parklane Hawk (NZ) CCI4* Badminton 2013

The retired racehorse part II

Welcome to EFTBA's veterinary newsletter

Dear European breeders,

Once again, you will find in the EFTBA Newsletter a major topic to our Industry: rehoming our racehorses.

A new start for our Thoroughbreds after their racing career, what a fundamental issue ! I am pleased to see great initiatives all around Europe starting with major breeding operators being involved in the UK, in Ireland and now for example in France.

As breeders we "make" the racehorses, they are born because of

our will. Therefore, it is our duty to think and to be responsible for their future, not only as racehorses but also afterwards. Many thanks to Dr Hanspeter Meier for putting such a great deal of information and research on the subject. It is our will to continue to address this issue to the European breeders as we will progress in rehoming our horses.

With kind regards

Hubert Honoré

Chairman, EFTBA

Editorial

In the newsletter 16, in part I of our reflexions on the fate of ex-racehorses, we reviewed the fact that Thoroughbreds are retired from racing at a relatively young age and that many of them are able to start a new or second career. This may sound simple and easy, but in fact, rehoming and retraining also are matters which ask for great professional competence.

With this newsletter, we want to devote ourselves to examples of ex-

traordinary performances of Thoroughbreds in the past and successful second careers of ex-racehorses in different disciplines, both in the past and in our days.

These arbitrarily chosen examples hopefully find your interest and pleasure.

Dr Hanspeter Meier

EFTBA veterinary advisor & Newsletter editor

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. The great versatility of TBs offers many chances for their second career

. For enhancing these possibilities, the creation of a market for such activities is highly advisable

. To preserve the future of an ex-racehorse, owners should do him the favor of retiring while still being sound

"Many thanks to Mrs. Eva-Maria Bucher-Haefner, Moyglare Stud Farm, for her valued sponsorship of this newsletter."



Free Eagle (IRE, 2011) by High Chaparral – Polish Gem (Danhill) bred and owned by Moyglare Stud

Introduction

In part I of the subject of the retired racehorse, we dealt with definitions, historical notes and some exemplary representations of the situation in our days. Now we want to be more practical with successful cases of transition and the positive development in these endeavors. To-day, their progress is already proven by the fact that one prefers to talk of "repurposing" ex-racehorses, contrary to the traditional word "rescuing". Moreover, the awareness did grow remarkably and in advising purchasers of horses, one tells them to put a retirement plan for their animals into their business plan from beginning (Shea 2015). The following representations may hopefully prove the sense of such efforts.

Great performances in the past ...

It is widely and generally acknowledged that thoroughbreds can be used for just about any task and not only for any equestrian activities but also for agricultural work. This already has been proven in the past to a great extent and few examples may illustrate this fact.

In Germany for instance, the Landstallmeister Burchard von Oettingen (1895) occupied himself most seriously with the Thoroughbred and its virtues. In his booklet about the importance of the Thoroughbred in half-bred breeding for instance, already the first chapter is entitled with "The superiority of the Thoroughbred horse". Under this title he not only refers widely to durable and hard horses for riding and the army but also mentions Thoroughbreds as farm-horses in France and England. As an example, he cites William Day (The Horse) who wrote that *"The late Lord Lonsdale used to plough with nothing else but Thoroughbred broodmares at the Links in Newmarket; and the same were used for all purposes on the farm. The late Mr. Thomas Robinson told me he had done the same for many years, and he preferred Thoroughbreds to any other sort for farm-work on account of their faster walk. I have also used them myself, and found that they could do the work as well as cart-horses, and better; while, though living on the same food as the others, their consumption of it was less."*

According to von Oettingen (1895), the dominating position of the Thoroughbred horse in its importance for breeding the noble half-bred horse in Germany did know no parallel. This opinion is also expressed by the Freiherr von Maercken (1911) with the statement that in the 19th century the Thoroughbred had

a victorious triumphal process. "Vollblut" was the solution just about anywhere and the most fabulous wonderthings about this most perfect race were spread (von Maercken 1911).

In regard to the use of Thoroughbreds in equestrian sports, von Maercken (1911) also refers to outstanding performances of some of them, e.g. *Heatherbloom* CAN in the United States (Fig. 1).

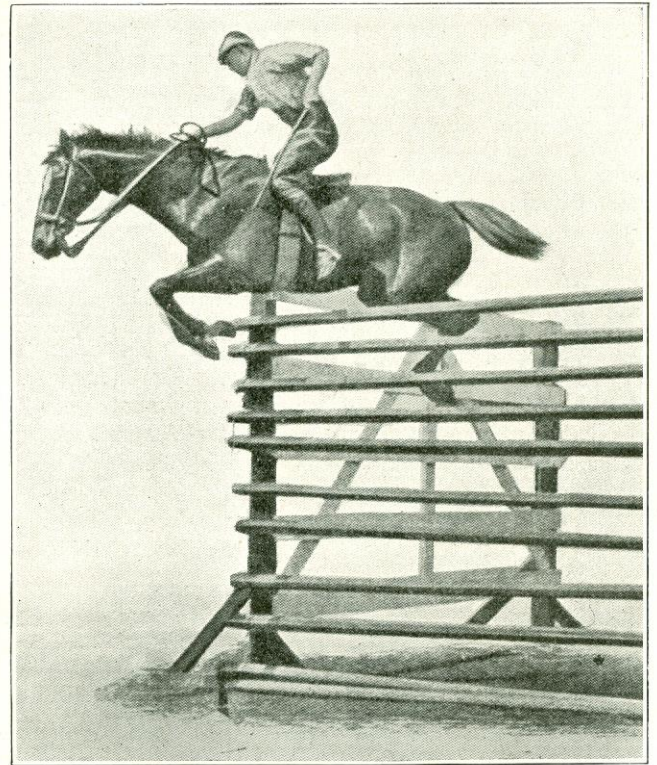


Fig. 1 *Heatherbloom* CAN

Heatherbloom was one of the first Thoroughbreds to achieve fame in show-jumping. He was a Canadian TB, foaled in 1895, owned by Howard Willets of White Plains NY and ridden by Dick Donnelly. Although he was only 16 hands, *Heatherbloom* was an outstanding jumper. His official horse show high jump record was 7'10 1/2", made at Richmond (Virginia). Unofficially he jumped even higher: once in 1902, he cleared 8'2" for a Harper's Weekly photo. Another time he cleared 8'3" at Willets' farm. The official world record in show-jumping (8' 1-1/4", 2.47 m, 1949 in Viña del Mar) belongs to another horse – *Huaso* – but also a Thoroughbred, ridden by Captain Alberto Larraguibel Morales. *Huaso* (1933-1961) was an ex-racehorse.

However, in regard to ex-racehorses in Germany, von Maercken (1911) criticizes the idolatrous praise of the Thoroughbred in the 19th century and mentions that *"for the officers, only those horses were*

available who had been worn out in racing and been disposed of as of inferior value". Moreover he asks, how few Thoroughbreds really do become good riding-horses ? Can poor riding alone be blamed ? He doesn't think so, he much more points out that the dressage of Thoroughbreds is too often done over-hastily, too much is asked and the necessary patience not applied.

In more recent times and in the history of the Olympic Games, we also did encounter successful Thoroughbreds, for a change in another discipline. At the Olympics in Helsinki (1952) and Stockholm (1956) outstanding Scandinavian horsemanship did prevail in dressage twice. The Thoroughbred mare *Julie* and Major Henry St.Cyr from Sweden won the gold medal consecutively, *Jubilee* and Liz Hartel from Denmark the silver medal (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2 Olympic Games Stockholm 1956, Major Henri St. Cyr (Sweden) with the TB-mare *Julie* and Lis Hartel (Denmark) on *Jubilee*

Lis Hartel was paralyzed at the age of 23 by polio but was nevertheless the first woman ever to share an Olympic podium with men (1952). Lis Hartel is widely credited with inspiring the therapeutic riding schools and shortly after winning the Olympic medals, she and her therapist founded Europe's first Therapeutic Riding Center – by the way also a possible task for ex-racehorses.

... and to-day

In the third great equestrian discipline, eventing, an example of our days may prove the great aptitude of Thoroughbreds and ex-racehorses for equestrianism. The arbitrarily chosen example of *Parklane Hawk (NZ)* may serve as an example in eventing for the British team, beside other great performances with victories in the CCI4*-events in Burghley (2011) and Lexington (2012) (Fig. 3 & 4).



Fig. 3 *Parklane Hawk* (ex *Park Lane*, NZ, 2000), by *Grosvenor* (NZ) out of *Deebie Lady* (NZ), with William Fox-Pitt in Burghley 2011 CCI4* (1st place)



Fig. 4 *Parklane Hawk* (ex *Park Lane*, NZ, 2000), with William Fox-Pitt in Badminton 2013 CCI4* (5th place)

Career Statistics Summary of <i>Park Lane (NZ) 2000</i> (<i>Parklane Hawk</i>)							
	Starts	Wins	Seconds	Thirds	Fourths	Fifths	Earnings
Career	19	-	-	2	1	2	\$ 1'875
Flat	13	-	-	1	1	1	\$ 875
Steeplechases	3	-	-	1	-	-	\$ 800
Hurdles	3	-	-	-	-	1	\$ 200

Park Lane wasn't quite the most successful racehorse, but as *Parklane Hawk* he sure is a very reliable and versatile eventer.

The Thoroughbred as champion racehorse and working ranch horse

Historically, we already mentioned the Thoroughbred as a farm horse (von Oettingen 1895), and today we also hear great praises for such individuals (Duckworth 2015): *Cheongnyong Bisang* (KOR) (*Volponi - Miss Alwuhush*) was born in South Korea in 2011, and as two-year-old was named Champion there after winning the Korean Breeders' Cup. He came back the following season to win the KRA Cup Mile, the first leg of the Korean Triple Crown, but was sent to the United States to compete. While in training there he suffered a bowed tendon and had to finish his career with 11 starts and 5 wins (\$ 550'577). He came to 'Gate to Great Horse Creek Thoroughbreds' in South Dakota and was successfully trained there for a second career as working ranch horse (Fig. 5 & 6)



Fig. 6 'Doc Ruel' ex *Cheongnyong Bisang* ex-racehorse - now a working ranch horse in South Dakota (Duckworth 2015)



Fig. 5 *Cheongnyong Bisang* KOR champion two-year-old in South Korea 2013

[http://www.gatetogreat.com/news-and-stories/untracked-mind-blog/cheongnyong-bisang/.](http://www.gatetogreat.com/news-and-stories/untracked-mind-blog/cheongnyong-bisang/)

The retraining, repurposing or reschooling of ex-racehorses

With the examples as above – such successful transitions are possible only thanks to great expertise in providing the necessary education. Both von Oettingen (1895) and von Maercken (1911) already gave their opinions on this issue. The former mentioned the unjustified but nevertheless too often uttered reproach of nervousness of the Thoroughbred. He considers this as a mistake as the racehorse in training is identified with the Thoroughbred. In his experience, the ex-racehorse is thicker-skinned and less nervous than the half-bred horse. Moreover, he points out the recognition that the stronger, more vigorous and robusiter a horse is, the more careful and understanding its handling and education has to be. Von Maercken (1911) did summarize his conviction much more pragmatically with the simple phrase: *“Last not least, Thoroughbreds only can be ridden – hand on heart – by very few riders only.”*

In our days, Cameron (1980) is of the opinion that *“there is no doubt about the people who are willing to provide the ‘happy home’ being known to us as the nicest and kindest people in the world. But do they really know their stuff? Are they really competent horsemasters? No number of lumps of sugar can compensate incompetence and shortcomings.”*

In regard to the education of the working ranch horse, Duckworth (2015) added: *“When horses start serious training, we try to let them set the pace, but they all have the same expectations at the end of it – to willingly do whatever job we ask of them, be it rope a steer, chase a cow through a creek or stand ground-tied while we doctor a calf in a 1'000 acre pasture. Some learn quicker, some learn slower, but we've never had a Thoroughbred drop out of the program. They are so smart and so willing to try anything you ask. Nothing beats a Thoroughbred's heart and try.”*

Further and much more detailed and very useful information, views, comments and advice on the subject of transitioning ex-racehorses for a second career are readily available, e.g. with the book 'Buying and Reschooling Ex-Racehorses' (Coldrey and Coldrey 1997) and nowadays, thanks to the modern IT, we can make use of competent and comprehensive references in the internet, as e.g.:

- Clark Tranquility Farm: www.tranquilityfarmtbs.org
- Heros (Homing Ex-Racehorses Organization Scheme): www.heroscharity.org

- New Vocations: www.horseadoption.com
- RoR (Retraining of Racehorses): www.ror.org.uk
- Second Chance Thoroughbreds, Inc.: www.second-chancethoroughbreds.org
- Thoroughbred Aftercare Alliance: www.thoroughbredaftercare.org
- Thoroughbred Retirement Foundation: www.trfinc.org

Etc. This list just shows some examples but isn't complete at all.

Finally - and once more: soundness

Just as in racing – for a successful career in any further task – soundness is a most important requirement. Shea (2015) therefore refers to comments of Erin Crady, director of the Thoroughbred Charities of America (TCA): *“Call to owners, do your racehorse a big favor – retire him while he's still sound”*. She certainly knows how to talk about this, as TCA was created 25 years ago and in the meantime significant changes in aftercare occurred. Its 'Retired Racehorse Project' e.g. has created major inroads for creating a market for Thoroughbreds among pleasure horse owners. Crady thinks that more and more owners are becoming aware of the amazing versatility of Thoroughbreds, and, once their racing careers are over, that's not the end for them, that's the beginning. *“If you see your Thoroughbred is dropping in class or he is hitting a certain level, try not to just get that one last race, let's retire him while he's sound. He could excel as an eventer, hunter or jumper and there is value.”*

Conclusion

As we have seen, a chaser from New Zealand can find a new home and be a very successful eventer in his second career in Great Britain, and a two-year old champion from South Korea may become a working ranch horse in the USA. Just two examples which allow to notice that in our global industry a mutual understanding for the welfare for ex-racehorses exists.

Very satisfying is also that the fascination for the Thoroughbred as riding horse, as expressed by von Oettingen more than hundred years ago, still (or again) can be noticed in Germany. Right this month (17. – 19. June) in Luhmühlen, Andreas Dibowski won the CCI4*-event on *It's Me*, a 12-year old Thoroughbred and ex-racehorse by *Kahyasi* out of *Itza* (by *Local Suitor*). Dibowski said: *“I still cannot believe it. It is quite incredible. My horse performed exceptionally on all three days. He is not a born*

dressage horse, but on the Cross Country he is outstanding." (Austen 2016).

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Fig. 7 *It's me* (2004), by Kahyasi – out of *Itza* by *Local Suitor*
Winner CC14* in Luhmühlen June 2016, rider Andreas Dibowski (Foto: FEI)

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