

Sport Horse Stallion Performance Test

High scores among a large turnout make the 2004 100-day Federation of North American Sport Horse Registries' Stallion Performance Test the best to date.

By Kyle Karnosh

In August 2004, stallions converged on Paxton Farm in Batavia, Ohio, now the permanent home of the Federation of North American Sport Horse Registries' Stallion Performance Test. The 2004 testing was the largest ever held in North America, with 19 stallions going through the 100-day test, six participating in the 30-day Short Test and two competing in the Sport Pony Test. As a testament to the vitality of American breeding, only six of the 27 stallions participating were imported from Europe.

Also known as "the 100-day test," the purpose of the performance test is to identify a stallion's strengths and weaknesses in a condensed period of time. By the time a stallion is competing at the upper levels, his active breeding years are limited. The test begins with 100 days of rigorous training in dressage and jumping. Testing director Helmut Schrant of Meadow Brook Farm, Ill., and his team of young professional German Bereiters train each stallion in a variety of categories (see sidebar "Performance Test Scoring"). At the end of the training period, there is a final, three-day test in which three outside judges score the stallions.



Galeno Tyme, ridden by Dirk Reichel, was the highest placed horse at the 2004 Stallion Performance Test.
Photo by Reg Corkum

Free Jumping and Gaits Testing

Free jumping kicked off the final test in Paxton Farm's indoor arena on Nov. 11. The judges, Manfred Lopp, Cord Wassman and Dieter Felgendreher, scored each stallion on both technique and capability.

The standout during the free jumping was the gray Oldenburg stallion Galeno Tyme, by Granulit/Barsoi xx. (Galeno Tyme's sire was Granulit and his dam was by the stallion Barsoi xx. The xx after a stallion's name means he is a Thoroughbred.) Galeno Tyme, owned by Jennifer Mosier of Abilene, Kan., scored a 9 in free jumping and went on to be the top scorer in rideability, second in cross-country and overall test champion.

Close behind in free jumping were Rubicon Z (Robin Z/Admiraal Ferdinand) and Cathalido (Calido/Cathargo), then Caleb (Florian/Columbus), Conrad I (Contucci/ Renaldo) and Iconicus (Idocus/Rambo).

The stallions' basic gaits were judged the same afternoon. The test consisted of a very forward walk, trot and canter over set distances. A light drizzle during the event evolved into real rain for the last few rides. Ken Borden, who has owned, ridden and trained the high scoring stallion of the last two Short Tests, gave everyone a scare when his horse, Rubicon Z, spooked at the waving umbrellas in the bleachers and bucked Ken off. There were some tense moments as onlookers waited for Ken to get up, but fortunately, he was not seriously injured and went on to ride all three of his stallions, including Rubicon Z, in the remainder of the testing.

To arrive at an overall score for gaits, the scores for basic gaits were later combined with the scores for gaits during a dressage test ridden the following day. High scores (8s and 9s) went to the impressive Hanoverian, Where's Waldo (Waterford/Warkant), whose pedigree reads like a "Who's Who" of Hanoverian W bloodlines (Weltmeyer, Warkant, Werther), with a little Thoroughbred (Matcho) thrown in. Also scoring high on gaits were Hanoverians Warcloud (Wolkentanz/ Bolero) and Donnerstein

(Donnerhall/ Weltburger), with 7s and 8s.

Testing for Rideability and Temperament

Due to the rain, the guest rider test was moved indoors. George Williams and Susan Dutta, both accomplished U.S. dressage competitors, and Oliver Luze from the stud farm Gestüt Tannenhof in Germany, tested the stallions' rideability. Luze is extremely experienced with young horses and the 100-day test, having previously been a test rider and an assistant training director when the tests were held in California.

The guest rider test is very important and often foreshadows the final results. Many people believe the 100-day test simply evaluates a stallion's dressage and jumping talent. However, almost 50 percent of the total score comes from a stallion's rideability, character, willingness to work and temperament. Thus, the performance test penalizes stallions that may lack the temperament required to produce good riding horses, something the competition path does not always achieve.

Each rider is given five minutes to ride and evaluate a stallion. Frequently, stallions that have appeared to be scoring well in the final test up to this point suddenly fall in standings, while stallions that previously didn't attract much attention, soar to the top. Weltanzer (Weltmeyer/Bolero) and Palladio (Calletto I/Samber) were very rideable and were scored well from all three riders. The 5-year-old stallion Galeno Tyme really shone in this portion of the testing. He easily offered Luze four or five steps of passage, which is unusual for young stallions in the performance test.

That Galeno Tyme would score well in jumping was not a complete surprise, as his grandsire is, after all, the great jumping sire Grannus, while his other grandsire is Ramiro Z. The remainder of his pedigree is also interesting as his dam's sire is the Thoroughbred stallion Barsoi xx, known mostly to breeders in this country as the sire of Beth Ball's Pan American Games horse, Bolshoi. Perhaps the combination of Barsoi and Ramiro produced Galeno's outstanding rideability. His high rideability scores, combined with an equally outstanding jumping scores, assured Galeno Tyme a top spot in the results.



Ublee, winner of the 30-day Short Test, is ridden cross country by his owner Ken Borden.

Photo by Reg Corkum

For most of his test, 5-year-old Hanoverian stallion Drachen Herz (Donavan/ First Albert xx) appeared quite content to go around in a longer, lower-level frame. But when Luze mounted and asked him to carry himself, suddenly he looked like an upper level dressage horse. People were asking, "Who is that horse?" He also went very well for rider George Williams. Conrad I appeared quite content to do whatever was asked of him as well.

Jumping Under Saddle and Cross-Country

The second day was the dressage presentation and jumping under saddle. Originally scheduled outside, the previous day's rain forced a move indoors. In the afternoon, U.S. guest rider Michael Dennary and Ireland's Greg Mangan jumped the stallions over a course of obstacles.

Unexpectedly, some stallions that scored 5s and 6s in the free jumping, scored better jumping under saddle--and vice versa. A number of stallions scored well in this phase, led by Galeno Tyme. But several horses dealt poorly with the indoor venue, the audience in the gallery and the unfamiliar

riders. Thus, stallions received scores as low as 4.5 for jumping under saddle.

On the final day, the stallions received two scores for the cross-country: one for jumping technique and one for the canter/gallop. Leading the gallop was the Thoroughbred stallion Sea Accounts (Sea Hero xx/Private Account xx), followed by Drachen Herz, Galeno Tyme, Isaiah (Ideal/Fatalist B) and

Warcloud. The high score in jumping technique, as expected, went to Galeno Tyme, followed by Donnerstein and Sea Accounts.

Galeno Tyme emerged from the 100-day test as the overall champion; Caleb was reserve champion.

The Short Test and Sport Pony Test

The ISR/Oldenburg N.A. Registry recently devised the 30-day Short Test as an alternative to the 100-day test. During the Short Test, a stallion is trained and shown by a rider of the owner's choice. The owner is given a training and conditioning schedule that will prepare his horse to join the others in the 100-day test during the last 30 days. Only the ISR/Oldenburg N.A. recognizes the Short Test.

For the third time, the top-scoring stallion in the Short Test went to one of Ken Borden's stallions. This year, it was Ublee (Opus/Orpheus), whose sire won the Short Test with Borden in 2000.

With the tremendous boom in sport pony breeding in North America, it was only a matter of time before performance testing for ponies was instituted. This year, two ponies completed the 30-day test. The sport pony stallion, F.S. Daily Hero, impressed everyone with his overall type, good gaits and a free-jumping ability that rivaled the big horses.

Now that stallion performance testing has established a history and the trainers having the testing down to a science, stallion owners have a better understanding of the testing process and more realistic expectations and are more satisfied.

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Read the entire article on 100-day testing in *Dressage Today's* March 2005 issue.