

While You Were Sleeping

How the American Breeder has been stripped of their status and rights in international rankings and the marketplace—revised 2/2016

While we have been sitting by, carrying on our work as usual, we have been systematically robbed of our status, history, and place in the international sport horse community. Make no mistake, we have let this happen; we are naïve and under educated and under armed for the battle that has overwhelmed us. Before we even realized we were in a war, we have been stripped of our heritage, our products and our market share. And what makes this situation far worse is it is *us* that has let the proverbial fox into the hen house, handed the fox the key and even helped the fox carry out our chickens.

The breeders of sport horses in this country are more aware of this plundering than the riders, owners and competitors—mainly because it is our breeders that have had their income slashed, their stock ignored, and their stallions by-passed in the rush to breed and buy ‘European’. Our industry has been devastated by this bloodless coup. In a cultural massacre carried out by our socialist European cousins, who have come here for the easy pickings, and they have walked away with most of what we have. And we welcomed them, and aided them, and continue to do so, and all the while they are mocking us and denigrating us and calling us stupid and uncultured. I am kidding, right? No, sadly, the situation is worse than that. And most of us don’t even recognize what has happened—indeed I am sure some of you are thinking I am not only exaggerating but making things up, or that I have a humongous chip on my shoulder. But stick with me and I will provide you some facts you will find hard to dismiss.

While I was thinking about what has occurred here and how to present it to you I kept getting the image of a cowbird in my mind. Specie of bird, *Molothrus Ater*, the Cowbird is categorized as a brood parasite. The Cowbird at breeding time carefully watches other specie birds; it waits until another specie of bird has built its nest and laid its eggs, and when that bird leaves the nest to get some food, it is then the observant cowbird zooms in and lays its own eggs among the host bird’s eggs. Cowbirds usually hatch early and have a size advantage from the start, so they get more of the food the host mother brings. The unsuspecting host bird does not recognize the danger to its own young, and so it feeds the demanding big chicks like they are its own. Before too long the cowbird chicks become strong enough to begin to push the other smaller young out of the nest to their death, thereby completely taking over the nourishment



income. And the hood-winked host bird ends up raising the invader’s young instead of its own.

[The brown headed Cowbird, photo taken and made available for public use by www.naturespicsonline.com]

There is a strong and remarkable analogy here in our American sport horse experience provided by the example of the cowbird.

For it is into our domestic sport horse nest that the powerful foreign government owned and operated sport horse registries have come and set up bases, which have grown even stronger with the

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WBFSH (World Breeder Federation for Sport Horses) set in place as its chief cowbird. The American breeds are in contrast less powerful, because they are simple registries, with no government support; instead they are run and funded by their individual members. And in the modern day scene it sure looks like our premier domestic sport breeds have been pushed totally out of the nest and been cut off from the sport horse arena by the steam rolling of the foreign government products. They play the game with totally different rules than our free-enterprise system entities. Therefore it is high time the American breeder woke up, and remedy the situation before it is too late, because the structures are now in place to *permanently* block the American breeder and their sport horse from the international field and market place—and it is sickening to realize that they have accomplished this with our own dollars and assistance.

The World Breeding Federation for Sport Horses organization began benevolently enough with an idea of England's Princess Anne, when she began talks with the other sport horse breeding countries of Europe in 1988. The outcome of this was seen in 1992 when the 'World Breeding Championships' came about. However, do not be confused by the name, as the 'world' in their titles means the *participating breed societies* in their organization. Words are powerful, and this title was surely picked to add to this establishment's influence and prestige. In 1994 the WBFSH was established with organized rules which automatically eliminate you, the American breeder of sport horses, from the 'world' rankings.

Okay, you might think, so what's the big deal, the Brits and the Europeans got together and made a federation—so what? Here's what: Over the years this organization has joined with the FEI—which is the official overseer of the Olympic and international competitions, and *together* they put on the 'World Breeding Championships' – but guess what? Your horses, Americans breeders, are not included, you are not part their 'world' and will never be, not unless you either form an organization that they *approve of*, and follow their rules, and then pay them for the privilege to join their 'world' or if you sell your breeding rights to one of their own 'world' registries. "The WBFSH generally promotes the common interests of its member studbooks and acts as a representative body for the sport horse breeding sector."(www.wbfsch.org). In case you have not noticed, your breeds are not permitted crosses in those member registry's allowed bloodlines either. In practice then the regulations and philosophies result is that unless you (your breed registry) are part of their exclusive club your horse is not included in the 'world' results. And their organization does not approve non-European model type registries as members either—go to their website and pull up their rules—your American registry does not qualify, and even if it did in principle, it would still have to run the gauntlet of their administrators to be approved. Therefore, if you do not do it their way then you don't get to play! Their game—their rules.

And here is some news for the American breeder—they think we are fools. My first wake-up to how the organized and government controlled European breeding program viewed us was published in "Breeding News for Sport Horses" in April of 2003, which is the trade journal of this very same *World Breeding Federation for Sport Horses*. I was a subscriber at the time and was shocked at the way the editors (and therefore WBFSH) portrayed us. They said we were uncultured and warmongers; that we were a materialistic people, and we could not breed anything of consequence—because we did not have the *centuries of experience* that they do and because of our cultural deficits we don't have the mindset to pull it off anyway. They said that we were disorganized and did little breeding, and to make up for this shortfall we just buy what we want, even implying we just appropriate the products of the countries that have taken *centuries* to build up their premier sport horses. Realize this 'centuries of sport horse

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production' is a huge misrepresentation because what they actually bred for centuries was a draft horse—a farm horse, but we, the gullible Americans, swallowed their propaganda for years—we believed them! Even in my relatively ignorant place at that time in regards to our own history in equine production and what the Europeans had actually been breeding for centuries, I was stunned by the vitriol of their confidently delivered comments. Of course I wrote to them, canceled my subscription, and stopped breeding European right then.

That editorial was published after the onset of the Iraq War, and they confidently then labeled us as warmongers. Ironically, it was their self-righteous editors of this WBFSH missive that forgot their own history, because it is Europe that holds the world record of warmonger—it is these same countries that brought us not one, but two WORLD WARS, in which the Americans spent our own lives and resources, even when we did not want to participate in their stupid infighting, but finally America had to enter to protect our allies England and France, and Holland, which is where this very same WBFSH is based. Evidently they also forgot that they were conquered mercilessly by their German cousins, stripped of their liberties (and their sport horses!) and they (Holland) along with France and England, all gleeful members of this organization, would have been German annexes today if we, the uncultured Americans, did not come to their rescue. Here is a further irony: we, the unsophisticated Americans, at the close of WWII had the decency to protect and rescue the horses of Europe—our own Third Army posted guards and supplied food and care to the horse farms and stables they found, and returned to the countries when possible their stolen horses—entire European breeds were saved from extinction by the action of the Americans and their allies. At the close of the war the horses of Europe were starving to death and were being looted and slaughtered by the ravenous Germans for food, while at the same time the Russians were looting and slaughtering any equine populations they came upon to feed their overextended armies and populace. Without our uncouth intervention (and that of Canada and England in their zones) there would not have been any stock left to build into the post-war warmbloods that are the base of this very same federation. We need to learn our own history.

After thirty years of pedigree database building and research, article writing, and historical research I have discovered our true equine history and performance is not at all like our European cousins would have us portrayed. I have written extensively about this in my books in order to give you, the American breeder, back the glorious heritage of our equine community. But for those of you who have not read them, here are some base facts for you: the American breeders have been producing a top *international sport horse* since the mid-1800s, that is more than one-hundred years longer than our critics can truthfully brag about. Not only have we produced the top three racehorse breeds in the world—the Quarter Horse, the Standardbred, and the *American* Thoroughbred—which is genetically different from every other Thoroughbred population, but our Hunter- bred sport horses (what you might call warmblood today) took top honors regularly on Europe's soil in this same time frame---and have continued to do so right up to this day. And did you realize that not only do our three racing breeds hold the top rank internationally in their respective forms (sprint, mid- gait, classic length flat) but our Quarter Horse is the most popular breed in the world—there are more registered QHs than any other breed—pretty amazing that such an uncultured people that populate a relatively new country could hold the WORLD title in so many categories of horse sport.

But it is these WBFSH member registries that hold top world rankings in Olympic style sport, right? Well, how do you know? You are getting skewed information again—'world rankings' that are published far and wide only means *their own* closed members rankings, which is their *own European* groups. which of course means that you, the American breeder and the horses you produce, unless you have sold your

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breeding rights to the Europeans so that your international horse is carrying a foreign brand on its hip (building their rankings not ours), then you don't count at all—because non-member breeds are not included in the 'world' rankings. It is a pretty slick game they have set up, and it is at a point now that they believe they can rule all world equestrian sport and the breeding of our sport horses—and you the American breeder has been boxed in to amateur status—a non-starter—because you do not 'qualify'.

[Graf Ferry, a dynasty head of top sport performance in the German Thoroughbred and the German Warmblood, he is 32% American Running Horse! – image provided by Wiki Commons.]



I have been aware of the condescending attitude directed at the Americans for some time, but over the years I have come to realize just how organized and malevolent this policy of pillaging our market has been. If it was really a two

way street with the European registries that operate here, then our true sport breeds, such as the Morgan, Standardbred, Saddlebred, Quarter Horse, our Hunter-bred sport horses—all breeds that are represented in international competitions and make up the genetics of our Hall of Fame horses and international champions, would be among the allowed crosses in their studbooks—in their own countries all their own and also their neighbors sport breeds are in the 'allowed' status. And the unrealized aspect of this is that their horses are already carrying a significant portion of American sport breeds in their genotype anyway—yet they shun our breeds like they are a lesser product. When in fact without the speed and athleticism provided via ours and the British breeds, these farm-horse based breeds would still be pulling a plow. But it is even worse, because of this assault on our market and minds our own breeders and competitors also then think our horses are lesser in sport talent—which is a stunning propaganda achievement for them and proof of our utter gullibility. I don't have the space to go into the American lines that are powering even those same WBFSH breeds because it is quite a story in itself – such as you can see in the example of Graf Ferry—with is 1/3 American Running Horse (this is information you will find in my books: *North American Sport Horse Breeder* 2013, *Legacy of Lexington* 2015 and possibly out next year: *Standardbred Sport Horses*).

How do we remedy this? By educating ourselves first and then taking the appropriate actions to insure that international sport remains open to all that want to participate.

There is a basic cultural difference between our European cousins and us—their horse breeding, training and competitions are government enterprises, while in America it is an individual pursuit. In their registry

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programs it is the administrators and the inspection judges that hold the power in the breeding decisions, so it is the registry bureaucrats who decide if your horse qualifies, if your stallion can hold a breeding license, if your mare can enter the stud book and at what level etc. In contrast, in American breeds it is performance and pedigree that rule—therefore the breeding decisions and power still resides with the breeder—not the registry. Try to see this; it is important to understand these differences. Our American model is totally different in concept from the get-go, resulting in a process and experience that is dissimilar. In Europe (WBFSH) the bureaucrats hold the power—the administrators and inspectors and judges, versus in America it is pedigree and performance, and the breeder calls the shots. So I ask you, do you really want to turn over to the Europeans the control of your product? Because if we continue to do nothing this is the inevitable outcome of their conquest in the world sport horse industry.

The vast divergence of philosophy, which at its root is political (socialism versus democracy), has provided not only a base lack of understanding and respect, but also the means to conquer our industry and market. Our democratic system, while attractive to them on one level, on another they see as a weakness, and one that they can and have exploited. Because we are democratic we have hosted the foreign government's sport horse breeding registries here, *with no concessions required from them*. This has allowed them to set up their registries, promote them, advertise them in all their forms and gradually take our best stock and most of our breeding dollars from us—while we just stood there and not just let them, but like the host bird mother to the invading Cowbird chicks in her nest, we have helped and nurtured them and brought them along as our own. But even more predatory, while they incorporate all the light sport breeds of Europe in their 'allowed' strains, here in our sport horse nests, with the exception of certain Jockey Club registered TBs, their studbooks have been closed to our sport breeds. So they have taken and taken from our bounty and given nothing back, they came to our table, demanded the best and got it, and then systematically blocked our breeders from dining with them.



[The Cowbird egg deposited into an Eastern Phoebe nest, where it will hatch first, get the greater portion of food and eventually push out the other smaller Phoebe young. Photo by and made available for public use by Galawebdesign.]

For prospective, because the WBFSH's published stance (editorial) is that the European has the centuries of experience in sport horse production and that the Americans know nothing about breeding and are basically

too ignorant to develop breeds on our own, we need first to look at some relevant history in sport horse production. I will try to keep this short, just giving some outline—if you are interested in the full back story and documentation I refer you to my books.

In North America we have been breeding a horse for sport since the colonial days, first a racehorse—this was the Running Horse and it existed as a breed until the early 1900s—that's 300 years, when the last

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remnants were absorbed into its descendant breeds—it is the base breed of all our sport horses. Racing was our first and most enjoyed sport in colonial days and it remained so right on through to our modern era, when its first place was then supplanted by the modern ‘team’ sports. But Americans didn’t stop at just a creating a fine racehorse (Running Horse), for by 1700 a group of breeders had begun specifically selecting and breeding strains of our racehorse for the Hunter sports, and these sports grew until by the early 1800s all settled areas of America had Hunt Clubs with scheduled competitions and grounds set aside for riding rings, jump areas, cross country courses and race tracks—therefore we have been breeding and performance testing our sport ‘warmblood’ for over 300 years as well. Somehow in our modern era we have forgotten this history. Since those days there has never been a ‘break’ in our sport horse production and we have continued to field international sport horses of all kinds since the mid-1800s, including Hunters (sport horses) from the mid-1800s. So we are not ‘new’ to sport horse breeding, actually we have *always* been sport horse breeders—our first sport horse breed was established in 1624—do the math.

In the meantime it was the political systems in greater Europe—not the individuals, that have controlled their breeding programs, it was first the Royal Studs of the various countries that controlled breeding of fine horses, but later it was the overall governments, which set up centralized studs where the State stood stallions, and gave premiums to the mare owners. This is a system that is still in place—and this is their centuries long experience—not sport horse production, but a *government supervised system for horse production*. And it was the State that decided which breed type would be produced according to the country’s perceived needs. However, and this fact is one that is consistently missed by the typical American, in continental Europe modern sport horse breeding—that is horses bred for show jumping etc. *were not* being bred in these state studs—it was a draft horse and later was carriage horses, and it was in the mid-1900s that a sport horse model was finally ordered. So this ‘centuries of experience’ they confidently hold over us is a sham—it is not true. Racehorse breeding was carried out earlier, but often in a limited manner and its base was most often the English Thoroughbred, alone or mixed with Norman stains—until the mid-1800s when the speed of the American breeds was experienced firsthand in Europe—and this changed everything. American breeds possess more speed than other strains—both our Thoroughbred (resulting in it being banned by England—the Jersey Act) our Standardbred and Quarter Horse; and as any breeder of sport horses will tell you, that no matter the form taken—that all sport performance requires speed and athleticism, and the American breeds have more of both. Science in our day has been providing us with the explanation for this. The speed gene has been discovered recently, and it has been traced to the early racehorse studs of England (and Ireland)—these were the pre-TB racehorse breeds of English Running Horse and Irish Hobby. And guess what Americans? These were the horse breeds imported in the 1600s (before they went extinct in the British Isles) by our sport horse breeders to breed racehorses from. This is why America has more speed in its breeds—its original domestic breed of horse began with the source carrier of that trait, and our talented breeders kept selectively breeding to keep the sport qualities dominant, but all that was forgotten until recently.

In our modern day, the international horse has come to the forefront. And surprise, surprise, American horses, breeders and competitors, were one of the driving forces for this movement.

In 1912 the first modern Equestrian contests appeared in the Olympic Games, ridden by each participating country’s cavalry, the games were based on the cavalry test for horse and rider.

Three years before this landmark occurrence was the debut of the Nations Cup competitions (1909), held

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in partaking countries, contests open for the foreign teams—we hosted the Nations Cup at Madison Square Garden in NY. These competitions have continued to our day.

It was the formalized sport of these two events that exploded the worldwide interest in international sport; however, contrary to common knowledge they were not the beginning of these sports. In the mid-1800s American horses were appearing in England, France, Ireland and elsewhere to compete in Hunter competitions, steeplechasing and the new sport of show jumping. Americans brought over their Hunter-bred horses, and their new Thoroughbreds and Standardbreds to compete with the Europeans in all manner of equine sport, and won so consistently that the English Jockey Club reacted by banning our Thoroughbreds from the studbook for 36 years in an effort to eliminate our breed as competition. (*Legacy of Lexington*)—that fact alone ought to alert you that our breeds carry something precious for sport success.

When talks began about formalizing international competitions—started by Sweden in 1906, America whole heartedly took their part in the process—the outcome of this was the Nations Cup competitions and then the Olympic equestrian games. Thus international equine sport was launched (read more about this in *North American Sport Horse Breeder*).

In contrast we in America have been at this sport horse breeding business so long that besides the recipe-bred sport horse (part-racehorse Hunter—what we call a sport horse or even warmblood today) we have several excellent purebred sport horse breeds. After *hundreds of years of sport horse breeding* America perfected several mixed bred breeds of sport horse and then closed the stud books—I want you to recognize and remember this. But first ask yourself, can a Morgan jump, can it do dressage, can it do 3-day and competitive driving? Of course it can, and very, very well. Can a Saddlebred do the same? Well, yes it can and has proven this by its presence and its performance on several of our international teams, so has our Thoroughbred, our Quarter Horse and surprisingly our Standardbred as well—most modern breeders never remembering that the Standardbred began as a *ridden sport horse*--many of these horses earning not only medals in top sport now and then, but have been USET team horses and some are entered into our Hall of Fame. For example in 2013 the *Quarter Horse* Nautical was entered into the Show Jumping Hall of Fame. Now, here is a new prospective for you to get your mind around: Europe is only getting to this point now, that their breeding is reaching a performance level and consistent breed type that shortly most of their mongrel breeds will be ‘pure-bred’—for instance the Selle Francais, which is really a mix of Trotter—both French and *American*, Thoroughbred (including *American Thoroughbred*) and Anglo-Norman (a mix of TB and Norman Draft), that they have recently begun closing their studbook—breeding back Selle Francais to only Selle Francais. The Trakehner is already closed, the Hanoverian and Holstein are heading that way etc. etc. *But we in America had already reached this point in performance and sport type in the 1800s*—and so besides our Hunter-bred sport horse we also have multiple breeds that are all top sport horse sources, and actually carry far more sport genes than those farm-horse based breeds do. That is why you will find copious amounts of not only the English Thoroughbred in the European product background, but surprisingly significant amounts of American Running Horse and later our Thoroughbred, our Trotter and later our Standardbred—because their farm-horse based breeds needed speed and athleticism to become sporting—their draft horse base did not have the ability to perform at sport until it received the true sport breeds into its gene pool. It is a wonderful enlightenment you gain when you learn equine history and stop listening to the current industry ‘wisdom’ and lore.

But you say, yeah, but their breeds are leading the world rankings and ours are not. You are forgetting that our breeds are not included in the ‘world’ rankings, *world* being an intentional misnomer, and that

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shortly our sport breeds will be blocked from even competing in the international arena through this aggressive European plan for dominance. So if the Morgan people want their winnings to count in those bogus ‘world rankings’ they would have to join the WBFSH—which means not only apply and pay the fee, but be approved by the Europeans, which is not a sure thing at all, actually they would probably be rejected—are you getting the picture yet? Our pure-bred sport horse breeds, which have been *competing in Hunter Sports for centuries and in international competitions since they began, would not be accepted into the European club*. My own sport horses, even those who make international points are never included in these ‘world’ rankings either. Neither is yours—that is unless you have sold your rights to them by registering your American-bred sport horse in their registries. It is way later then you think—they really believe they have the game wrapped up now—and it sure appears like they do. But ask any student of the Titanic disaster and they can tell you that appearances are funny things.

So it is, that today in the sport horse world, it sure looks like we have been totally and completely shut out by the sly and cunning moves of our remarkable European cousins and our own apathy, ignorance and naiveté. But it is not over, and now that we are waking up from our slumber, we will fight back, and reverse the bad rules, and we will *return an open market to the sport horse venue*. It is the very essence of sport that it is ‘open’—to have it closed and controlled by a limited group is in of itself *UNSPORTSMANLIKE*.