Movado

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PHOTOS BY JERRY SPARAGOWSKI

Scottsdale, February 2003. The temperature soars to over 30ºC. In the ring, a group of champion geldings awaits the judges' final decision, and the crowd watches with bated breath after cheers for the Reserve Champion have died down. The announcer draws out the tension - usually a little hint is thrown out, a teaser, just before he announces who the Champion is. The microphone clicks on ... and strains of *O Canada* waft over the speakers. That's it! The elegant chestnut gelding Movado has just captured the 2003 Scottsdale Open Champion Gelding. It is the first time a Canadian-bred horse has captured this Championship in the 48-year history of the show.

"There were people (other Canadians) who came up to me later and said they'd had tears in their eyes," says breeder and owner Ed Friesen. "From the day he was born, he was a special horse. Even when he was a baby out in the pasture, he was picked out by visitors as a favourite."

Movado was born and raised at Friesen's Wunderbar Arabians in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. His dam Cindra is a daughter of one of Wunderbar's foundation mares, Classique Design, who was admired by many people throughout North America for her beauty. Cindra has produced other champions such as Brooklyn Bey (x NV Beau Bey), Region 17 Champion Two Yr. Old Filly in 2002. Her fourth foal, born in the spring of 2003, is the promising colt Jullyandro WA (x *Jullyen El Jamaal). It was her first breeding, to Versace, which produced Movado.

"We were one of the very first to breed to Versace," Ed explains. "The beauty and type of Versace as an individual and (later) what he was producing had attracted us. We bred to him as a two year old and a number of mares as a three year old, and are again awaiting a Versace foal for the spring." Wunderbar's stallion Couturier is also a Versace son. Both colts did very well in the yearling Sweepstakes classes, with Couturier and Movado as Region 6 Champion and Region 17 Reserve Champion respectively. Another Wunderbar-bred Versace colt, Extreme, was also Region 6 Champion Sweepstakes Gelding, so the cross has worked out very successfully for the farm. Movado was considered a stallion prospect, but unfortunately tested positive as an SCID carrier and the decision was made to geld him.

Movado's sire line needs little introduction. Proof of quality is perhaps best summed up in the 1987 US Nationals when Bey Shah was sire of both National Champion Mare (Shahtyna) and National Champion Stallion, Fame VF, Versace's sire. Versace himself was a US National Top Ten Heritage Sweepstakes Colt (1996), Region 12 Champion Stallion (1998), and US National Top Ten Futurity Colt (1998).

Movado's own halter wins culminated this year in the Scottsdale Championship, the Canadian National Reserve Champion Open Gelding, and a top ten at the US Nationals. Halter training at Wunderbar is entrusted to Chiquhino Rego, who led Movado to his recent Canadian and US National wins, and their halter horses in training are worked and schooled under the careful hand of Lucho Guimaraes. Wunderbar uses various different conditioning methods, such as ponying, riding (if the horse is started under saddle), and lunging.

"Variation is so important," Ed says, "because different methods will condition different muscles. They also get several hours of turnout time every two or three days, though we do have to limit this somewhat so that the coat doesn't bleach out. They are rinsed down and groomed every day."

It seems that the big chestnut gelding is truly a part of the family. Daughter Maegan is a huge fan of Movado – of all the horses on the farm, he is her favourite. Together they placed third this year in the Arabian In-Hand Geldings of 1999 & Before JTH class at Scottsdale. "He always gets a treat or some attention from her when she goes by his stall," says Ed. "And our grandson Bailey takes every chance he gets to sit on his back, even when Movado's walking from the barn to the arena, or from his stall to the hot walker. He knows there's a little guy on his back. He has an extra careful step."

When asked what he believes makes Movado such a special horse, Ed has a ready answer. "He is, first of all, a very correctly conformed *horse*. Then, in addition to that, he also has excellent Arabian type. It's not uncommon to have one or the other, but to have both is what really makes him special." Rick Moser, a carded Arabian judge for many years and a well-respected member of the Arabian horse community, agrees. Rick was one of the judges at Scottsdale 2003, and he liked what he saw as soon as Movado stepped into the ring. "He had a lot of presence and nice motion. He's a very correct horse, with a lot of nice size and substance. He looks like he's an athlete."

It is the athletic portion of Movado's career which will be focused on in 2004. Last year saw him doing some 'prep work' under saddle with Todd Ehret, but the focus was still on halter. "For Movado, coming in at that time (March 2003), it was worked out to give him some under saddle show experience and not interfere with the halter plan," says Todd.

Their first class under saddle was at the Westerner show, in Arab Hunter Pleasure Jr. During that class Todd's stirrup leather broke, and he had to call a time-out to try to fix it. By the end of the class he was holding his stirrup in his hand in the lineup. But they won the class, and finished the year as Region 17 Champion Hunter Pleasure Jr. Horse of 2003.

The focus now is to finish Movado's last Junior year as a hunter. "He's very trainable. He is the sweetest horse. He has this huge, beautiful soft eye and he's very easy to have around." Todd's enthusiasm for Movado shows in the easy way that the praise rolls off his tongue. "Really good attitude, handles new things well ... Easy keeper, loves his food ... He bats those big fawn eyes at you and it's really hard not to slip him a few extra treats. This horse has so much quality and presence that he'd look good no matter where he went."

Lest you think this horse is perfect, he does have one annoying habit. "Movado loves to destroy his blankets. He grabs the chest piece and pulls. He just shreds them! It's his one little quirk," says Todd. "He entertains himself." Ed is not so forgiving. "Oh," he says with exasperation and a smile in his voice. "He is *so* hard on blankets. It just drives me nuts."

Movado will again be going back to Ehret's facilities on March 1st, 2004, and on to the Canadian and US Nationals in Hunter Pleasure. Todd says he looks forward to having him back and adds, "Our plans are to take him as far as he'll go."