

TOGETHER They STAND

The South German Stallion Approvals and Auction

A Warmbloods Today author travels to Munich to experience first hand how the auction and approvals work in Germany's South.



By Ann Daum Kustar

What do you get when you combine 79 of the best three-year-old stallions in Germany, five Warmblood registries working together (that's right, working together!) to license and sell them, and a whole lot of Bavarian beer? The South German Stallion Approvals and Auction in Munich held this past January 27th to the 29th.

For those familiar with German stallion approvals, many of the sights and sounds are familiar... the gleaming baby stallions freshly braided each day, wide-eyed as they puff up into huge extended trots; leggy handlers racing alongside the stallions in their matching sweatshirts, white pants and running shoes, knees pumping up as rhythmically as the stallions'; beer stands doing a brisk business well before noon; and the elbow-to-elbow crowd filling the stands to see the judges finally announce "Gekört" or "Nicht Gekört" (approved or not approved).

REGIONS UNITE

Now what makes this approval and auction unique is the variety of brands decorating the stallions' left hips. Instead of a licensing for a single breed registry with like-minded registry officials choosing which colts will become the future sires of that breed, this licensing is a cooperative event, bringing together breeders, buyers and registry officials from five different regions.

Unique in Germany, this cooperative effort really personifies the age-old story... the little guy struggling to compete with the big guys. For the small breeding

districts of southern Germany, this has traditionally meant that the bigger breeding districts up north, i.e. the Hanoverians, Holsteiners and Oldenburgs, are able to bring in the big bucks at their auctions, then send their horses all around the world, promoting their name even more. But who's ever heard of a Thuringen, a



AT RIGHT TOP: Ann's favorite photo of the event. Captain Kirk, the jumping champion now standing at the Zweibrücken State Stud, Captain Fire x Golden Joy J, pictured with his breeder, Jakob Schrötzlmair. Photo by Maximilian Schreiner

BOTTOM: View of the whole arena where stallions and auction horses are presented in Munich. Photo by Ann Daum Kustar

Sachsen, or a Brandenburg?

Add the fact that regional distinctions between Warmblood 'breeds' are disappearing. The big name stallions and best producing mother-lines, or stamms, are a staple in nearly every breeding district in Germany now. The Diamond Hits, Stedingers and Contenders born in Bavaria, Rheinland Pfalz-Saar or Baden-Württemberg, for example, lack nothing in comparison to their northern cousins except a bigger price tag and a ready road to an international market.

Faced with these facts, and the prospect of dwindling financials, directors from the small breeding districts of Baden-Württemberg, Bavaria, Rhineland-Pfalz-Saar, Hesse (ponies), Saxony and Thuringia joined forces to create the Southern German Breeding Association (AGS). Brandenburg-Anhalt jumped on board in 2009 making the South Germans the second largest breeding association in Germany with 13,500 mares (the Hanoverians have 19,000).

Don't be fooled by the name. This cooperative organization geographically now covers about 75% of Germany, from the Rhine river valley in the west, nearly all the way to ports on the Baltic Sea. The South German breeding association shares borders with seven different European countries: Belgium, Luxembourg and France in the west, Switzerland and Austria to the south, and Slovakia, Poland and the Czech Republic to the east. The stallions, too, travel from all over Germany to take part.

"Every registry has its own functioning team and organization here. We just put a big, common roof over everybody," says Thomas Münch, marketing director for the South Germans. This 'roof' now puts on not only the

South German Stallion Approvals and auction in Munich in January, but also an elite foal auction in summer, and multiple smaller auctions for south German horses throughout the year. The January auction and approval is particularly popular with dressage riders looking for young horses ready for spring materiale classes, as well as stallion owners who want to give their two-year-old colts a little more time to grow up, as opposed to being prepped early for the fall approvals.

A truly international mix of breeders, riders, trainers and enthusiasts fill the stands. American rider and breeder Karin Reid Offield, whose dressage superstar stallion Ligh now stands at the Bavarian stud Gestüt Birkhof, was excited by the variety and number of young stallions. "I've seen so many nice horses today," Karen says. "And it's wonderful to come to an area that has really open arms. It's kind of like the American Midwest, which is really welcoming. Certain areas in Germany are like that - genuinely happy to see you!"

The Munich stallion approvals is now in its eighth year, and the quality, as well as numbers, is truly impressive. With bloodlines reading like a who's who from the top of breeding and sport, the young stallions' gaits and free jumping kept the crowd cheering and music pumping in the glass-sided stadium best known for hosting the equestrian events for the 1972 Olympic Games.

BIDDING EXCITEMENT

Out of more than five hundred two-year-old stallions presented at various pre-selection sites, 79 were allowed to attend the approvals and auction, and in the end, 32 were approved by a panel of judges made up of

breeding directors for each registry involved, as well as one jumping and one dressage expert. Thirteen stallions made premium status, and fifty were sold at auction the day after their approval. Catalog #39, an elegant dark chestnut Fidertanz x Wolkentanz II-Sixtus colt, sold to Swiss Olympic dressage rider Christine Stückelberger. Professional riders, dealers, breeders and registries representing Germany, the Ukraine, Switzerland, Australia, South Africa, and Libya spent 1,564,700 Euros in Munich, for a sale average per stallion of 31,294 euro.

Early in the auction a hush fell

LEFT: Judges confer with one another during stallion evaluations. Photo by Ann Daum Kustar



over the crowd when bidding reached 95,000 euro on the reserve champion for dressage, a powerfully built black stallion sired by Dr. Doolittle x Rubin Royal–Rothenburg J. The auctioneer held the silence up until the next bid raised the price to 100,000 euro. The crowd let loose with cheers and clapping, the stallion snorted fire and trotted even bigger, and a new runner took over the reins from the panting handler. The hammer fell at 150,000 euro, earning the Dr. Doolittle colt honors as the high-selling stallion of the auction!

The jumping champion, a golden-bay powerhouse by Captain Fire x Golden Joy J, brought 70,000 Euro, and will be standing at the Zweibrücken state stud in 2011, along with the approved son of Florestano x Laudatio. The Marbach state stud of Baden-Württemberg snapped up the Premium Reserve II stallion, a son of Quarterback x Paradiesvogel, for a final bid of 100,000 euro.

But while 100,000+ euro price tags for some of the Premium stallions were exciting to watch, the real values of the South German auction may have been the other sixteen approved stallions, as well as those who were not approved. Many approved stallions near the middle and end of the auction sold between 15,000 to 21,000 euro. Riding horse prospects (non-approved stallions) brought between 7,000 to 25,000 euro. Even with the weak dollar and import cost, that's a good price for a top young prospect for sport, already x-rayed, in flawless condition, and usually started under saddle.

SOUTHERN ADVANTAGES

"The beauty of this auction is that you find all the same bloodlines, but at a better price," says Susanne Lauda, North American representative for the Baden-Württemberg registry. "You can find everything at this auction from top dressage prospects to future international jumpers to absolutely top hunters for the American market."

The Baden-Württemberg registry was proud to sport their brand on the champion dressage stallion approved this year—an impressive black son of San Amour x Cabaret—Campari M. Last year's dressage licensing stallion also wore the Baden-Württemberg brand. So you see, regional pride is alive and well, even in this alliance of breeds!

Sabine Reisenauer bred the San Amour son who brought in top honors this year. Like many German breeders, she breeds just two or three foals a year and

usually sells her prospects at foal auctions. The San Amour colt was sold as a foal to Harald Kocher, who raised him in a pasture just down the road from her house before preparing him for the Munich approvals. Even before Munich, his qualities were appreciated when he was presented as an exemplary young horse at the German Masters in Stuttgart. "This colt was born a champion," Sabine says. "He never underwent the ugly-duckling stage that most foals do, and his first trot step was already impressive."

Sabine, like the vast majority of southern German breeders and trainers, is thrilled that the southern registries have joined forces as it gives individual breeders a much wider stallion selection and better exposure to potential buyers.

But what about the fate of the regional Warmbloods of Germany—will cooperative selections homogenize the unique characteristics of the Bavarian, Zweibrücker, or Baden-Württemberg horses bred in these regions for centuries?

Most breeders and registry officials seem to accept (even embrace) these changes, even while holding on tight to regional pride in their horses' accomplishments. The current trends in Germany, to favor microchipping over branding and for mare owners to choose the most popular and successful stallions regardless of region or brand, reflect this change in the German breeding scene.



AT RIGHT, TOP: Puerto Rico, the premium stallion now standing at Zweibrücken state stud, by Peking x Contender – Coriander.

Photo by Maximilian Schreiner

BOTTOM: An approved stallion Swarovski x Weltmeyer – Abraham. He was one of the higher selling stallions that sold for 115,000 euro to a buyer in South Africa. Photo by Ann Daum Kustar

"When you look at the results at big international shows, you see Dutch, Danish, French, Belgian horses, but no 'German' horses—just Holsteiners, Hanoverians, and so on," Thomas Münch explains. "Germany is broken into too many individual pieces. Fifteen years from now there will be only one German sporthorse."

GETTING ALONG

Is the cooperative approval process always cooperative though?

Thomas Münch says the registries work well together overall. "Obviously, there is sometimes a clash, based on the mentality of the different regions. But it also adds experience and different points of view. They still need to grow together, even tighter than they are now."

Jürgen Casper of Gestüt Birkhof, the biggest private

EC-approved insemination station in southern Germany, laughs. "They agree, but they also fight. But in the end, these are really horsemen, and the best horse will get the license." He should know—Gestüt Birkhof presented two sons of their 2007 South German licensing champion Don Diamond (Diamond Hit x Carolus I) out of Heraldik xx and Damon Hill dams, and both were approved. "For marketing, one big event is better than five small ones," Jürgen says. "Clients from other countries have one place to come and see a lot of good horses together."

One of the five judges on the South German committee, Hans-Willy Kusserow, breeding director of the Pferdezuchtverband Rheinland-Pfalz-Saar (PRPS), explains the judges' decision-making process in evaluating the young stallions, and stresses the

JUDGE'S COMMENTS: An interview with Breeding Director Hans-Willy Kusserow

by Ann Daum Kustar

Hans-Willy Kusserow, Breeding Director of the Pferdezuchtverband Rheinland-Pfalz-Saar, served on the judging commission for the South German Stallion Approvals in Munich, January 27–29, 2011. He opened up his judging notebook to comment on the top four stallions.



#14 – Dressage Champion: San Amour x Cabaret – Campari M

This stallion has a very nice type and good conformation. He's correct with good muscling, and moves from behind in all three gaits. He was special—very free in the front and shoulder. We call this schulterfreiheit, or shoulder freedom,



Photo by Olav Krenz

and at the same time, the back end goes very well under the body. In all movements he shows very good reach. In trot he shows himself with good uphill tendency, and goes very well uphill in trot and canter. The free jumping is okay. He shows very good balance, but you have to know he is a dressage horse, with a dressage pedigree. We still free jump the dressage stallions because it is very important to know their balance. We see that the movement always goes through the whole body. They don't have to jump the last height, but it's important for us that they have good balance. For the jumping horses—they have to be correct, but the canter and free jump are most important. For a dressage horse, it is more important that they have good gaits and character.

I was impressed with this good-looking son of San Amour when he showed a very good mind. He was cool, and he always cooperated with the man beside him. This shows character. I don't need horses which go up and don't look at the person beside them. The entire commission agreed upon the attributes of this stallion.



Photo by Maximilian Schreiner



LEFT: This is the newly approved stallion by Fürst Grandios x Weltmeyer pictured as a foal and later at auction. He was bred by Anja Riss, and he sold to Australia for 21,000 euro. Photos © Anja Riss

says, 'I want to work with you' to his handler, as this promises a very good base for riding. We all agreed on this point."

"It's a kind of democracy," Mr. Kusserow continues. "We each score every stallion, then we discuss a little, then we find an agreement. We all have a lot of experience—I've been scoring horses for more than 20 years, and the same with others on the commission. Every year we see thousands of horses. We use this experience to make decisions that move the breeding goals in a forward direction, toward the best horse we can possibly breed." 

importance of working together for the greater good. "The overall impression of the young stallion is very important, as well as what we saw in the champion stallion—movement that always goes through the whole body," Mr. Kusserow says. "We also look to the young stallions' interior values, because we want to ride these horses in the end. We look for the stallion that

#75 – Jumping Champion: Captain Fire x Golden Joy J – Lincoln

This is a very modern horse with a beautiful face, a wonderful neck, and good muscling in his conformation. He shows himself with a lot of energy, especially in his really excellent canter. His jumping shows a lot of potential, and he is a powerful horse who holds your attention. This stallion brings a very good bloodline, also through his motherline. One of the things we feel is very important in the overall impression of a stallion is the value of the motherline, because knowing this is very important for the breeding of good horses.

#40 – First Reserve: Dr. Doolittle x Rubin-Royal x Rothenburg J

Here we have a very beautiful young stallion with dressage bloodlines. He is a big horse with very good type, a nice face, and if you see him, you know you see a stallion. He is very well developed, his conformation is okay and he is also a very correct horse. His three basic gaits are very good, and he showed himself very well on the final day.

He is a horse that shows "I want to work with you." The lunging is very important for the final decision—the trot and canter, and the balance shown. We also look to the young stallions' interior values, because we want to ride these horses in the end. We also look for the stallion that says, "I want to work with you" to his handler, as this promises a very good base for riding. We all agreed on this point.

#22 – Second Reserve: Quaterback x Paradiesvogel – Kolibri

Here we see a noble horse, and one the audience really appreciates—the people really love him. He is a very modern horse with a truly wonderful neck and face, and eyes that really 'look.' Here we see a stallion with a lot of esprit and presence. In his movement, he touches the ground so softly and shows real expression.

As a commission we must be objective, see all of the qualities of the young stallions and make our decisions for the goal of producing the best horses in the end. ■



Photo by Ann Daum Kustar



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