

Haflinger Sport Horses

The smaller Warmblood

by Mary Procopio

A Brief History

The Haflinger is a European breed of horse that originated in the South Tyrolean region of Italy. Its name is derived from the town of Hafling located there. Although small in stature compared to the typical Warmblood, its heart and spirit are big. Today, Austria is considered to be the home of the modern Haflinger. Contrary to popular belief, the Haflinger is not a draft breed, but traces its origin back to the foundation stallion 249 Folie (b. 1874), sired by the half Arabian stallion 133 El'Bedavi XXII (b. 1868) and a refined native Tyrolean mare. (Some sources also note Folie's sire as being half-Thoroughbred.) In most countries, including the United States, Austria and Canada, all purebred Haflingers must go back six generations with no outcross in order to be registered. Haflingers are striking in appearance since they must be light chestnut to liver chestnut in coloring with a white or flaxen mane and tail.

During World War II, Haflingers were crossed with other horses to provide a smaller, sturdier pack horse capable of carrying weapons and supplies through the mountains. Following the war, Austria began a rigorous selective breeding program to return the breed to its original height and athletic build. Quality breeding is strictly adhered to there, and all breeding stock must pass inspections. Stallions are state owned; mares can be owned by individual breeders. Stud colts are inspected as weanlings, and only those seen as potential stallion candidates are retained. In Austria, stallions and mares go through two additional inspections at one and three years of age. Today there are more than a quarter million Haflingers worldwide and they are used for driving, endurance riding, dressage, hunters, eventing and vaulting along with being a wonderful family horse as well!

Haflingers in America

The first Haflingers arrived in the United States in 1958. While the American Haflinger Registry (AHR) promotes the Haflinger as an all-around family horse ranging from 13.2-15 hands in height, sport horse breeders focus on taller, athletic Haflingers capable of competing and winning in open competition against other breeds. Dedicated breeders



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present their Haflingers for AHR inspection each year. Horses rating 81 points or higher achieve gold status (less than 1% of Haflingers worldwide). Those rating 75 points to 80 points achieve silver status. Elite, Supreme and Star status are awarded

to stallions and mares based on the performance of their offspring at inspections.

In keeping with promoting the Haflinger as a sport horse, several breeders have presented their horses for inspection through the AWS (American Warmblood Society), NASPR (North American Sportpony Registry), and other sport horse performance registries. In 2003, Aristo van de Rijdsdijk owned by Wyldehaven Farm (Florida) received a first premium ranking at his NASPR inspection, becoming the first Haflinger stallion to be approved as an American sportpony. In 2010 Ricola DTA, owned by New Horizons Farms LLC (Michigan) was the gold medal winner (sportpony division) and ranked first in the nation in the AWS National Year-End Inspection Awards Program. Ricola also received the bronze medal as the third highest scoring horse at the Michigan inspection site.

In May 2012, A Gold Review HMF owned by Dreamfield Manor Farm (Pennsylvania) achieved Blue Preferred status with a score of 77.3 points at an AWS inspection held in Pennsylvania, making her the highest scoring Haflinger at that time registered AWS. "Ayla" was awarded the silver medal as the second highest scoring horse at that inspection site. In July 2012, Haflingers topped the AWS inspections in Michigan over several Warmbloods and took the top four placings of the day! The gold medal winner was Aura of Genesis with a score of 78.8 points, followed by silver medal winner Faith by Fire DAF who also achieved Blue Preferred status. Both mares are owned by Genesis Farm (Michigan). The bronze medal went to the Austrian imported stallion, Stellar TVR, owned by New Horizons Haflingers (Michigan) who scored very high Red Preferred, just missing Blue Preferred status.

Less than two weeks after the AWS inspection, Stellar attended the 2012 Weser-Ems/GOV Inspection in Michigan where he made history by becoming the first Haflinger stallion in North America to be approved for breeding through the Weser-Ems Breeder's Society.

Hafingers in Competition

Throughout the United States Hafinger sport horses are holding their own and winning against other breeds with children, amateurs and professionals alike in sport horse venues. In addition to numerous wins in dressage and hunters, in 2010 A Gold Review HMF won the Jumper Itty Bitty Speed round over twenty-nine other

entries and swept the Prudential \$500 Mini Prix Classic at the Bucks County Horse Park (Pennsylvania). On the west coast, imported stallion Maximotion WSF owned by Wingspan Farms LLC (Oregon) won numerous first and second place ribbons at training level dressage in 2011 and is continuing his winning ways at third level in 2012. The gelding Star Wars TOF, owned by Jillian Santi (Washington), was successfully shown at Grand Prix in 2011, the first Hafinger to achieve that level. Jillian and "Star" were

the only pair in 2011 to qualify to ride the Grand Prix Freestyle in Region 6, and they brought home the Northwest Cup for the FEI level with their combined Grand Prix Freestyle and Grand Prix test scores. Avanti of Cedar Lane, owned by Deer Haven Farm (Kentucky), has won more than one dressage championship and several combined training competitions against the "big boys."

In eventing, Anita's Legacy and Melanie Rousseau of Tudor Oaks Farm (Illinois) qualified and competed in the 2009 American Eventing Championships, where in a field of over seventy juniors, they finished twenty-first on their dressage score. In 2010, Melanie and "Anna" again qualified and competed at the American Eventing Championships, once again finishing in the top third of the field on their dressage score. They were in the top four on the USEA National Leaderboard in the Junior Novice division for most of the 2010 competitive season, and they were the Area IV Junior Novice Leading Horse and Rider for 2010. Melanie has already qualified for the 2012 American Eventing Championships by winning two or four events at the Beginner Novice level thus far this year, this time with Heaven Sent TOF, another mare owned by Tudor Oaks Farm. At the Fox River Valley Pony Club Horse Trials, "Flo" finished in a three-way tie on points for first place. Also qualifying in 2010 for the Junior Beginner Novice Championship was American Express FAH and rider Jordan Lane, and Linka ridden by Tess Kelly. In



Photo by Lyle Timmer




Photo by Heidi Forchheimer

Area VII, Waidring SCH (aka "Pippin") with rider Chesna Klimek of Nayborly Farms (Washington) was the 2010 USEF Eventing Association champion at training level. Also in Area VII, Adler's Whisper ridden by Kena Knott has been successfully competing at the Preliminary Level with his young rider since 2010.

Hafingers are also coming out on top on-the-line at dressage sport horse breed shows throughout the country.

Alomar RVM owned by Supplicant's Acres (Ohio) was Champion Mature Stallion at the 2011 Mid Ohio Sport Horse Showcase I & II and won Reserve Grand Champion Stallion in the GAIG/USDF East Coast Breeders Championship at Dressage at Devon. Alomar ranked tenth in the nation in the 2011 Adequan/USDF DSHB HOY mature stallion division. Stellar TVR, owned by New Horizons Hafingers won Reserve Champion colt/gelding at the Bucks County Horse Park DSHB Show, and ranked sixteenth in the nation in the Adequan/USDF DSHB HOY open three-year-old colts/geldings division. Stellar ended 2011 with the highest median score out of all Hafingers competing in open classes at USDF DSHB shows throughout the country. And, for a complete

change of venue, Always Alert GVS, a.k.a. Ollie, a gelding owned by Dreamfield Manor Farm, who is a consistent champion at hunter shows under saddle, entered the Extreme Cowboy Race hosted by Craig Cameron at the 2011 Pennsylvania Horse World Expo "just for fun." Ollie surprised everyone as the wild card entry in the final round by finishing second place out of thirty entries! (You can see Ollie and Chelsea on YouTube at "Always Alert GVS "Ollie" and Chelsea w/Craig Cameron.")

In addition to being versatile and athletic, Hafingers are easy keepers known for their soundness, longevity, intelligence and excellent work ethic. They are quick to learn and very people-oriented. Sport horse breeders pride themselves for producing willing horses with excellent temperaments, rideability and trainability, with gaits that are pure, rhythmic, and powerful. Next time you see a Haflinger at an open competition, feel free to ask us about these "golden mini-Warmbloods" and see for yourself what they can do! 

◀ Opposite page: The mare A "AAA" Review HMF owned by Dreamfield Manor Farm. ▲▲ Above, top: The stallion Maximotion WSF winning at third level dressage, owned by Wingspan Farms LLC, rider Elizabeth Brown. ▲▼ Above, bottom: The stallion Nordtirol jumping over five feet at the 2005 World Show in Austria, owned by the Folenhoff, Ebbs, Austria.