



Angela Pritchard | Photo

70-Day STALLION TEST

BY ADELE FURBY

In August of 2012, I sent my young Shagya-Arabian stallion, Nicolette's Revelation, called "Revel" to Broken Arrow, Oklahoma, to participate in the 70-Day Stallion Performance Test at Silver Creek Farms. Revel went on to successfully pass the test, but it wasn't easy for either him or for me! I actually have myself, plus a few unexpected circumstances, to blame for the difficulties we encountered. But Revel, with his fantastic character and athletic ability, made up for what we lacked in preparation and good luck, to become the first Shagya-Arabian stallion in America to successfully complete this test.

Silver Creek Farms in Oklahoma was established some years ago by Summer Stoffel as a sport horse breeding facility, specializing in Warmbloods mainly for the sports of Hunter and Jumper. Several years ago, Summer became involved in the process of hosting stallion performance testing, and now stallion performance testing has become the main endeavor of the farm. There is a long tradition of such in the Eastern and

Western European countries. Each year, the various governmental horse-breeding facilities would put the newest crop of 3 or 4-year-old stallions into training for a period of time and keep detailed records as to how each stallion handled every phase of its training. Then, at the end of the training period, each stallion performed certain tests and was given scores for his final performances in the different disciplines. The ongoing training

scores and the final test scores were then tabulated, and the entire group of stallions were rated from the highest-scoring to the lowest-scoring. This way, the breeding experts were able to determine which stallions had the best potential to be used as new breeding stallions for that particular breed or region. There was a lot of variation in how testing was done depending upon the purpose for which each breed was developed, be it certain riding, driving, or draft disciplines.

After World War II, a number of horse breeds were developed specifically for riding and competing in the “Olympic” disciplines of dressage, jumping, and three-day eventing (also known as “military” in Europe, since the eventing test was based upon what an officer’s horse would theoretically have to be able to do when in war—be maneuverable in battle, run long distances cross country, and navigate over fences, through water and other obstacles en route). For many years, the majority of the European Warmblood Breeders used a “100-Day Test” in which the horses were trained for 100 days, usually as either 3 or 4-year-olds. In recent years, most of the Breeding Societies have changed over to a 30-day/70-day format, whereby, as 3-year-olds, the horses are trained in basic flatwork and free jumping for 30 days, and then as 4-year-olds, the stallions are put back in training for 70 days for their final testing, consisting of dressage, stadium jumping, free jumping, and cross country, jumping over fences, in and

out of water, and up and down various terrain. The 70-Day Performance Test has now evolved into the accepted performance test for the majority of sport horse breeds.

In the United States beginning in the 1980’s, a few of the Warmblood breed societies held “100-Day Stallion Performance Tests” occasionally in various parts of the country. Many years there were no tests at all, and it was also problematic to have the testing run by one society or another, as inevitably the test could be seen as somewhat biased towards the horses registered in that particular society.

When Summer Stoffel began to develop an annual 70-day test at Silver Creek Farms, she did so in conjunction with the North American Sport Horse Association, whose goal is to unite the various sport horse breeding groups together through shared activities and promotion. She chose Harald Hoffman to manage the 70-day test. A German “Pferdewirtschaftsmeister” (master in horse management), Hoffmann is a publicly appointed and sworn expert by the North Rhine-Westphalian Chamber of Agriculture for competition horses as well as for breeding and management of horses. He is also a Grand Prix rider and a judge for competition and breeding. As a master in horse management and long time competition stable and Gestüt manager, Herr Hoffmann knows about training young horses and advanced competition horses, stallion and mare management, and foal raising. He



Angela Pritchard/Photo

Revel in “hunter pose” with Summer Stoffel at Silver Creek Farms.

knows what to look for as both a breeder and rider.

Mr. Hoffman brings with him from Germany four "training riders" who are responsible for the riding and training of the stallions to be tested. The North American 70-Day Stallion Test is held in accordance with the German Stockbreeding Law following the standards of performance tests and horse breeding value requirements as ordered by the breeding associations of the German Equestrian Federation (FN). It is open to stallions of any sport horse breed that are a minimum of 3 years of age.

Upon arrival, the stallions undergo a veterinary examination before beginning the test. Once the stallions have passed the initial veterinary examination, the testing process begins.

The testing process lasts for seventy days, during which time the stallions must remain at the testing station. During the training period, the training director assesses the stallions in the following criteria: Character, Constitution, Temperament, Willingness to Work, Ridability, Athletic Ability, Gaits (walk, trot, canter), Free Jumping & Stadium Jumping (scope, technique), and Cross Country (canter, scope, technique).

The scores are given during the training period by a training judge and are factored in to calculate the final score. During the



Revel as "cow pony", Montana spring 2013, ridden by Richard Vrooman.

final testing days, the stallions are assessed by two test judges, two guest jumper riders, and two guest dressage riders who were appointed by the training director and FN representative. Every judge and rider assigns their own marks.

The following areas are judged during the final testing days: Gaits (walk, trot, canter), Ridability, Free Jumping & Stadium Jumping (scope, technique), and Cross Country (canter, scope, technique). Judging scores are given by the judges on a scale of 1-10, with 10 being the highest score and 1 being the lowest.

After the scores are collected, the final overall result of the test is calculated with the software program developed by the German Verden VIT. The final results align with the index average score of 100 and one standard divergence of 20 points from the average (100). Stallions age five and older receive a deduction of 5% from the average achieved scores of the 3 and 4-year-old stallions in the test group. Following the same procedure, the ridability and jumping indexes are calculated. From these calculations, the stallion's final score is calculated.

At the conclusion of the test, for each individual stallion, the "whole index," "ridability index" and the "jumping index" are announced. After all of the scores have been announced, each stallion owner receives a score sheet showing the marks given in each individual category, along with a comparison of the average score received by all the stallions in each individual category. The score sheet also indicates the placing of the stallion in the final results of the stallion test group. The German Equestrian Federation is informed by the training director and the FN representative as to the results of the test. Results of the stallion's test performance for licensing are made available to the registries.

Returning to Revel's story, over the winter of 2011-2012 I



On the "drop jump" on cross country, the horse goes down an incline, jumps a log at the bottom and comes up the other side. This obstacle spooked many of the stallions.



Angela Pritchard Photo

Jessica Wisdom from the USA was the American dressage test rider.

heard about this test and tried to get information about the test from the Silver Creek Farms website. The website contained information and results from the 2011 test but did not mention having a test in 2012. I wrote to the address on the website and asked if a test was planned for 2012 because I wanted to enroll Revel in such a test. However, even after writing several inquiries, I got no answer over the following months.

Meanwhile, in late January, I sent Revel to my favorite cowboy trainer, Dick Vrooman of Montana, to start Revel under saddle. Dick is the man who trained and rode *Hadban USA during his NASS Performance Test in Endurance, and he also started Shagya Raja AF under saddle for me. He started Revel in January 2012 and soon had him under saddle. Dick rode Revel on and off over the next couple of months, but with Montana winters such as they are, and with Dick having only a covered round pen but no covered arena, Revel didn't get ridden much, and most of the riding was over the icy, rocky hills to check Dick's cattle.

In June, we began collecting and freezing Revel's semen, and

Dick did not ride him during June and July at all while Revel was being collected. Revel handled the collecting well, but he got rather thin and out of condition, being kept in a small corral at Dick's and hauled back and forth 60 miles to the clinic for his collections.

In late July, out of the blue I got an e-mail from Summer Stoffel at Silver Creek Farms asking me if my questions had been answered. I replied that I never had gotten any answer at all! She explained that the Stallion Performance Testing entity now had its own, different website from the Silver Creek site, and that she had had trouble with her e-mail server and that many e-mails sent to her had been lost for some months and were only recently found. I found out from her at that time that there was indeed going to be a 70-Day Test in 2012, and it was slated to begin on the last day of August.

Well, this did not give me much time to prepare Revel for a long trip to Oklahoma, not to mention getting used to an english saddle instead of Dick's roping saddle and learning to carry the

snaffle bit and be ridden with contact on the bit. But, with my great faith in Revel that he would rise to the occasion, I hurriedly found a transport to haul him the long, hot distance to Oklahoma, and Revel arrived there in mid August. Summer agreed to have her training rider give Revel about two weeks to learn how to lunge, carry an english saddle, and get used to the feel of the snaffle and being ridden on contact. Meanwhile, her barn manager assisted me in buying all of the required blankets, sheets, halters, headstalls, bits, and boots of all types by mail order through the Dover Saddlery catalog. I also had to supply a full



My favorite photo from the Stallion Performance Test, Revel over the stone wall, Bastian Walser from Germany is the rider.

set of grooming tools.

Summer called me to report on Revel's safe arrival after the three-day van ride and asked if I wanted Revel on any of the joint supplements which are used these days. She said that most of the stallions would be already on such supplements to help them with any soreness they might develop while training. I replied that I would not put Revel on anything unless he showed signs of problems, and indeed Revel made it through the entire test with absolutely no medications, soreness, or health problems whatsoever.

I kept in touch with Summer during the training phase of the testing. She reported that, while Revel really didn't know anything, he was willing and had great manners. She told me on our first phone conversation after his arrival that "He's like a gelding in the cross ties." This was encouraging! First of all, he had never been in cross ties, and second of all, he had never been anywhere except on my farm and at Dick's (and the vet clinic where he was expected and encouraged to act like a stallion, not a gelding).

Ten days before the final weekend of testing was the scheduled stadium jumping testing with the test riders, so I flew back to see how Revel would do. It was a real thrill to see Revel all spruced up, body clipped, braided, and ridden with the other stallions! He clearly didn't think too highly of stadium jumping however. Not that he did anything awful, just that he didn't seem in his element by any means. Luckily, however, I was able to see him training on the cross country course the following day. By chance I had an afternoon flight, and in the morning I had gone out to the farm to watch the training. Revel was out on the cross country course with three of the warmblood stallions.

Summer had written me that "On the cross country Revel is very brave. He never hesitates." And, indeed, I witnessed that fact on that day. The other stallions, all of whom had much more previous training than Revel, were hesitating, refusing, running out, and just generally acting challenged by the situation. On every single obstacle—jumping into water, onto platforms, down inclines, over stone walls and cribs—Revel was the only horse that never hesitated or refused. On the cross country course, Revel truly was in his element! He was showing his natural capability for bravely carrying a rider through the countryside.

On the final days of testing, there was a photographer who took lots of photos as well as a videographer who videoed all of the phases of the final tests. I now have some great footage of Revel under saddle in dressage, stadium jumping, and free jumping in the arena. The cross country footage is my favorite, as Revel absolutely cruised around the course with his training rider, looking fresh and energetic at the end, whereas a number of the Warmblood stallions were winded and tiring rapidly. You can see this cross-country ride on my website at: adeles-shagyas.com.

What did I learn about Revel and about the stallion test? Well, the most important thing I learned was that Revel, despite his handicaps, was up to the task and won over the entire training and test riding crew with his sterling character and rugged con-

stitution (he received the highest scores for those two criteria). I also learned that it was really unfair of me to send Revel to such a test where all of the other stallions had months or even years of training (and showing), whereas Revel had almost none. And it was unfair of me to send him when he was not in better physical condition. The Silver Creek staff did a great job of feeding him and managing his condition, considering that he arrived thin and not very muscled. But it was asking too much of Revel to ex-

extensive training and conditioning beforehand. When one considers this extra necessary training cost, the total cost to have a stallion successfully complete a 70-Day Test should be expected to be well over \$25,000. This is the reality of modern-day sport horse stallion performance testing.

Luckily for Revel and me, Revel managed to come through sound, beautiful, and now fully approved for breeding by NASS and all ISG (Purebred Shagya-Arabian Society International) reg-



Revel with his awards from having successfully completed the 70-Day Stallion Test.

pect him to be able to gain weight during such a rugged training schedule. I hope he has forgiven me for my mistakes.

One of the difficulties of putting a stallion through such a test is expense. The flat fee of \$8,500 for the Testing was very reasonable, I feel, considering the amount of management and training that the horses receive at Silver Creek. But there are a number of other necessary expenses: tack that needs to be supplied by the owner, farrier, transportation, grooming fees, etc. Furthermore, I think any stallion sent to such a test should be in full-time training for at least a year prior to going. While historically the Tests were developed for untrained horses to test their trainability, the reality is that now nearly all horses sent to such a test have had


istries, and he is also now eligible for presentation to Warmblood breed societies as having passed his performance test requirement. I'm looking forward to enjoying Revel under saddle myself now and hope to show him in dressage. I am very grateful to Silver Creek Farms and Mr. Hoffmann and his testing team for doing such a great job with Revel.

The 70-day test at Silver Creek Farms concluded on Saturday, November 10th, when the successful stallions received their awards—neck rosettes and a cooler—and on November 15th our Montana farm was sold. We began the long process of moving to the new home of Adele's Shagyas in Camp Verde, Arizona. Revel

Continued on page 65

70-Day Stallion Test

Continued from page 39

has had the year off while we have been setting up our new facility, and his first two foals, out of Trakehner mares, were also born. We plan to return Revel to dressage training soon and to show him in dressage in the Southwest and Rocky Mountain region. We are considering presenting him to some of the other Sport Horse Registries such as the ATA, since Shagyas have a long and proven history as “improvers” in most European Warmblood breeds. 

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Shagya Arabian breeding in North America began 30 years ago in 1984 when Montanan Adele Furby read about this special Arabian breed in “Arabian Horse World” magazine. Adele’s search led her to the fortuitous discovery of the 24-year-old Shagya-Arabian stallion Hungarian Bravo living in her home state of Montana on the farm of a Hungarian-American Countess, Margit Besseney. Hungarian Bravo’s sire and dam were

both imported to America by the US Army as “Prizes of War” after WWII (along with the Lipizzaners made famous in the Walt Disney movie “Miracle of the White Stallions”). Adele’s discovery of “Bravo” led to her invitation by the Purebred Shagya-Arabian Society International (the “ISG”) to utilize Bravo as the foundation stallion of the American Shagya Arabian breed. Adele subsequently imported three Purebred Shagya stallions and four Purebred Shagya mares from Germany, Denmark and Hungary, and founded the North American Shagya Arabian Society (NASS) as a Purebred Shagya-Arabian Registry and a full member of ISG in 1986. She embarked upon an ambitious breeding program to perpetuate this Arabian breed along with its registry according to strict European performance horse standards, and in June of 2013 was named an “Honorary Member” of the ISG for her work in establishing Shagya-Arabian breeding in America. She currently stands four approved Shagya-Arabian stallions and is located in Camp Verde, Arizona. For more information about Shagya Arabians and NASS, visit the NASS website at: shagya.net.

Nicolettes Revelation AF (Shagya Royal AF x *Nicolette by O'Bajan I-10)



Revel shows his bravery



Revel on the cross country course at his 70 day stallion performance test



Revel free jumped 1 meter 50 (5 ft.) at his 70 day test



Portrait at Revel's 70 day test



Revel's official inspection photo, age 3, 2009



Stadium jumping under test rider



Training rider aboard Revel at the 70 day performance test



Test rider in dressage phase



Dressage phase

Available via internationally certified excellent quality frozen semen