

Horse Of A Lifetime: **Alla' Czar**



THIS WEEK'S ENTRIES

51 COMMENTARY



SPORT HORSE BREEDING

52 Horse Of A Lifetime: Alla' Czar
by Molly Sorge

55 Tish Quirk Won't Settle For Anything
But The Best. by Tricia Booker



BETWEEN ROUNDS

59 We Have A World Full Of Stallions From
Which To Choose. by Scott Hassler

60 IN THE COUNTRY

62 OBITUARIES

63 LATE NEWS

64 STALLION INDEX

65 ADVERTISING INDEX

In this occasional series, Camille Greer looks back on the unexpected, but thrilling, ride the flashy bay stallion has given her.

Molly Sorge

You'd think that the owner of Alla' Czar, who has topped the U.S. Equestrian Federation National Hunter Breeding Sire of the Year standings for five consecutive years—2002-2006—would be a full-time breeder, with a string of stallions and broodmares, a full-time staff and a bustling operation.

Not so. The Dutch Warmblood calls Camille Greer's unassuming Darkhorse Farm in Gilbert, Ariz., home. "For someone like me to have a stallion like him in my backyard, is a really exceptional thing," Greer said. "I was an amateur rider. I always loved the horses, but I wasn't looking for all this. I'm very aware of how lucky I've been to have him."

Greer believes that all the stars aligned to bring Alla' Czar into her life. "This was the only time in my life, truth be told, that I was in the right place and knew the right people. I was able to negotiate the purchase of this stallion, who—honest to God—I couldn't afford. He was way beyond what should be standing in my backyard, and I'm well aware of that. I'd be the first one to admit it. I have a fancy stallion—I don't have a fancy facility," she said.

Perhaps Alla' Czar's most famous progeny is Oszcar, who in the late '90s dominated the regular working hunter divisions with trainer Rick Fancher and the amateur-owner hunter, 18-35, divisions with owner Dawn Fogel. In 1997, at the Capital Challenge Horse Show (Md.), Oszcar became the first

Alla' Czar's daughter, Scharlett, inherited his stunning jump and won the IHF West Coast Regional 4-year-old championship in 2005.

hunter to score a perfect 100. Oszcar, now 16, retired in 2003.

But a new generation of Alla' Czar offspring is taking after Oszcar in collecting blue ribbons. His stars showing on the line include one USEF national champion and two reserve national champions in 2006. Pat Michael's Czierra (Alla' Czar—Rowdey Alphabet) is the USEF national yearling hunter breeding champion, while Karen Severns' Whimczical (Alla' Czar—Kalidascope) is the reserve national 2-year-old champion and Michael's Ma'czaratti—a full brother to Czierra—is the reserve national 3-year-old champion.

Czartistic (Alla' Czar—Rowdey Alphabet), bred and owned by Renae Coates, was the 2003 USEF 2-Year-Old Hunter Breeding national champion. Piczazz, a 2000 filly bred by Greer, won the International Hunter Futurity Finals (Ky.) 3-year-old filly title.

And now, Alla' Czar's flag is being carried back into the performance ring as well. Lauren Newmeyer's Czolitude (Alla' Czar—After Thoughts) earned the reserve 4-year-old performance championship at the 2006 IHF Finals (Ky.). And Scharlett (Alla' Czar—Native Blossom) went from winning the IHF West Coast Regional 4-year-old championship in 2005 to earning tricolors in the small junior hunters in 2006.

"It's just been an incredible ride. I've met the most wonderful people. I live vicariously through these horses. They're starting to get to the show rings now, and it's been great fun. I wouldn't trade it for the world," Greer said.



► The Winding Road

Having Alla' Czar, now 24, has been a dream come true for Greer. "He's been such a gift in my life—that's the best way that I can describe him," Greer said. "I'm just incredibly proud. For me to have had him and done this has been incredibly rewarding. And, I think he's contributed to a lot of people having nice horses, and that's so nice to know."

Alla' Czar (Zeus—Renetta, Legaat) traveled a wandering path to Greer's farm. He was imported from Europe by Libby Hernandez in 1984 as a 2-year-old jumper prospect. But Alla' Czar's career seemed to be over before he even started. "He was either injured on the plane, or right after he arrived. He broke his pelvis, and he was almost destroyed for insurance money," Greer said.

Hernandez's assistant, Cathy Connor, bought "Czar" for a greatly reduced price, and spent a year rehabilitating him in California.

Czar underwent his 100-day stallion test in 1986, and was approved for the Oldenburg N/A registry. "But he wasn't really sound, even then," Greer said. "I've got his stallion test score sheets, and he got a 9 for willingness to work, and a 5 for his trot. He wasn't sound. But he got a 9 for jumping, and he still passed. I've got a note on his stallion test that says it's a tribute to this stallion's heart that he made it through the testing."

Czar continued to develop, and in the late '80s, he enjoyed a prolific career in the hunter ring in California. He showed under trainers Karen Healey and Cindy Grossman in the green and amateur-owner divisions. "I know that the first year showing in California, he was the hit of the circuit. He'd come in the ring, and people would go watch him," Greer said.

It was during this period that Maureen Martin bred the soon-to-be-famous Oszcar. But in the early '90s, Connor moved to Arizona. Czar started another career, as a dressage horse. He competed up to the Prix St. Georges level with various riders and also showed in the jumpers. But Connor wasn't marketing him aggressively as a stallion.

Greer met Connor in 1993, and bred a Thoroughbred mare to Czar. "I couldn't afford to go out and buy a nice horse. I don't have deep pockets—I was always the kid who had to work pretty hard to get to show. I did all my research for my diligent stallion search. I had my *Chronicle*,

Alla' Czar, here showing under Cindy Grossman in the 1980s, passes on his athletic jump and great mind to his foals.



(Molly Sarge Photo)

Osczar, here pictured with owner Dawn Fogel, started to make Alla' Czar famous as a sire when he scored a perfect 100.

stallion ad in the *Chronicle*," she said.

The effort paid off, as in 1999—his first year standing at Darkhorse Farm—Czar booked more than 100 mares. But Greer had to continue on her steep learning curve.

"I'd never stood a breeding stallion before. I didn't know what I was doing," she said. "But he's a great stallion to work with. I was collecting him all by myself. And there was one night, when I was collecting him in the middle of the night, with the truck lights shining on the dummy, trying to make the red-eye flight to ship the semen. And I kind of stepped back, and said to myself, 'There has to be a better way!' So, I went to some seminars, talked to a lot of people and learned how to do this in a professional manner."

Trainer Renae Coates has been breeding to Alla' Czar for years and also helps Greer develop young prospects for the IHF. "She definitely marketed him well," Coates said. "He was kind of lost, sitting up there in northern Arizona. And she's done a great job of getting him known and his name out there and back in contact with the hunter and futurity people. And she's wonderful about staying in touch with the people who have Alla' Czar babies."

► He Leaves His Mark

Pat Michael, who owns full siblings Cziera and Ma'Czaratti, was enchanted by Alla' Czar's young ones. "He did strike me instantly," she said of Ma'Czaratti. "His conformation was flawless and he was beautiful. And he's absolutely an amateur's horse—he's so easy to deal with and very personable.

"I'm drawn to the way they all look. I love that they're so conformationally correct, and clearly they're very athletic. He does a great job of passing on the right things."

and all these stallion videos," she said.

"I went to see Czar, and it was love at first sight. He's so stunning and such a well-mannered stallion. I got to know him very well and started breeding to him. My first one arrived in 1994, and I never looked back—I never used another stallion. He was everything I ever wanted—beauty, temperament and talent."

In 1996, dressage rider Karin Reid Offield bought Czar and competed him.

Then, Oszcar began making a name for himself in 1997, and people began wondering who Alla' Czar was. And in early 1998, Greer had an idea. "Sometimes, I really do believe in fate. I had just opted to go into early retirement from my job, and I was just looking for something to do. I'd had a car accident and hurt myself pretty badly, so I couldn't ride anymore. I wanted to stay in the horses. The timing couldn't have been any better," she said. Reid Offield was amenable to making it possible for Greer to bring Czar home.

► Getting Up To Speed Quickly

And so began Greer's crash-course in stallion management. "I had to educate myself. It was

really a leap of faith and ignorance for me to buy him," she said.

"I was really just looking for a part-time job. Little did I know it would turn into this. I had to dedicate myself to figure out how to serve the customers properly. I didn't even have a breeding contract. The challenge for me was to bring myself up to speed so I could do this stallion justice."

In that first year, Greer put her years in corporate marketing to work for her. "I started doing my homework. I got hold of Dawn Fogel, and she sent me a tape of that perfect 100 round, and I got some pictures and got a video put together and put up a website. I completely re-did his



Whimczical, shown by Junior Johnson at Devon, is just one of Alla' Czar's offspring winning consistently on the line.

Greer has had particular success with crossing Czar with Thoroughbred mares. "It retains the beauty of the Thoroughbred and their lightness, but it adds his talent and sturdiness. Alla' Czar himself is $\frac{3}{4}$ Thoroughbred on top, so he has been considered a refining stallion. He's known for throwing beautiful heads and necks," she said.

And while beauty is a definite plus in a Czar offspring, Greer values his mind above all. "He's a super gentleman—I would not have gotten him had I not known him for all those years. I can get on him bareback, ride down the street, and tie him up and have coffee. He packs me around like a good old gelding. I can collect him myself; he's perfectly mannerly. You couldn't ask for a nicer stallion. I can give kids pony rides on him," she said.

Coates has started and competed numerous Czar babies. "They have great minds, and are very easygoing. They want to learn whatever you want to teach them. They're very balanced, the lead changes come easily, and jumping comes naturally to them. They want to do their job and please people," she said.

Michael believes that Czar's true impact on the hunter division is yet to be seen. "I think that, since the crops from the last six years that Camille has had him are now getting into the performance rings and doing well, we'll soon start seeing him climb up the performance sire list as well," she said. Alla' Czar is currently eighth in the 2006 USEF National Hunter Sire of the Year standings.

Alla' Czar has a distinctive look, as a bay sabino with four high white stockings and a wide white blaze. And his offspring frequently share his flashy look. "He does stamp them. With all the different mare types that have been bred to him, you can tell his babies. I think his success in the hunter breeding ring—all across the country, and in front of all judges—has shown the consistency of type that he has put on the ground," Greer said.

In his heyday, Czar bred more than 75 mares each season. But he's slowing down physically, and Greer has scaled down his schedule. She has some frozen semen she'll distribute to select mares, and she plans to breed him to four or five of her own mares next spring, but he won't stand to outside mares.

"I'm trying to be as fair to him as he's been to me. I'm not going to breed him into oblivion," she said.

Greer watches Czar age with bittersweet thoughts. "I'm going to miss him terribly—I'm so sad he's getting old. If I could find the fountain of youth for one of us, I think I'd give it to him," she said.

"He really kind of came out of nowhere—nobody expected all this success, especially me. I thought he'd be a little hobby I could go out there and feed and play with. It's been a little scary at times, because there's a considerable amount of money and effort you invest in this. But I couldn't be happier—it's been an experience that's been irreplaceable." ❧