



Gelders Horses of North America © LVWS 2019

*Kyraloma MG possesses versatile genes with Navarone as a Sire and a dam from the well-known Loma- jumper line.*

## ➤ Gelders Horses in North America

# High quality allrounders

*Gelders horse- fan Liesbeth van Woerden is living in the United States for at least three years. The past year she has been doing research on the Gelders bloodlines there. For her photo project 'Gelders Horses of North America' she visited several breeders and owners of Gelders horses. For the Christmas edition of the KWPN Magazine she tells us about this project and the Gelders Horses of North America.*

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Between the 60's and 90's, quite a few Gelders horses were exported to Canada and the United States. Stallions like Emigrant (by Wodan out of Regentes van Wittenstein keur pref by Graaf van Wittenstein), Patrick (by Jonkheer out of Leeuwa keur pref by Geoloog), Zoöloog (by Gondelier

out of Kariena by Flaneur), Vosmaer (by Formateur out of Korine ster by Epigoon), Taxateur (by Obelisk out of Helena by Commandant) and Wanroij (by Symfonie uit Nolda keur pref by Jagermeester). From most of these stallions, there is still frozen semen available. The past year I have been doing research on the Gelders bloodlines in North America. After finishing this, I've written an article about Gelders horses for the KWPN NA, with the goal to inform people about their past, present and future within the KWPN. Then, I started my photo project, 'Gelders Horses of North America', which will continue in 2020. This project consists of interviews and pictures and is meant to showcase the North American Gelders horses and their breeders and owners.

## **Majestic Gates**

The first visit on my trip to the North East of the USA in October, was to 'Majestic Gates'. This farm is located in New Hampshire and owned by Kathy Hickerson. Kathy has been the exclusive USA- distributor of frozen semen for VDL Stud. "I started working with VDL in 2000," Kathy tells me. "I imported several stallions and mares through them as well. Like Farrington (by Wellington out of Onetty ster by Doruto). This tall chestnut was KWPN approved but injured his hindleg at a certain point in time. This made him unsuitable for serious high- level competitions. I'm sure he would have been a great dressage horse if this wouldn't have happened to him. He was such a good mover; he always moved with so much poise, very uphill and with an enormously strong motor from behind. He trotted around on our property a lot, despite his injury, showing himself off. His offspring are all very correct in conformation, with good strong bone and substance, easy to work with, just very nice sport horses. He received the keurpredicate based purely on his offspring."

## **Karrington MG**

In 2006, Kathy imported a very good mare: elitemare Torette R (by Silvano out of Dorette elite sport-dres by Flemmingh). She bred several foals with her, of which Karrington MG. She keeps him for the KWPN NA Stallion selection of 2020. "The KWPN inspectors once told me that it would be very nice to have a licensed stallion by Farrington. Karrington seems to be good enough for that, because he moves really well and has a very correct conformation. He isn't a modern dressage type, with his above average bone and substance. That's why we will offer him for the Gelders breeding direction. I didn't think he was ready this year, but I hope he will be next year. If not, we will geld him and sell him. He will be a good sport horse for sure."

Kathy has bred more classical type offspring out of Torette. "They don't have the modern dressage horse look, but they are all very athletic and have great movement. Just like Torette herself, who is an amazing mover," Kathy says. "She has a daughter, Carette MG, by the German stallion His Highness (by Hohenstein). She is competing at Intermediate level now and will start Grand Prix level soon. Her owner bought her as a youngster and together they have learned everything and gone through all the levels. This makes them such a special couple! And it's proof of her great mind. Carette is an impressive powerful mare with a beautiful charisma and she is chestnut with lots of chrome. In retrospect, I probably could have had her registered as Gelders for her type."

### **Kyraloma MG**

Next to Farrington, Kathy also imported the stallion Navarone (by Jus de Pomme out of Goedele keur by Armstrong). “Navarone is a very high- quality stallion. He was super successful in both dressage and showjumping up to the highest levels,” Kathy says. “So, he was very versatile. He is quite classical in his appearance but very athletic and work- willing. He passes this on to his offspring without exception. I bred my first ever Dutch imported mare Miloma (elite pref by Goodtimes) to him and offered their daughter Kyraloma MG at the Keuring. After deliberation with the judges, we changed her to the Gelders breeding direction. They thought her versatile bloodlines fitted best in that direction. Besides that, she definitely has more bone and substance than the average horse from the other breeding directions. She also has that impressive front and powerful appearance the Gelders horses generally have. She is a bit hot in her character though; she can’t wait to get to work. But once she’s at work, she is very manageable. Just a very work- willing horse, not spooky or nervous.”

Kyraloma is in foal to Desperado for 2020. “This will be her first foal,” Kathy says. “I am curious about this combination and in what breeding direction I will register the foal. I have always been a fan of versatile horses with proven older bloodlines. Also, I believe in crossing jumper and dressage lines. My customers know this and come to me for exactly that reason. Not all riders, especially amateurs, want to focus on just one sport with their horses. That’s why I believe in breeding high quality allrounders, that are work- willing but also have amateur friendly minds. So, both amateurs and professionals can enjoy my breeding products.”



*Avenir Farms has been breeding Gelders horses for over 30 years. This colt is 'O' (Aidan out of Salem by Morning Glory)*



## **Avenir Farms**

After my visit to Majestic Gaits, I drove up North to 'Avenir Farms', in the state of Vermont. Avenir Farms originates in Washington state and exists for over 30 years now. The owner and founder is David Black, a real horseman that has bred over a 100 horses and speaks about the 'Gelderlander' with passion. He started his Gelders breeding business with the purchase of three horses with mainly original Gelders bloodlines: the mares Salina (by Senore) and Morning Star (by Patrick) and the impressive white stallion Avenir (by Patrick out of Zabella by Sportman).

"The approved Gelders stallion Patrick was imported by John van Dongen," David tells. "He bred a lot with Patrick. I used to live close to him and drive past his farm a lot. I always saw these beautiful horses in the pasture and wondered what breed they were. I drove up to his house sometimes to find out. He wasn't home most of the time but one time he was, and we got to know each other and became friends. I learned that the horses in his pasture were mostly Gelders horses, and that most of them were offspring of Patrick. Avenir was also bred by John and sold to Harm de Vries in Canada. Harm bred a few foals with him and after a couple of years, offered him for sale. I managed to get a hold of him then, which I was very happy about! I had seen him before and knew he was a great stallion."

## **Rockstar**

David sold a lot of Quarterhorses to the South Californian mounted police in these days and brought them down South often. "John was a real horse trader, so he also did a lot of traveling to sell and buy horses. We started to travel together and were on the road a lot between 1990 and 2006, down the Westcoast from Canada to Mexico. He sold his trade; I delivered my horses and promoted Avenir. In these days without social media, promoting stallions like that was very common," David tells. "I would give shows with Avenir and have him breed some mares on the same day. Avenir was such a show-off, he loved the attention, he was like a Rockstar, would come into the arena and rear in front of the audience. I would ride him bareback and let him do some jumps. People always wanted to see him up close and touch him, they all stood around us in awe. He was a real show horse, he loved the audience and the audience loved him. It was a great time."

David kept frozen semen of Avenir but during the move from the West coast to the East coast it probably has gotten compromised somewhere along the way. "Such a pity," David says. "I never came across a stallion like Avenir again, he was so special and had so much charisma. A real breeding stallion. I was intensely sad when I had to have him put down. I buried him on my property." David has a son of Avenir, a tall grey stallion that he uses for breeding. His name is Aidan (out of Salina by Senore). David also stands Morning Glory stud; a black great grandson of Argus out of the Patrick daughter 'Morning Star'. He shows me both stallions under saddle and they take a couple jumps as well. Such impressive tall and powerful stallions. I notice how well behaved and calm they are. "I raise all my horses myself. I start handling them as foals and as they grow up I make sure they get decent groundwork, before they move to new owners," David says. "I think that's extremely important to do as a breeder, to make sure your breeding product have a solid foundation."

## **Future**

David has downsized a lot since moving to Vermont. He has a small herd and breeds one or two foals every year with his two stallions and three broodmares. This year, the combination of Aidan and Salem (by Morning Glory) has brought him a really nice chestnut colt. "I am considering keeping him intact," David says. "Up until now, I always gelded my colts quite early, so they could stay in the herd with the mares and other geldings. I have three geldings at the moment, of which two are ready to get backed to ride and sold. Now my two stallions are getting older, I might have to look at a successor for them. And since this colt really seems to be something special, I might separate him from the herd soon."

I ask David why he never had any of his breeding products registered with the KWPN NA. "Oh, I did consider that," David replies. "But I heard that the KWPN wouldn't continue the Gelders breeding direction. I was so disappointed by that. I knew I would want to keep breeding them, so I decided to look elsewhere for registration. Avenir was already registered as a Canadian Warmblood, so that seemed to be the most logical choice for us." What is he going to do now he knows the Gelders horses are still part of the KWPN and they even sponsor this project, I ask him? "Well, that's good news! I am pretty certain that my horses carry more than enough Gelders blood. If there also still is a place for their type at the KWPN NA, I will certainly consider registering them there from now on. My young stallion prospect for example, doesn't have an official name yet. If you say the KWPN foals need to have a name that starts with the 'O', I will definitely give him a name with an 'O'!"



*The North American bred KWPN NA licensed stallion Olivier Crown (by Idocus Crown) enjoys his retirement in Vermont at Imajica*

## **Imajica**

My third and last visit on the trip to the North East was to Imajica, the beautiful equestrian property of Madeleine Austin, close to Burlington in the state of Vermont. Madeleine is a successful Grand Prix dressage rider, trainer and breeder. In 1986, she imported the keur preferent prestatie mare Rowillie (by Porter out of Kowillie keur pref by Graaf Oregon). Madeleine already knew this half Gelders, half Holsteiner mare because she had previously imported a very good horse out of her. A lot of Rowillie's other offspring was also doing really well in competitions so Madeleine wanted to try and buy her, to use her for her own breeding program. Because she has Dutch roots herself, she visited The Netherlands frequently. On one of these trips she managed to convince Rowillie's owner to let her buy Rowillie and take her home to the USA.

## **Olivier Crown**

Madeleine bred Rowillie to Idocus Crown (by Equador out of Eretha keur pref prest by Zonneglans) and in 1996 this brought her a very special colt named 'Olivier'. "Immediately after he was born, I could tell he would be really good," Madeleine tells me. "I decided to keep him as a stallion and offered him for licensing at the KWPN. They thought he would be most suitable as Gelders stallion, considering his type and bloodlines. After that, he was also licensed with the Oldenburg Verband and the BWP. In 2012, the BWP even gave him the elite predicate, which was very special since it was the first time in history that a North American stallion received this honorable title."

Madeleine has retired from breeding now and is downsizing on her horses. Olivier won't be sold though, he is enjoying his retirement at Madeleine's farm. He is turned out every day and will go around his own pasture stretching his legs. He shows me his supple movement and impressive appearance. "I've had semen frozen from him for the Netherlands in 2014," Madeleine tells. "VDL Stud is keeping it in storage but it hasn't been used a lot. Such a pity I think, since his bloodlines are so good, proven and versatile. On top of that, his bloodlines are free of the popular dressage and jumping stallions so very suitable for a lot of mares, both Gelders and any other direction. He is also a very good jumper and all his offspring have proven to be beautiful, easy to handle horses, that are amateur friendly but also of high enough quality for professionals. I have a very good mare with amazing movement for example, Flirtieni, who is by Olivier out of a Balzflug dam. This dam wasn't very easy but Flirtieni is so much nicer to work with; I am certain that Olivier has passed this on to her."

## **Successful**

Olivier has had a very successful dressage career in the USA with Madeleine's daughter Elisabeth (Liz) Austin. He had many wins on the highest levels and they were even reserve for the Worldcup Dressage in 2011. "In North America, stallions with a successful career like that, can get the official 'Crown' predicate behind their name. Olivier received this predicate in 2008, something we are very proud of. His sire Idocus Crown also has this predicate. Such a great stallion he is, so durable and passes on the best work ethic to his offspring. He is



retired at DG Bar Ranch in California now. By the way, I received some amazing offers for Olivier at the top of his career. Some big names from Germany and The Netherlands wanted to buy him... But I didn't do it, since Liz was having such a great dressage career with him. Looking back, I sometimes think... what if...? But you know, she is my daughter... and he was her best horse ever."



Gelders Horses of North America © LVWS 2019

*Deborah Harrison of Lio Lomas Dutch Warmbloods bred this colt by Contester II out of Gelders mare Tatiana (IJsselmeer x Zoöloog)*

## **Lio Lomas Dutch Warmbloods**

In November, I went on a trip to California for the project. My first stop was at San Juan Bautista, to visit Deborah Harrison's farm 'Lio Lomas Dutch Warmbloods'. Deborah, originally from Hawaii, is well-known in North America as a repro vet but also as a judge for the KWPN NA at keurings, which she did for over 20 years. She has been breeding with Gelders bloodlines for over 35 years. She imported most of her Gelders foundation broodmares herself and used Gelders stallions like Taxateur and Vosmaer. She also used the KWPN approved Holsteiner stallion Rubinstein (by Lorenz out of Bellana by Allasch) frequently. All these stallions were imported by Jeff Moore and Liz Searle. Jeff Moore is also well-known, as the founder of the KWPN NA and as successful Grand Prix dressage rider. He now runs his equestrian business 'Osierlea', is instructor and writer.

### ***Gelders bloodlines as a foundation***

Deborah has always used Gelders bloodlines in her breeding program consciously, because she believes in their quality. Gelders ster mare Abolien (by Indiaan out of Jobolie by Eufraat), Gelders ster preferent Odessa (by Commandant out of Kroonprinses ster by Normann) and

Gelders ster mare Cadenza (by Taxateur out of Utopia ster by Fresco) have had the most influence on Deborah's breeding program. She bred her most well-known horse out of Cadenza: the KWPN NA licensed Grand Prix dressage stallion Ijsselmeer (by Vosmaer). His full sister Gisela later brought the Grand Prix stallion Lauwersmeer (by Farmer). Chelsey Sibley competed both of them. "Ijsselmeer is my once in a lifetime horse," Deborah says. "He was so very special and real Gelders to see with an impressive front and great movement. On top of that, he was a chestnut with lots of white markings. He recently passed at 29,5 years of age. Ijsselmeer was such a good breeding sire; he really stamped his offspring. He passed on his recognizable looks to many of them but most importantly, his talent for dressage and his great work ethic." Deborah didn't have Lauwersmeer licensed and didn't have him breed a lot. "I thought Lauwersmeer would be a bit too short and square in his confirmation, that's why I didn't have him licensed and didn't use him often," Deborah explains. "In retrospect, that's a pity, because the offspring he does have, is of very high quality. Especially their movement is far above average."

Apart from her own stallions, Deborah also used some older, proven dressage stallions in her program. Like UB40 (by Olivi), Uphill (by Oscar) and Ferro (by Ulft). "I have also used Chelsey Sibley's Holsteiner stallion Contester II (by Contender) a lot the past years, and I still do. I think he is of very high quality. Recently, I bought the Dutch Harness stallion Bruiser (by Unbelievable out of Pauletta B by Fabricius). I love him, he has the best temperament. He is a classical type Harness horse with lots of expression in his movement, a lot of bone and substance, a long-lined body and more vertical neck direction. He can really add something extra to some of my mares. All his foals so far have been great! For this year I bred five of my Gelders and half- Gelders mares to Gaudi SSF (Totilas out of Annabel elite pref EPTM dres prest PROK by De Niro). I saw this as a bit of an experiment because Gaudi is still a young stallion, but it turned out really well. He surely modernized my mares, but the foals are all beautiful, very good uphill movers with correct conformation. They all still have good bone and substance, which I am happy about, because that is something I find very important."

### ***Functionality as the highest good***

Lio Lomas's slogan is: 'Breeding Dutch Warmbloods with the talent for the FEI and the temperament for an amateur'. "Yes! My goal is to breed top quality sport horses that amateurs can also ride and enjoy. Because riding horses should be just that: a joy! And to be realistic, most of the North American dressage riders is an amateur. People have to be able to deal with their horse's temperament, so I breed horses that have amateur friendly minds," Deborah says. I ask her why she always had her horses registered as a dressage horse and not as a Gelders horse. And why didn't she go to keurings? "Well, I was a judge for 20 years, so I stopped going to keurings because of that. Concerning the registration: it worked against me to have them registered as Gelders," Deborah answers. "People wanted to buy a dressage horse. So, I needed to register them as such to be able to sell them. Most people didn't know anything about Gelders horses, they didn't know that the Gelders horses had so much quality. They thought a Gelders horse was 'less' than a dressage horse, which of course isn't true at all! Gelders horses could be just as successful at the upper levels as any other



type. But it didn't make sense to people: why would people want to modernize the Gelders horses then, why would the KWPN have a separate breeding direction for dressage? It was hard to explain that to buyers, although I tried. They kept thinking the Gelders horse was just for recreation, some sort of old-fashioned farm horse. Besides that, the KWPN rules kept changing in that time. The Gelders horse was called a *basispaard* for a while, and then there was the blood requirements, which made my crosses with the dressage and Holsteiner stallions non eligible for Gelders. All these reasons made me decide to just choose the easy way out and have them all registered in the dressage breeding direction."

Nevertheless, Deborah kept believing in the Gelders bloodlines. "I had and have a firm belief in the quality of the real Gelders bloodlines," Deborah says. "It started when Taxateur came to the USA in 1981. When I saw him move, I was *hooked*. Jeff and Liz were experts in biomechanics of the horse and taught me everything about the ideal conformation of a horse for upper level dressage. And most importantly: a conformation that made it possible to stay sound up until a high age. In their opinion, the Gelders horse like it was back then, had the ideal conformation and movement for dressage: and I agree with them fully."

"People need to realize more that functionality is more important than fashion," Deborah continues. "Handsome is as handsome does. The ideal horse should move with ease and poise from back to front, in balance, uphill, with suppleness through his whole body. They also need to be durable and therefore need enough bone and substance and especially good feet. Finally, a horse needs to have a good mind. I am convinced that horses can be bred to have these characteristics, these traits: it can be in their DNA. With horses like that you don't have to train balance and movement, they will have it naturally through genetics. And that makes training so much easier! I think all these characteristics are exactly what a Gelders horse always used to have and what's still in the original bloodlines. Power, balance, and rising in the front like 'climbing the sky'... this creates the vision of the ethereal heights of Mount Olympus and the Greek gods... that's classical. That's the Gelders."

## **Chelsey Sibley**

After visiting Deborah Harrison, I went to see Chelsey Sibley at 'Sky Ranch' in Sonora, California. Chelsey is a well-known Grand Prix dressage rider and trainer, especially on the West coast. She started her career by riding for Jeff Moore and later also for Deborah Harrison. She competed Gelders stallions Taxateur, Vosmaer, Ijsselmeer and Lauwersmeer successfully up to Grand Prix level. She now offers boarding, instruction and training at her ranch, but she is still a competition rider as well. Next to that, she is also a breeder of both Gelders, dressage and allround horses.

### ***Breeding***

Gelders mare Korina (keur pref by Commandant out of Dora II by Zenith), imported by Jeff Moore, plays an important role in the story about Chelsey's breeding program. "I've ridden a very special mare out of Korina," Chelsey tells me. "Her name was Chaam, and she was by Goudsmid. She was super difficult, very spooky and a one- person horse: I was basically the only one who could deal with her. But she was extremely talented, I loved her a lot and she is definitely one of the best horses I've ever ridden. I tried to breed with her for a long time,

but I couldn't get her in foal. Then Jeff let me train her half- sister Jazz (by Vosmaer) and let me breed a foal with her. I used Taxateur and got a mare, which I called Narcisse. She has brought me a lot of really nice foals. Jazz went back to Jeff and had several more foals there. When Jeff retired from breeding, he gave Jazz to me and let me breed another foal with her. I used my Holsteiner stallion Contester II (by Contender) on her and this gave me a beautiful colt. Unfortunately, Jazz became very ill after that, and I had to put her down when her colt was six months old. That's why we called him Finale: he was her last foal."

### ***First KWPN-NA Gelders stallion ever***

"Finale is my dreamhorse," Chelsey continues. "He always does everything I ask of him, even if he finds it difficult, he never resists, he always tries. He really is the sweetest and most easy-going horse I've ever ridden. I could basically let anyone ride him, even a total amateur, a child or an elderly person. I can hack out by myself with him, turn him out next to other horses... He is a stallion and knows it but is so well behaved. His sire Contester has such an easy character as well, by the way. It's such a pity that the Holsteiner studbook didn't license him: they found him too classical at the inspection. The BWP did license him though, which is nice. He breeds really well on all types of mares. He passes on great athleticism and very versatile qualities. His offspring has already proven to do great in all disciplines. His specialty is improving difficult characters tough: I haven't heard of any offspring that doesn't have a great mind! They are all very lovable, easy and social. Like Finale: his dam Jazz was not very easy and quite spooky, but Finale doesn't have that at all. So Contester definitely gave him that. He likes everyone and is not impressed by anything easily. As I said, a dreamhorse!"

September 2020 will be exciting for Chelsey and Finale because Chelsey will offer Finale for licensing as Gelders stallion at the KWPN NA keuring at DG Bar ranch. "I'm super excited," Chelsey admits. "But I am also very happy that I found out what his path has to be: Gelders stallion! He has great Gelders bloodlines, is so beautiful and talented and has such a perfect character, that I really think he would be a great breeding stallion. We are training hard to have him show Grand Prix level in September. I have ridden a lot of stallions and also at that level, but never offered a stallion at a KWPN Keuring before. But I think I asked the right people for advice, so I have faith in a good outcome. There is already some offspring by him, and they all seem to be very nice, also out of modern riding- type mares."

### **Bright future**

The past year has been so interesting as concerned to the Gelders horses. I found out that although not many people are familiar with the Gelders horse, there is a group of motivated Gelders breeders and enthusiasts in North America. Most of them just had their own reasons to not have their breeding products registered and inspected as Gelders. Almost all offspring of the Gelders stallions that were exported from the Netherlands to North America between the 60's and the end of the 90's, have been registered as dressage horses, in another studbook or not registered at all. There has only been one breeder, Beverley Hilton at Hilton Hall Sporthorses, that has brought horses to the KWPN NA keurings to be inspected as Gelders. So it seemed as if there weren't any Gelders horses in North America, but there actually were!

The KWPN NA has stated they want to give more attention to this breeding direction from now on. They've taken on my offer to write articles for them on the Gelders horses, my project is co-funded by them and I will give a presentation at the KWPN NA Annual General meeting. I also started a Facebook group for the international breeders, owners and enthusiasts of the KWPN Gelders horse. I am getting quite some questions about Gelders horses that I receive through social media or email, and people are considering having their horse judged as Gelders at this year's keuring- season. Finally, I am planning more trips for the project this year, to put more North American Gelders horses and their breeders and owners in the spotlight. Hopefully, all these positive developments combined will bring the Gelders horse with all their wonderful traits more familiarity and give them a bright future in North America.



*Finale (by Contester II) was the last foal out of Vosmaer daughter Jazz. He will be offered for licensing as Gelders stallion in 2020.*