

Interview with KWPN Dressage Breeder of the Year 2022: Willeke Bos of Stable 104

The Year 2022 was without a doubt the year of Willeke Bos. During the 2022 KWPN Stallion Inspection she was in charge by having bred three of the four premium stallions. In the summer she was named Breeder of the Year and in the autumn performance test she had three stallions approved, of which Obsession Taonga, imbued with Stal 104 blood, who held the highest score. Willeke Bos: "I'm noticing that my selection is becoming increasingly strict."

Written by: Yvonne Buis- Franken & Steef Roest for KWPN Magazine 3 & 12, 2022

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Images by: Dirk Caremans

Between aging Dutch horse breeders of many generations, Willeke Bos can be seen as a young breeder; the leading lady of Stal 104 only took up breeding seriously about fifteen years ago. With the right breeding choices, by gathering the right people around her and collaboration with different riders, Willeke has been able to become a successful dressage horse breeder in a relatively short time frame. Her most important achievements as a breeder: four Heavy Tour horses, including one Olympic stallion, eight Small Tour horses and six KWPN stallions. Willeke bred both the stallion champion and the NMK champion from the Small Tour mare Atilinda M (by Negro) in the same year. Vitalis, purchased by her as a foal, is making its mark on dressage horse breeding worldwide, we see his offspring excel from foal to international top sport and her own breeding is now infused with the blood of her own stallions.



Obsession Taonga (by Vitalis out of Jatilinda Elite, Preferent, Ibop (dres), Sport (dres) PROK by Negro)

Yessin Rahmouni

Yessin is one of the riders that Willeke has a collaboration with. He boards his training horses at Stal Visser in Vijfhuizen. Yessin rode his second Olympic Games in Tokyo with the KWPN-approved stallion All at Once (by Ampère), bred by Willeke. But their collaboration goes further than that. In addition to the Stable 104 horses that are in training, Yessin is the trainer of Willeke's daughter Lara van Nek and the stallions Obsession Taonga (by Vitalis) and One Two Three (by Vivaldi) who have completed the performance test and were approved in 2022. The former will be trained by Lara under the guidance of Yessin.



All at Once (by Ampère out of Wynona RB Elite, Preferent, Prestatie, Ibop (dres), Sport (dres) D-OC by Gribaldi)

All at Once was the first stallion bred by Stal 104 to earn KWPN approval. He came to Yessin as a six-year-old, after being leased to Germany as a breeding stallion for two years and ridden by Vai Bruntink in the stallion competition. Yessin thought he was a world class horse from the very first moment.

Yessin: "The talent was oozing, but it was not very easy in the beginning, he was so sensitive. There were quite a few people who said it wouldn't turn out well, but I was sure he would be very good, if he could just process it mentally. Despite being behind as a six-year-old, he competed in his first Grand Prix at the age of nine. Once we understood each other, he learned the work very easily."

Willeke: "You have strengthened each other. You made All at Once calmer and he taught you how to ride better."

Yessin: "He was very sensitive. I am a male and naturally have somewhat coarser motor skills than many women have. Eventually we adapted to each other. I am very proud of how that turned out."

Willeke: *"It was on Vai's advice to put All at Once with another rider. Yessin and I are a one-two punch. We have known each other for years and it feels more like a friendship than a business agreement."*

Yessin: *"Our contact arose from my lessons. I taught Elizabeth Penterman, she rode Tolivia, the mother of Vitalis and One Two Three, to the sports predicate. Willeke also came to train with me and at that time I occasionally rode one of her horses. At one point Lara also came to take lessons with me. She was still very young, but Willeke thought it was important that she learned the right things from the start. I'm very direct, so I wondered if that would go well with such a young girl. Fortunately, that also worked out well. Willeke herself at ZZ-Licht (4th level), but nowadays she doesn't ride that much anymore."*

Willeke: *"Yessin also wants these kids to be successful. That is a quality that I can appreciate, it is also great fun to experience this success together. For me this is a very positive collaboration. We don't always agree, but we can say everything to each other, and we always find each other in compromise."*

Yessin: *"I'm not afraid, so in the beginning of our collaboration I often got the horses that were a bit more difficult. Fortunately, over time I also got easier horses. I'm not really a competitive rider and I think very commercially: if a good horse can be sold well, I think Willeke should just do it. Sometimes I think that the horses cannot get more quality and then there are even better young horses in front of me. That is why we never have discussions when a horse is sold. Saying goodbye often means getting a better horse back."*

Willeke: *"I do have blood horses, but Yessin likes that. You never know whether a horse will get to Grand Prix, but with All at Once I was betting that it would be possible. Yessin also has a Moroccan passport and that increases his chances of attending the Olympic Games. The Games are always a long way, but as a Dutch person there is much more competition."*

Yessin: *"As I said before, I'm not much of a competitive rider, but with All at Once that's a different story. When the crowd goes crazy in the World Cup final, it's quite a thrill. There are also few horses that give a better feeling. All at Once feels like a very fast car driving through a busy city. The steering wheel is sensitive, and you have to be careful with the accelerator pedal. A few percent can easily be added. He loses out on the easy parts, such as entering and stopping. The goal is to score at the top of his game in Paris."*

Willeke: *"I have believed in All at Once from day one. As a foal he usually stood at a distance, his full sister Fynona was much tougher. He always had that special character, very sensitive and yet never dishonest. When he came out of rearing, we spent a few hours getting the halter on. That was definitely not out of meanness, because he really is the sweetest horse in the stable, but he is super sensitive. He was not a stallion that you could put in the corner and say it was going to happen now."*

Yessin: *"You actually see the same thing with his offspring. They can be very sharp, but above all they are very sweet. On average, they have a talent for piaffe and passage. That Grand Prix work comes easily to them. In addition, they are beautiful and have a nice mouth."*

Willeke: *"They are very sensitive. This often means something different than what I think it means. If you want to continue in the sport, you need a sensitive horse. I often find his offspring handsome; they have a good conformation, and they can move well."*

Wynona RB

The story of All at Once begins when she is looking for a horse for her husband to ride. "Patrick did not want to go to a riding school, so it was important to find a large and stable horse. Of course, I also wanted it to be a nice horse. In my search I came across the then six-year-old

Wynona. This was definitely not a horse for Patrick, but that mare never left my mind. So I bought her too, in addition to that horse that my husband could learn to ride on. Sander Marijnissen showed Wynona in the Small Tour, while I flushed four embryos from her. Then I sold her again.”

Performance line

The elite preferent prestatie mare Wynona RB carries almost all the predicates that a mare can carry. The Gribaldi daughter, bred by M. van de Rijt from Nuenen, comes out of the Jazz daughter Ravolite, who is closely related to Vai Bruntink's Grand Prix horse Romanoff (ds Jazz) and the KWPN stallion Ebony (by Painted Black), who also competes at the highest level. This mother's line goes back via Contango to the Ulft daughter Favorite, bred by Huub van Helvoirt. She is the full sister of the well-known mare Gemsch, who is known as the mother of the KWPN stallion Norway (by Jazz) and was the foundation of much success at the Broere stud farm. All in all, a high-performance line from which many sport and inspection horses arise.



Fynona Elite preferent Ibop(dres) Sport(dres) D-OC (by Ampère out of Wynona RB Elite, Preferent, Prestatie, Ibop (dres), Sport (dres) D-OC by Gribaldi)

Invincible

Willeke produced four foals with Wynona, of which Fynona (the full sister of All at Once) is also very successful. As a three-year-old, Fynona was ninth at the National Championships and performed her IBOP for 88 points. With Marten Luiten, the elite mare was good for silver and bronze medals at the European Junior Championships, in the Young Riders this duo was

unbeatable, and they were European champions two years in a row. The duo is currently making strong progress in the GP-U25. In breeding, in addition to several predicate and sports mares, she also produced the designated stallion Masterpiece (by Vitalis).

“I regularly met Marten at international competitions, so I could also see how he treated his horses,” Willeke explains. “During his pony days, the management of that pony was very well thought out. He didn't have a horse for the Juniors and I thought Fynona could suit him. She is very easy and very eager to learn- a dream to ride, but also very afraid of other horses. Marten was there with a big smile from day one, he immediately had a good feeling about it. For me, the advantage is that I can continue flushing for ET this way. At first, I did that because she is the full sister of All at Once, but now also because she competes at the highest level herself. With a lot of time and energy, the two have really become a great team.”

Big dose of luck

The line of All at Once and Fynona is certainly not the only line that Willeke breeds with. She still lives partly on the offspring of the foals that she bought at the start of her breeding business about fifteen years ago. Mares such as Darabel (by Westpoint), Honeymoon (by Hotline) and Ice Princess STH (by Davino V.O.D, dam of Opoque) have brought Stal 104 a lot. This also applies to the Small Tour mare Atilinda M (by Negro, dam of Jameson RS2) and her daughter Lara's Junior horse Fariska (by Vivaldi), who are also used for breeding. D-Day daughter Tolivia has yielded a lot to Willeke in terms of her own offspring, and we often see her son Vitalis in the breeding farm in Wijdewormer.



Jameson RS2 (by Blue Hors Zack out of Atilinda M Elite, Preferent, Prestatie, Ibop (dres), Sport (dres) D-OC by Negro)

Recipe for success

How did you get so successful? “What a question,” the breeder from Wijde wormer laughs modestly. “I notice that people think that I now have all the wisdom- I am often asked how I do it. First of all, I think I was very lucky. My interest in breeding came when I was pregnant myself. I was standing on the side and then you look around. I did do some breeding, but I did it with a show jumping mare. Those were quite nice horses, but not of the quality I actually wanted. I actually switched from purely broodmares to mares that also compete in sports, where I rinse embryos, or we apply ICSI.”

“I look very closely at mare lines, because in my opinion sport is the most important thing. I think my biggest asset is that I breed my own sport mares. They are with me for a reason: the conformation and movement appeal to me, their pedigree is correct, and on top of that I know everything about the mares. What are they like in the ring? What problems do we run into with them in training? How do they behave in the stable? Are they smart and cooperative enough? I think that gives me a very complete picture of all the pluses and minuses.”

Breeding choices

“When I make stallion choices, I again look very closely at the sport, and I regularly use my own stallions or stallions bred by me. Of course, it is a pitfall that you no longer keep a fresh perspective when it comes to choosing a stallion, but I really look carefully to see whether something fits or not. When I see a horse move, I really want to get goosebumps. But breeding is difficult. You make things up on paper and try to combine minus and plus. But sometimes that plus becomes a plus, and sometimes that minus remains a minus. It just depends on how the genes fall. Good starting material is always a must. After a while you can say something about the inheritance of a mare. My best mares really stamp. I sometimes find that difficult with stallions, especially when they are young. Also, when it comes to character, it is sometimes very difficult to find out the whole truth. The KWPN could be a bit more transparent about that.”

Selection

“I find it very difficult to judge foals. The question is whether they will grow out as you expect. I therefore never sell them as foals but select who I will keep or sell when they are three. I notice that my selection is becoming increasingly strict. The horses we continue with, are almost never disappointing. With some horses I know it is there, but if they are still a bit weak or young, it may take a little longer and they get that time. It is important to me that I see potential in the horse and believe in it myself. Impress Taonga (by Vitalis) is a good example of this. He showed some very good moves as a young horse, but he was still very young, and he needed time. He was recently sold to the Australian Mary Hanna. Yessin later said that he could probably be better than All at Once. Commerce certainly also plays a role within my company. With so many horses you sometimes must sell, so that the company can be self-sustaining.”

Little to wish for

Having bred several approved stallions, including one Olympic stallion, Young horses that compete for European Championship medals, several Grand Prix horses, the NMK champion and the champion of the stallion inspection, there is little left to be desired for Willeke Bos. What else does she dream of? "I hope things continue to go well. I hope that I will continue to breed such nice horses and that my own horses will make me happy every day. That is what I do it for," concludes the dressage horse breeder of the year.



Opoque (by All at Once out of Ice Princess STH Elite, Ibop (dres), Sport (dres) D-OC by Davino V.O.D.)

Approved KWPN stallions bred by Willeke Bos of Stal 104

All at Once – Ampère x Gribaldi <https://www.kwpn.nl/database?paard=P-472574>

Jameson RS2 – Blue Hors Zack x Negro <https://www.kwpn.nl/database?paard=P-527447>

Kilimanjaro – Bordeaux x Westpoint <https://www.kwpn.nl/database?paard=P-576209>

Obsession Taonga – Vitalis x All at Once <https://www.kwpn.nl/database?paard=P-632727>

One Two Three – Vivaldi x D-Day <https://www.kwpn.nl/database?paard=P-632724>

Opoque – All at Once x Davino V.O.D. <https://www.kwpn.nl/database?paard=P-632726>

Find all the KWPN horses bred by Stal 104 HERE: <https://www.kwpn.nl/database?Paard=P-632726>