

1993

# A serene way of winning

Serena Morgan  
and Cassander  
won two classes  
at the national  
championships,  
only the sixth  
dressage outing  
for the stallion.

Anne Ince  
reports

It was against all the rules of the game - Serena Morgan went to Holland with a friend - on the shopping list was a strong Warmblood foundation mare with good bloodlines for herself, while the friend was looking at show jumpers. It was the last day of their trip and Serena had given up any hope of getting the mare she wanted so she was clad in jeans and sneakers and the last call was to look at jumpers.

There was this young three year old stallion, unbroken, very good paces, only medium size, but he filled the eye. She says: "It was possible to see what a nice character he was, even though he had not been 'anglecized', in fact he was just a commodity that had been produced to be sold. Though he had been lunged, and was used to a bridle and saddle, no one had ever sat on him. There was some consternation when I said I was not buying unless I could ride him. After all there is no point in buying a competition horse unless you know it is comfortable."

The stallion was lunged for five minutes then Serena said to the man: "Don't you dare let him go as I get on!" She climbed on board without a problem. "I asked him to go forward and he trotted, so I said the chap could let go as I knew the horse was used to lunging. In fact he just trotted on the circle, a bit tensely for the first couple of minutes, but was fine once he realised that this was all that was being asked of him." "She's a brave girl," said her partner, David Pincus, who had not been present. "I would never have done that!"

When Cassander, Cassis for short, arrived in England he continued to demonstrate his fantastic temperament, but when starting serious work, a mare he was covering lashed out and the injury kept him off the road for a long time. His appearance at Goodwood to take both the Shell Gas Novice and Elementary Championships was only his sixth dressage outing.

The ebullient, well made up, unplaited eight year old made quite an impact, particularly in the more difficult test. Serena was not too happy with the Novice performance as Cassis

became unsettled when another competitor canter pirouetted right under his nose just as he was about to go into the arena. Later she was dismayed to hear it rumoured that the horse was unplaited because he was vicious.

"He was unplaited because he looks better that way. He has a massive crest and a heavy mane, we just don't feel plaiting enhances his looks. Mr Nyblaeus, when Mrs Gold was criticised for not using white tape, said it didn't make any difference how you plait, it is the dressage that matters. In fact Cassis is not a naughty horse, all the girls ride him. He'll cover a mare in the school and then you can work him, or the other way round. Once he has his protective boots and a lunge line on he knows he is to cover something and he comes out like a lion, but put him in a headcollar and he is just a big pony."

"I love my horse because I love my horse, the fact that he won is a bonus. It was lovely for me and for the girls and we had a great party back home. So many people who have his foals were just as thrilled."

Only after his purchase did Serena start to delve into the horse's bloodlines to discover just how good they were. His dam, a successful Preferenz graded mare, was by Porta, a Grand Prix stallion by Polafirst who only lived for one season but produced five graded stallions out of it. "Cassis' father threw Santiago, an international event horse, and our stallion goes like stink across country!" she says proudly.

David comments: "We can trace him back a long way. You can get a report on each stallion, what they cross well with, what movement they have got, the good and the bad characteristics, how trainable they are. People over here cannot imagine the amount of data available."

Serena admits that as well as riding horses of the calibre of Cassis she aspires to breed successful competition horses. "The Continentals are tending to specialise for jumping or dressage. But a dressage horse has to be something of a showman and if you breed for that alone you will breed a wimp, not a real dressage star. That little bit of practical, functional, athletic ability only seen in the jumper plus good paces, good temperament and above all trainability is what is needed for the dressage horse. Discard the performance end and you will get a pleasant horse without the vigour and the necessary killer instinct. The role of the mare with sporting bloodlines and preferably ability is a very important part of the equation." □

I love my  
horse; the fact  
that he won  
is a bonus



Goodwood, September '92