

The Lusitano Collection™



*Where Dreams Do
Come True*

The Lusitano Collection™ International Horse Auction in West Palm Beach, Florida, is not your typical horse auction. The selection of four- and five-year old classically-trained Lusitanos imported from two of the finest breeders in Brazil -- Interagro Farms and Coudelaria Rocas do Vouga -- are available to buyers to ride, by appointment, for two days prior to the auction. During that time, guests have an opportunity to talk to the horses' breeders and trainers and examine the x-rays and medical records evaluated by a board of veterinarians from the Palm Beach Equine Clinic. Interagro Farm Managing Director Cecilia Gonzaga elaborates, "We care about each and every horse. We have handpicked the healthiest and most desirable sport horses from our breeding farms for this event. Our goal is to match the right horse to the right rider."

Director of USA Training - Interagro Farm Export Program and international rider Heather Bender comments, "We use a comprehensive process to select a combination of FEI caliber horses that may be suitable for professional, amateur and junior riders." Throughout the year, Heather and Cecilia speak to clients, new ones as well as returning buyers, so they are familiar with what riders are seeking. "When we look at the horses, we get an idea of which ones will be appropriate for this market. Also, we have the benefit of holding some back for the 2011 program if we feel they haven't completely matured," Heather offers.

The advantages of selecting sport horses from large breeding farms become obvious when Cecilia describes the geography and atmosphere at Interagro Farms. Established in 1974 when her father Dr. Paulo Gonzaga imported four mares and one stallion from Portugal, Interagro Farms is surrounded by picturesque countryside. Paddocks surround the center where indoor and outdoor arenas along with a breeding facility and stallion barns are

International Horse Auction

located. Mares and young horses are grouped in different pasture divisions where they remain until around age three when they begin formal training.

Kate Tremain, a Massachusetts resident and working student at Interagro Farms for six months, recalled, "The farm is 1,200 acres with open grassy fields, an idyllic place for foals to grow up. Interagro supports a whole community of staff, from the trainers, maintenance workers, riders, a vet and his assistants, and they all make up a team who provide the best they can for the horses. All of the riders have regular sessions with a head trainer to make sure they are on track and proceeding correctly in their work, and that every horse gets individualized attention." Kate fell in love with one of her "pupils," Zenith Interagro, a light gray stallion, couldn't bear to part with him and bought him when she returned to the USA.

Kate and Zenith are one of eight pairs of "former" Collection horses and riders which are appearing during the Showcase Reception on Friday evening, February 26th, when The Jim Brandon Equestrian Center will be transformed into a charming hacienda. Hors d'oeuvres and wine will flow as guests wander through giant wooden doors where a fountain ripples under the soft lighting of iron chandeliers hanging from tent poles. The eight-Lusitano quadrille is directed by Heather Bender who has served as a member of the USDF quadrille committee and as a qualified quadrille judge. These eight Lusitanos, bought by different people between 2005 and 2009, all grew up together on Interagro Farms. The four stallions, three geldings and one mare, all gray horses, will move in unison to the tune of lively Brazilian music selected by Cecilia Gonzaga and her husband, Christiano Rainer. Because these horses were groomed in open cross ties and were ridden side by side in large groups when they began their training, it helped them become better socialized, Heather suggested. She further noted, "Because they are used to



continued on page 24

Where Dreams Do Come True



working closely together, this has made putting a quadrille together an easier project."

Three owners are riding their horses, and five trainers are riding the others. Pia Aragão, a Swedish-born international rider and twice-Brazilian dressage champion who works as a trainer on Interagro Farms, is riding Xenocrates Interagro, the horse she once successfully competed in Brazil before he was exported and sold in The 2009 Collection. Millie McCoy, Xenocrates' owner, visited her horse's birthplace this past summer and shared that being there, "gave me great respect for the care and concern of Xon's breeders and a deeper understanding of the type of home where my horse was raised." Heather who is riding Zairo Interagro, owned by Priscilla

Baldwin, and Leah Winston who is riding Amintas Interagro, owned by Sherie and Al Zobec, currently train the horses out of the same barn in Palm City, Florida, and have had the opportunity to work together for months. Other participants may arrive only weeks before the performance, but Heather isn't concerned because she knows all of the horses so well and trusts the riders' abilities. In reality, the performance won't be finalized until the final two weeks. She said, "We may have to add a few bars to the music. It all depends on the timing. That's where the creativity comes in." Heather added that "some will piaffe, do half passes and flying changes, but the real beauty in a quadrille occurs when the horses are in sync, a necessity when 'threading the needle' in perfect harmony across the arena, an audience favorite."

Also during the evening, The Lusitano Collection™ will auction off a rose gold plateau ring donated by the exquisite Italian designer

Vhernier to benefit its official charitable partner for the event, Equestrian Aid Foundation which assists those in the horse community suffering from catastrophic injury or illness during their time of need. The featured event that evening is the parade of horses to be auctioned, when guests get another look at their favorite Lusitano under the lights of the grand arena with the giant 11 ft by 20 ft inflatable screen flashing images of each horse running free and being trained under saddle.

The event culminates on Saturday, February 27th, when guests dine inside the tented area and sit at white cloth tables set with candles and white roses to enjoy cuisine catered by Christafara's, well known in Palm Beach for its fresh, healthy, contemporary menu served with a creative flair. Colorful heart-pumping entertainment will be provided by Paulo Gualano's performing company which includes female samba dancers wearing brilliant head-dresses and tiny bikinis and "The Rhythm Beaters," men who create a pulsating, contagious beat with their drums. A native Brazilian, Gualano has provided percussions for Gloria Estefan's recording of "Destiny" and has worked with Quincy Jones. Last year when the samba dancers gyrated in the center of the room, danced with willing guests and paraded around the tables, it was reminiscent of a festive Rio de Janeiro Carnival celebration.. Each year, when the dancers depart, a nervous chatter begins to build as potential buyers scan the auction list and prepare to get down to business.

Seasoned equestrian auctioneer Tom Biederman, who comes with ten years of experience from Fasig-Tipton Company, North America's oldest Thoroughbred auction company, is directing this year's bidding during the auction of the Lusitano horses. Last year, when announcer Claudia Anderson introduced each Lusitano, the horse's image flashed on the giant screen, and the atmosphere began to heat up like klieg lights. The auctioneer maintains a rapid-fire repetition while assistants run across the aisles like dervishes raising two fingers or three, indicating thousands

of dollars, as they encourage the bidding. Buyers, like Athene von Hirschberg from Connecticut, remembers the thrill of raising her bidding paddle for the first and only time during the 2008 auction after furious bidding for her "dream horse;" She reported that she leaped into the air when the hammer banged down to confirm hers as the highest bid. "It was passionate," she recalled. Trainer Leah Winston attended the 2009 auction with her sponsors, Sherie and Al Zobec, who owned one Collection Lusitano and had no intention of buying another. Sherie said her husband wanted a bidding paddle anyway. Over dinner, Leah commented on one horse she'd been watching, Amintas Interagro, and simply said that "he'd be the one she'd get" because of his outstanding talent. When he trotted out into the arena during the auction, Leah muttered, "There he is!" Sherie turned to her husband, "This is the one who is supposed to be the best." Moments later, Leah was absolutely shocked when Al Zobec won the bid on her "dream horse." "I'm the luckiest person in the world," Leah says about the talented gray stallion she now trains and shows.

The fifth anniversary of The Lusitano Collection™ - and the third year it will take place in the United States, The 2010 Lusitano Collection™

International Horse Auction will bring horse lovers together in a lavish environment, provide entertainment and excitement, but most importantly, it hopes to fulfill the dreams of those longing for that special horse to own and ride. For tickets or more information about The 2010 Lusitano Collection™ International Horse Auction, go to **www.lusitanocollection.com or call the ticket office at (877) 546-7393.**

The 2010 sponsors of the event include the publications: Canadian Horse Journal, Dressage Today, Horse Connection Magazine, Palm Beach Post, The Friesian Blood & Baroque Horse Magazine and Warmbloods Today; as well as Red Barn, The Jim Brandon Equestrian Center and Cantor & Webb P.A.