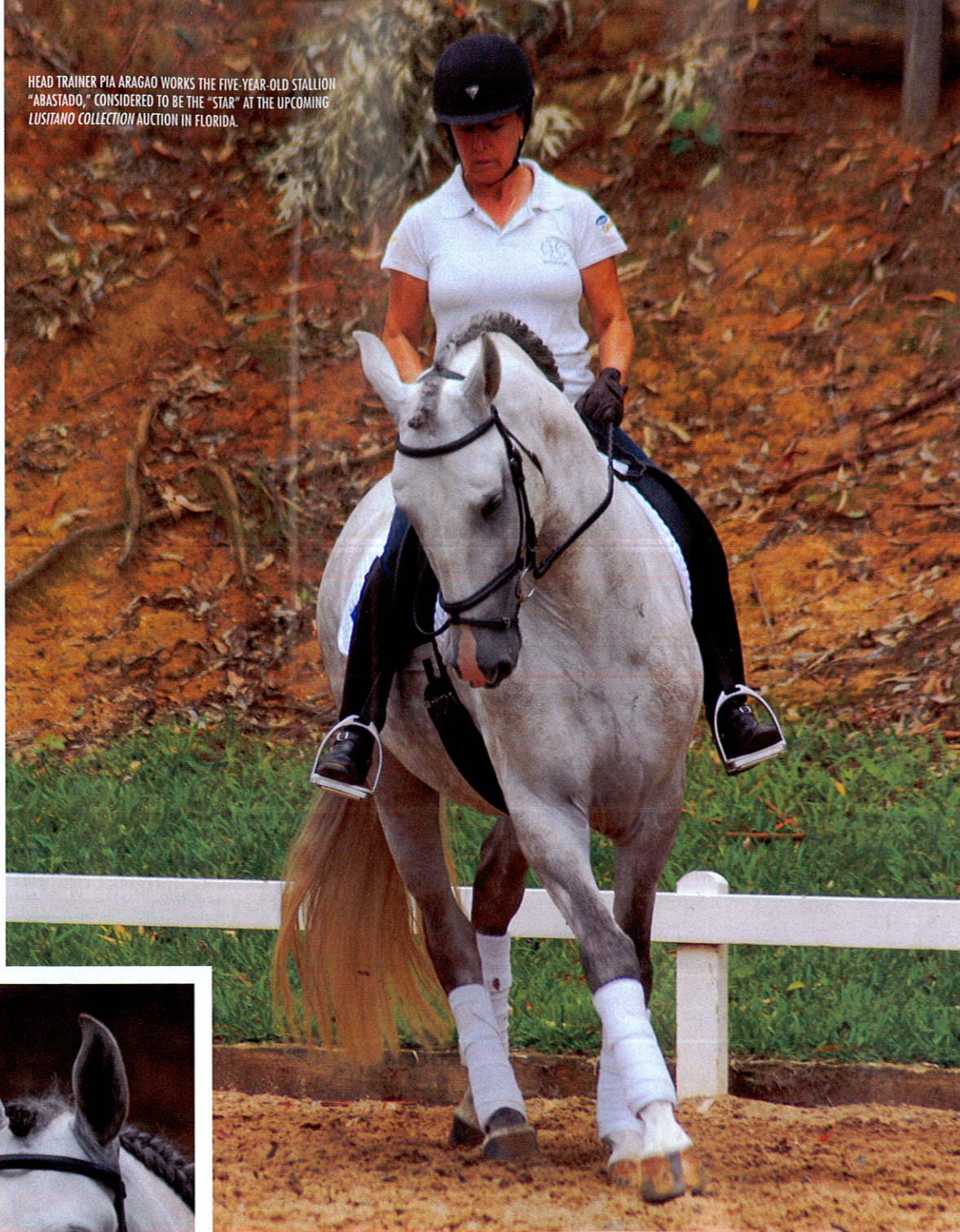
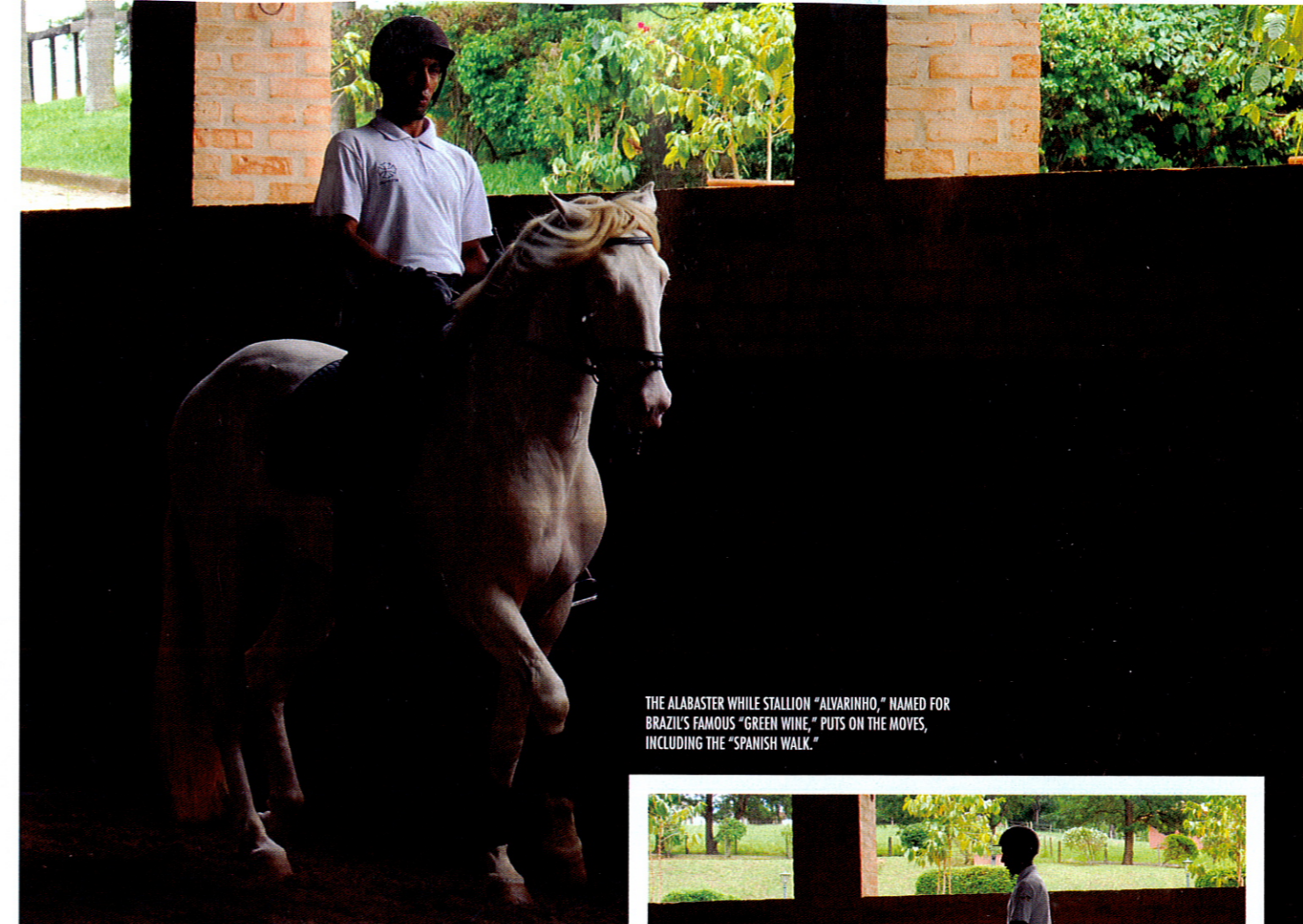


HEAD TRAINER PIA ARAGAO WORKS THE FIVE-YEAR-OLD STALLION "ABASTADO," CONSIDERED TO BE THE "STAR" AT THE UPCOMING LUSITANO COLLECTION AUCTION IN FLORIDA.



The two stallion barns flank an open courtyard, and the boys can see each other and interact. It really is a testament to the demeanor of the Lusitano that the stallions can get along so well with each other. It is also the product of raising these horses together in herds. This enables the horse to grow up knowing where it fits in the equine chain of command. It produces calmer, more confident horses, two of the traits that make the Lusitano such a wonderful riding horse.

Dr. Gonzaga writes about the Lusitano in his book, *O Cavalos Lusitano*. "They are strong, vigorous horses, obedient, generous of character, agile, and articulate, elegant, distinct and arrogant, proud, lordly and noble of spirit; they are also docile, intelligent and submissive, easy to teach for every horse activity. Such characteristics make the Lusitano the best saddle horse in the world."



THE ALABASTER WHILE STALLION "ALVARINHO," NAMED FOR BRAZIL'S FAMOUS "GREEN WINE," PUTS ON THE MOVES, INCLUDING THE "SPANISH WALK."

The following day I watched several young riders from Sweden working horses in the outdoor dressage ring to prepare them for The Lusitano Collection auction in Florida. They all rode under the watchful eye of head trainer, Pia Aragao. Pia has worked for the Gonzaga family for over seven years and has been the head trainer at Interagro for almost five years. Born in Sweden and a naturalized citizen of Brazil, Pia rode the Interagro foundation stallion, Nirvana, in the Pan Am Games and has competed at the Winter Equestrian Festival in Wellington, winning the freestyle in 2006. Pia not only trains and competes with the Interagro horses, but helped usher in FEI regulations to the Brazilian equestrian tradition. One of those regulations is Pia's requirement that riders wear helmets. This might not sound like an earth-shattering move, but Brazilian's mindset held that if you rode a horse with a helmet, than the horse was unsafe. Of course, after riding one of these Lusitanos, unsafe was a word that never entered my mind.

**OF COURSE, AFTER RIDING ONE OF THESE LUSITANOS, UNSAFE WAS A WORD THAT NEVER ENTERED MY MIND.**

I asked Pia what she loved about the breed. "Lusitanos don't say no," she replied. "They give, give, and give. Sometimes they give too much, to riders who don't deserve it," she said, betraying an obvious fondness for these horses. Pia then asked if we were ready to take a ride and the moment I had been waiting for since boarding the plane had arrived.



Touring the farm from the back of a Lusitano stallion was the highlight of this trip. Three of us, Pia, my wife Valerie, and myself saddled up three stallions and rode the lush grounds of the farm. These stallions were attentive but not skittish, were comfortable and confident with more than enough spirit to tap. Any nervousness we had riding stallions was quickly put out to pasture as these horses more than took care of us. And Val was riding a three-year-old!