

## 2009 Lusitano Collection

### The 2009 Lusitano Collection Auction: An Event to Remember

March 17, 2009

When the 25 stallions, six mares and three geldings initially settled into the permanent stalls at The Jim Brandon Equestrian Center in West Palm Beach, Florida, for the second annual Lusitano Collection Auction on February 12, 2009, the buzz among Auction attendees had already begun. Armed with a pen and the pre Auction Catalogue, women and men wearing riding boots studied each horse and tried to get a reading on others standing or sitting nearby. *Have you been to other Collection Auctions? How many tryout appointments did you make? Do you have a favorite?*



The trainers and riders from Interagro Farm and Coudelaria Rocas de Vouga began to familiarize the horses with the tryout arenas and main covered arena where the Showcase and Auction would be held while workers continued setting up tents, screens, lighting and sound systems. The catering staff from Christafaro's in West Palm Beach bustled about setting up their wares while the Uruguayan Champagne and wine sponsors, Champagne Las Rosas and De Lucca and Pizzorno Wines, filled the bar. Additional sponsors provided materials and set up booths: Cantor & Webb P. A. Attorneys at Law, an award-winning firm which represents high net worth international private clients in tax estate planning, wealth preservation and real property and commercial matters; Lazcar

International, family-owned and operated specialists in shipping livestock worldwide; Palm Beach Equine Clinic, a 24-hour full service veterinary and surgical facility with offices throughout the USA; The Palm Beach Post, a respected daily newspaper in Palm Beach County and the Treasure Coast; and Wellington Magazine, a high gloss publication featuring stories about the people and events in the Wellington area.

During the riding tryouts, the



Lusitanos accepted one rider after another with the patient temperament for which they are known. Potential buyers from Canada and from all over the USA began to share their personal stories more freely. A law professor from Georgia who knew Heather Bender, the Interagro Farm training consultant, was looking for a new horse; she rode a Lusitano for the first time ever and found them “so steady, sensitive in a good way ...with an ease of connection and lightness.” A couple from California was returning after buying three horses from previous Lusitano Collection Auctions. Another rider, a woman from the Midwest who owned an Interagro stallion and boarded several other Collection Lusitanos at her facility, knew Heather and had come to see the offerings. One of Interagro Farm’s most loyal clients, an elegant lady from Pennsylvania, returned with her trainer after purchasing six horses in 2008. (She eventually took home four horses this year!)

The Welcoming Reception with the Showcase Parade of Horses was held on Thursday evening, February 19, from 5-8pm. Two USA Bronze dressage team medalists from the 1992 Olympics, Carol Lavell and Mike Poulin, arrived early to spend a moment with Heather before she had to ride. The two Olympians also met Juan Matute, member of the 2008 Olympic Spanish dressage team.



The evening began with a freestyle performance by 2008 Brazilian dressage team member Luiza Tavares de Almeida who at 16 was the youngest person to ever ride in the Olympics. Horses trotted and cantered around the ring in twos and threes during the Showcase in front of a giant flat screen which showed each horse running free and being ridden when in Brazil. The closing act was a pair of stunning Robinson Lusitano driving horses fitted in shining harnesses with Peter Van

Borst, American representative for Interagro Farm, in the driving seat accompanied by his lovely daughter Thea and his adorable Jack Russell, Toby. William Robinson, the largest Lusitano breeder in the USA, has bought and imported approximately 30 horses from Interagro Farm.

The Auction was held the following evening, and people dressed up for the affair. The wine, champagne and liquor flowed, guests mingled in the lounge area and many visited the sponsors’ booths. The 2009 Lusitano Collection® honored two charitable recipients this year with a portion of the proceeds from the sale of tickets going to The Jim Brandon Equestrian Center and The American Cancer Society, which held a Silent Auction. To add to ACS’s bounty, the jeweler Judith Ripka generously created an exclusive necklace specifically for the silent auction.

At 6:30pm, guests were directed through the giant wooden doors past sconces into a black carpeted *hacienda* where a fountain rippled amid lush plants. Beneath soft lighting provided by iron chandeliers hanging from



the tent poles, wicker chairs were tucked under white cloth tables set with candles and white-roses. Six-foot-tall propane heaters provided some relief from the chilly evening, which dipped down to 52 degrees. The room quickly heated up when five bronze-skinned voluptuous women wearing colorful headdresses and bikinis with thongs entered with fanfare. Accompanied by “The Rhythm Beaters,” men who create a pulsating, contagious beat with their drums, the samba dancers smiled and gyrated in the center of the room. After dancing with willing guests and parading around the tables (Several men were seen taking photos of the women from behind with their cell phones!), the samba dancers left, and the guests were ready to get down to business.



Auctioneer Paul Martin handled the bidding with three bid spotters who helped recognize the bidders and encourage them on. Claudia Anderson, the Master of Ceremonies introduced each horse and rider while the horse’s image flashed on the giant 11ft by 20ft inflatable screen. Bidders kept looking at one of the two flat screens which kept a running tally on the high bid. Martin’s rapid-fire repetition, “do I hear “40...40... 40?” along with the assistants

raising two fingers, three fingers, indicating thousands of dollars, drove buyers to confer in haste whether to bid so they could clinch the deal. Once Martin banged his hammer and pronounced, “sold,” guests breathed once more and the rise in energy quickly climbed as another horse was brought in.

One of the most amusing moments came when Alter Interagro, the 16-hand bay stallion, who was being ridden by Heather Bender, suddenly noticed that an image of him running was being displayed on the giant screen! Alter stopped dead in his tracks and stood at full attention, totally focused on watching himself. He would have remained there had the rider not gently asked him to move on.

There was a tie for the highest bid horse: Alcacer Interagro and Xenocrates Interagro shared the honor, both selling at \$65,000 USD. During the two hours of bidding and cajoling, worried faces and smiles of glee, guests intermittently dipped pita and flat breads into cous cous caviar, Moroccan caponata, hummus and spinach artichoke and roasted garlic and eggplant dips. They also nibbled on sliced herb and pepper encrusted dry salamis and grilled vegetables. When the Auction concluded, the waiters served a duo plate of braised baby beef Osso Bucco in a savory Merlot reduction and pan seared grouper with roasted lemon tapenade on



a bed of mushroom and wild rice flan along side a steamed asparagus bundle. The piece d' resistance dessert was a bombe glace with raspberry, coconut and passion fruit sorbets garnished with a horse motif. Wine and champagne flowed freely.

Cecilia Gonzaga and her father, Paulo Gonzaga, moved through the room to congratulate those who had bought their horses and posed for photographs. Manuel Tavares de Almeida visited tables to greet his buyers, and he, too, posed for pictures. Smiles abounded. When the riders, trainers and staff entered the tent to join the guests, the event had turned into a fabulous party, a festival of joy and celebration. Each 2009 buyer was given a copy of Dr. Paulo Gonzaga's fifth book, *The Lusitano Horse, Basic Lineages Volume I*. The energy felt under the tent that evening seemed to derive from the passion and magic Dr. Gonzaga writes about the Lusitano in his book, *O Cavalo 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."

Quietly munching hay in their stalls, the Auction horses would soon be transported to their new homes to become acquainted with their first owners. Together, each 2009 Lusitano Collection® horse and his owner will become partners on a personal journey, whether it be the show ring, pleasure, breeding or jumping. The Lusitano Collection® looks forward to hearing about everyone's experiences and sharing them with others in the Collection Family.

For more information please visit our website: [www.lusitanocollection.com](http://www.lusitanocollection.com)

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