

affiliations

Gypsy



Gypsy Horse Association

Doubts have been expressed that the Gypsy Horse is able to compete successfully against other breeds in driving disciplines which require speed, stamina, and agility. The Gypsy was bred to be a plodder, some believe, able to walk all day but at a slow, plodding pace. However, this is far from true, as two of Villa Vanners' horses showed when they won in competition against horses of other breeds in the Nature Coast Horse Driving Trial held at the Black Prong Equestrian Center in Bronson, Florida, on January 24-25.

A Horse Driving Trial, or HDT, is similar to a Combined Driving Event, or CDE. Like a CDE, it consists of three separate competitions whose scores are combined at the end – a driven dressage test, a cross-country marathon, and a cone driving competition. However, an HDT differs from a CDE in that the cross-country marathon is shorter but consists solely of the obstacles and hazards portion of the marathon. Although shorter in distance than the CDE's marathon, an HDT's 4 to 7 kilometers is not a trivial distance.

Gypsy stallion Villa Vanners Romeo won the marathon phase of the Preliminary Single Pony competition and placed second overall in Preliminary Single Pony. At the Preliminary Level, the marathon is a timed competition, and so the competi-



Photo: PICS OF YOU

Villa Vanners Lenka driven by Rachel Nicely was Overall Dressage Training Level Champion, Nature Coast HDT.



Photo: PICS OF YOU

Villa Vanners Lenka, Marathon Leg of the Nature Coast HDT.

tor who negotiates the obstacles and hazards of the course in the shortest amount of time wins this portion of the competition. Romeo's trainer, Rachel Nicely of Riverplains Farm (Strawberry Plains Tennessee) states, "This is an amazing feat for the Gypsy breed! Many people have been concerned that Gypsies are not fast enough to be competitive or agile enough." Romeo's performance disproves this concern, Nicely believes. The key, she states, is proper conditioning and training as well as an experienced driver.

Also competing at Black Prong was Villa Vanners Lenka, who not only won the Training Single Pony Class but also had the best dressage score in the whole Training Level Division,



Photo: PICS OF YOU

Villa Vanners Lenka driven by Rachel Nicely, Cones Portion of the Nature Coast HDT.

comprised of Training Single Pony, Pony Pairs, Single Horse, and Horse Pairs. Lenka was therefore the Overall Dressage Training Level Champion of the Nature Coast HDT.

Although not new to driving, the Gypsy Horse is new to the American driving community to which Gypsy owners such as Villa Vanners are demonstrating just what the breed is capable of. Kudos to Villa Vanners for blazing a path for the Gypsy in high profile driving competitions such as this one.

In other news, members Lynn Strauman and Ann Claycomb of Gypsy Horses West of Lodi, California, participated in the Fort Worth Stock Show & Rodeo on January 30-February 1 where Gypsy Horses were present for the first time. Twenty classes including the championship classes were held. The event no doubt allowed many who had never before seen a Gypsy Horse to do so.

And Villa Vanners' matched team Tango and Flash participated in a spring foxhunt with the Tennessee Valley Hunt Club at Riverplains Farm. Driven by Frank Nicely, they "hilltopped," following and observing the hunt.

Next month please join us for coverage of GHA's first Ohio Equine Affaire. Seven member farms and fifteen horses are scheduled to attend.

Submitted by Mary Graybeal