

RISING FROM THE ASHES: Tamarack Select's Story of Persistence

by Christine DeHerrera

Tamara Smith has always loved Thoroughbreds. Even as a junior rider with gaited horses, she managed to begin her Thoroughbred breeding program with a single mare and an interest in researching pedigrees. Over the years, this fascination with bloodlines led to the development of her sport horse breeding program Tamarack Select. The fates have not always been kind to Tamara Smith and she has had to rebuild her program time and again. But her commitment and belief in the athletic ability of the Thoroughbred has always given her the energy to stick to her course, just like a Thoroughbred racehorse.

The Early Years

Smith grew up showing gaited horses and hunters and jumpers. A lot of the show horses were racetrack rejects. Smith noticed that some of the best horses came out of a particular racehorse farm. They could all jump, but they did not all have the disposition suited to the rigors of show horse life. This knowledge led Smith to investigate the bloodlines and she discovered that certain crosses produced athleticism without the right temperament, but that other crosses produced horses with the right brains and athletic ability.

Smith's career with horses took several turns including years of showing and training Arabians, but the Thoroughbred was always a mainstay of her life. She developed horses off the track for new careers in jumping, but she longed to raise Thoroughbreds that would not bear the mental and physical scars from time spent at the track. She saved her resources and eventually imported two Thoroughbred stallions from South America that met her requirements for athletic ability and good bloodlines.

The stallions were progressing in their training, and showing so much promise as jumping horses that Smith gave up her job training Arabians to focus on the jumpers full time. Then tragedy struck. A barn fire claimed the lives of the two stallions plus four other horses Smith had

in her program. She was devastated and decided to get out of the horse business. This self-imposed exile from the horses lasted ten years until a handsome horse named Napur lured Smith back into the horse show world.

Napur

Napur was a successful jumping stallion that had been a Keeneland Sales yearling and successful racehorse. Smith became enthralled with the attractive stallion and followed his career as he passed from successful futures horse to World Cup class competitor and international grand prix jumper. Although she had few financial resources, when an opportunity presented itself to purchase the stallion Smith worked to make the dream happen.



Napur became the founding stallion of Tamarack Select. "He shook me out of the doldrums; I've always had a lot of thank him for," Smith said. Napur's babies possessed his wonderful attitude and jumping ability. His son Get A Clue was individual gold medalist at the North American Young Rider Championships.

Napur was helping Smith realize her breeding goals. "My intent has been to preserve and promote the very specific Thoroughbred bloodlines that are very successful internationally. I want to stand stallions that are capable of producing performers that are successful at the top levels of the A circuit and beyond," she said.

Jasprin

Another top quality Thoroughbred came into Smith's life in the form of the 17 hand bay stallion. Jasprin had been a very successful show hunter winning three horse



of the year titles in green conformation and regular working hunters. Jasprin's excellent show record, conformation and temperament earned him 130.8 points in the 100-day stallion testing usually reserved for the finest warmblood stallions. His score ranked him among the top stallions of all time. In addition, he was able to pass on his qualities to his progeny and his babies have been very successful in the sport horse breeding and hunter classes at top A rated shows. His son Zydeco was undefeated in three-year-old hunter breeding classes.

Crashing Down

A little more than a year ago, Tamarack Select was a successful breeding operation, with loyal clientele, two beautiful breeding stallions and successful foal crops on the ground. Then Tamara Smith's world shattered. Jasprin was found dead. Although he died of natural causes, he was not an old horse and his passing was unexpected. Smith was devastated and although she thought things could not get worse, they did. Three months later, in March 2001, Napur died. The older stallion "passed away peacefully in his pasture," Smith said. "He was so much fun to be around. I've always had a special place for him and I miss him desperately."

Tamarack Select had a dedicated following of serious breeders that were not only distressed at the loss of the stallions for their own sake, but also the loss of the bloodlines. Napur was a royally bred son of Damascus with Bold Ruler and My Babu on the bottom side of his pedigree. He traced to the athletic sires Bleinheim II, Nearco, and Teddy. Jasprin was also well bred with Royal Charger, Nearco, Hyperion, and Princequillo bloodlines.

Although Smith was grieving, she arranged to stand the Thoroughbred stallion Canadian Kid, sire of the 2000 Midwest Regional International Hunter Futurity Grand Champion Three Year Old.

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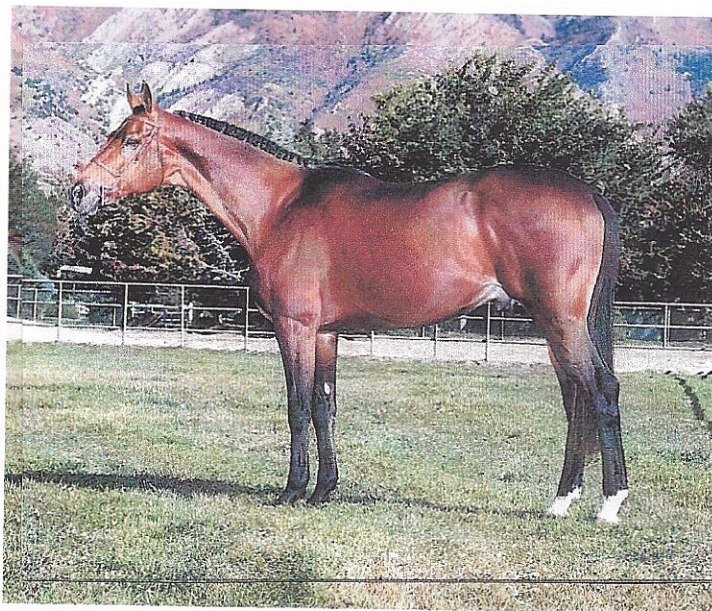
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She also began to look for other Thoroughbred stallions with the qualities that Napur and Jasprin possessed.

A New Era

Although Smith knew she could never replace Napur, she looked for stallions with similar pedigrees. She found Coconut Grove. Unfortunately, "Coco" was all but sold. European buyers were ready to import the stallion, but the seller decided to keep the horse in the United States and Tamarack Select became his new owner. As a grand prix performer, Coco won World Cup classes in Venezuela and competed at the Pan American, Centro American, and Caribbean Games. He also placed third in the US Open Championships and qualified for the American Invitational and AGA Championships. His performance ability comes from his bloodlines. "My fascination with his pedigree is that Coco's cross is similar to Napur's," Smith said. Coco has Bold Ruler on top and Damascus on the bottom. Both stallions shared a similar level of national and international success, as well as similar pedigrees. "This makes me believe that this extreme athleticism is not accidental; it comes through the pedigree," Smith said.

Smith found another stallion that met her requirements for good bloodlines, good looks, and good performance in Brooke Front. The 17.2 hand stallion was bred by Some Day Soon Farm and has won in the hunter, jumper, dressage, and combined training rings.



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American Bred Sport Horses

Although the numbers of imported European warmbloods has grown over the past twenty years, many riders prefer a horse that is more forward and more sensitive to the aids. "There has been a resurgence in interest in Thoroughbreds," Smith said. "For sheer heart and the will to try – a Thoroughbred will turn himself inside out to try to please you."

Smith has always believed that Americans can breed the best sport horses in the world. "Riders and trainers need to have more faith in our horses bred in the U.S.," Smith said. Europeans have always imported Thoroughbred stallions from the United States and England as improvement sires for their warmbloods. "[The Europeans] are very adept at locating our Thoroughbred jumper stallions and importing them. I had offers for Napur from Europe all the time," Smith said.

Smith's lifelong goal of producing Thoroughbred jumping horses has taken a new turn within the past year, but the dream lives on. Napur and Jasprin will not be forgotten. They reawakened an interest in American riders in Thoroughbred jumpers as well as made Tamara Smith's dream come true. "They put me on the map in a very short amount of time."