

## Sport Horses

*Mansfield, Georgia  
by Dana Clark*

Rewind back to 2009. Remember where you were in October? I will never forget the day. I was at Ashland Farm watching a schooling show with a friend. Through the start-gate, this stunning pair galloped in and immediately took command of the entire show grounds. For a few moments no one moved or spoke...spectators were aware of one thing, they were in the presence of an awesome force. I stopped dead in my tracks. I still remember my awe struck paralysis. (A finer pair of athletes had never impressed me so strongly.) This shining black stallion was leaping over the jump course like it was just a fun and easy playground. Ears up, eyes bright, knees tight and tidy, he folded and landed just like a cat. His keen expression and his scope was tempered with complete enthusiasm for his job at hand. And his rider was perfectly at ease with all this power and grace, equalling his ability with her flawless timing. The comfort and confidence the two had in each other was remarkable. Just as calmly and deftly as they had galloped in and sailed over the course, they were gone. Mystery rider and the dark horse came in quiet calm. No entourage. No fanfare. Just under the radar, spectators turning to the person standing next to them asking, "who were they?"



*Freedomhall and  
Erin Flynn*

Wanting to know, how could something this splendid be such an unknown? In this small, tightly interwoven niche of riders and breeders, how had they escaped attention before?

It took me weeks to find the owners of this fabulous stallion, and the rider who sat so effortlessly on this airborne athlete. But, when I finally was able to track them down, I found two generations of passionate horsewomen. The fresh faces of not just two, but three beautiful women, and the man who loves them, were the powerhouse that was quietly generating this energy. Their quiet fortitude matched their strong faith in God. And that faith is what has guided their successes and their passion to where it is now.

But where had they come from? This stunning and uber talented young rider, it turns out, had just graduated from Oglethorpe University, and her name was Erin Flynn. She was just returning to her riding career since graduating college, and hadn't been in the saddle since High School, ten years earlier. Her aunt was the owner/breeder of this remarkable young stallion. The stallion's name was "Freedomhall", and his owner/breeder's name was Sherry Smith. The reason no one knew them, YET, is because Sherry and her husband Don had recently relocated to Mansfield, Ga. from Jacksonville, Fla., where Sherry ran a 40 stall Hunter/Jumper and Dressage barn on 40 acres.



*Freedomhall*

Beside Sherry, was her sister Monica Flynn, who has lived in the Atlanta area for 33 years, and shares an immense breeding knowledge and experience of warmblood and warmblood crosses, so, along with Erin's riding ability and the patience and foresight of Sherry's husband Don, the magnificent 100 acre breeding farm called "Dogwood Sport Horses" in Mansfield, Ga. was established. The farm's history is as rich as the bloodlines of the horses that grace it's lush pastures. Now, embraced with beautiful, dark, three board fences, and spotted with a large pond and shade trees, Dogwood Sport Horses was purchased by Don Smith in 1996, while he was searching for land in the Covington area. Don had spent happy childhood summers near Covington with his grandparents, and his mother was born in the neighboring city of Mansfield, so when Don saw the land of the old Hayes Dairy Farm with the old barns that are still standing, and knew he had found the land he could enjoy his dream retirement on with his family. What had originally been a working dairy farm of 50 years, with tired barb wire fencing, and gently sloping hills, has now become the beautiful vision Don had when he first spotted the property. The lake, the arenas, the barns and the beautiful plantation style house are all integrated into this amazing training and breeding facility.

**DOGWOOD** *Sport Horses*





*Freedomhall*



And this is where Freedomhall has been raised since he moved to Georgia from Jacksonville as a yearling. This beautiful black stallion stands 16.3, and has perfect conformation, from the shining tip of his refined black ears to the bottom of his solid and square white legs. His breeding is superb; Florestan1, Caprilli, Donnerhall and Pik Bube. (I booked a breeding to my Morgan mare, Mojo, and was thrilled with my flashy chestnut colt I named, "Let Freedom Bling"). But this stallion was only one feather in the cap of Dogwood Sporthorses. For over 25 years, this family has consistently bred four generations of Premium Award winning sport horses. One of the first generations of Dogwood Sport Horses is currently competing successfully at Grand Prix Dressage in West Palm beach. His name is "Double 07." This breeding is a result of one of Dogwood's foundation Arab mares, and the stallion Donnerschlag. Along with consistently breeding Premium quality foals, there is the Site Champion Reserve Colt and "very special" Raphael Rousseau sired by Rousseau, and out of the wonderful Dogwood

mare, Stellar Hit, by Sandro Hit, that the family is keeping a closely guarded secret, next to his half brother sired by the world famous stallion, Moorlands Totilas.

This truly stunning, coming yearling is named "Totil Hit", but he is affectionately referred to as "Todo" by his family and fans, which appropriately translates to "everything" in Spanish.

*Stellar Hit out of Wolkenshow (Willow) by Sandro Hit with Moorland's Totilas X Stellar Hit foal, Totil Hit!*



In one of the pastures beside the mare and foals, and the young horse field, peacefully grazing and sun bathing, are the true legacy of Dogwood Sport Horses, three of the original foundation mares, ages 28, 30 and 33 years young. They hang out and enjoy their retirement, and oversee the daily activities of the farm with their kind eyes and remarkable genes.

I asked Sherry what the key was to her successful world class breeding program, (beside the obvious world class bloodlines) and she said with a smile in her voice, " GOD has used my relationships with people over the years to enlighten and

inspire me, but I have always been enamored with, and in awe of the creator of this majestic animal, more than the creation. I breed only for improvement of the breed, and with Divine Guidance." That is the answer to the lovely mystery I witnessed over three years ago. That is the source of the powerful force I witnessed. That is the power of creation.

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