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# MORGAN WINS INTERNATIONAL BATTLE OF THE BREEDS

By Suzy Lucine



Maximum Velocity takes victory passes at Toronto's Royal Horse Show with, left, Amy Champion and, right, Miller Young Fina (photos © Howard Schatzberg).

For the first time in the 96-year history of the Royal Horse Show, a Battle of the Breeds was held. Maximum Velocity, a 12-year-old Morgan gelding, made the victory pass with Miller Young Fina in the saddle.

The brainchild of David Freedman of Freedman's Harness, and Allan Ehrlick, another show committee member, the Battle of the Breeds was held in conjuncture with the Royal Winter Fair in Toronto, Canada, November 2–11. The event was open to all saddle seat breeds.

"I think there is a need for open English classes to be held at top level shows," said David Freedman. "This is an opportunity for

us to exhibit our saddle seat breeds before exhibitors and spectators of other breeds and disciplines.

"And the Royal Horse Show sold out both Friday and Saturday nights with 6,500 spectators, many of whom had never seen some of these saddle seat breeds." David continued.

When David worked with horse show organizers, including horse show manager Peter Doubleday, he had to promise a minimum of 12 entries and to secure prize money of \$20,000 or more. He received entry commitments and thanks to several generous sponsors, he obtained the prize money needed to hold the event. Each of the classes offered \$4,000 in prize money, and

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the stake offered \$8,000.

The Battle of the Breeds offered three English saddle classes and a championship stake. Exhibitors were asked to walk, trot, and canter both ways of the ring. Melissa Moore of Versailles, Kentucky, judged the event. When the ingate opened, the entries included one Arabian, five Half-Arabians, two Friesians, nine Saddlebreds, one Hackney Horse, and one Morgan.

“The Battle of the Breeds was an amazing event, and it was good for the saddle seat discipline,” said Melissa Moore. “It gave lots of publicity to all the saddle seat breeds during an event that was spectacular.”

Maximum Velocity, a Morgan gelding on lease to Elizabeth Young Fina of Averil Park, New York, earned the blue in the first class of the Battle of the Breeds. “Harley” was ridden by trainer Amy Champion of Braeburn Equestrian Center in Old Chatham, New York.

“Harley was amazing in the class on Thursday,” Amy said. “I can’t ever remember having so much fun showing a horse.

“It’s a very big ring with a great atmosphere in which to show horses,” Amy continued. “The audience was very enthusiastic supporting all the entries with their applause.”

Elizabeth’s daughter, Miller, rode the gelding in the second class. This duo was coming off their Reserve World Youth English Pleasure Championship from the Morgan Grand

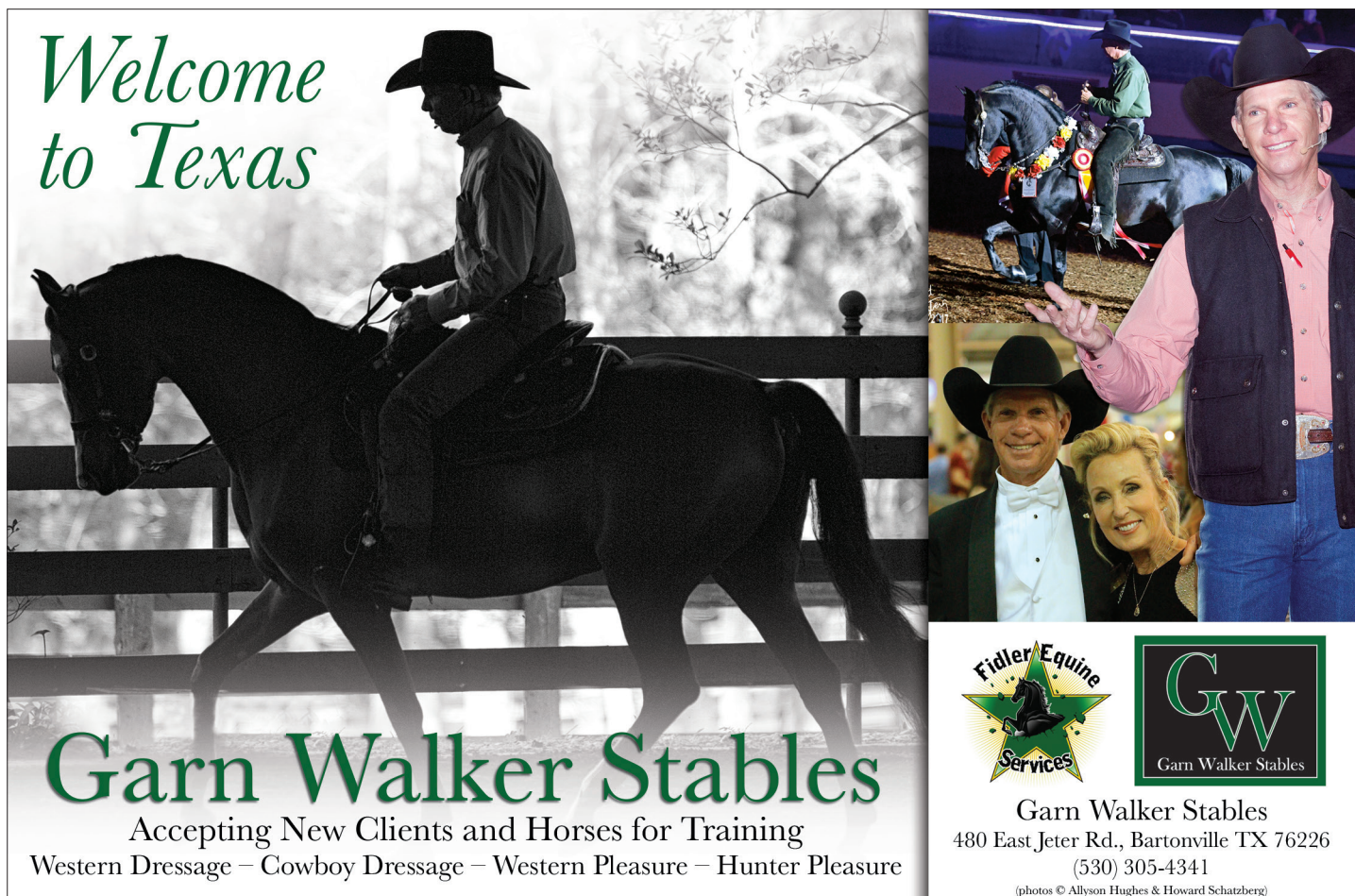
National Show. “It was so exciting watching Amy show Harley in the first class,” Miller said. “The pressure was on when I rode through the ingate on Friday, and I didn’t have my best ride on him. But I knew what I did wrong, so when I was offered the opportunity to show him back in the stake on Saturday night, I did it.”

“The chestnut Morgan gelding that I tied first in the first class was spectacular,” Melissa said. “In the final class, several of the entries were a bit flat, but when this gelding reversed, he just stepped up his game and gave a winning performance. This Morgan gelding has that winning show horse quality that a judge looks for no matter what the breed of horse.”

“There are no words to describe what it was like showing at the Royal Winter Fair,” Miller said. “I was disappointed that I didn’t ride well in the earlier class, but I was ready on Saturday night, when the very large audience was dressed in black tie attire and the air was electric with excitement.

“We had a great ride, and winning the event was such a fun way to end this great show season,” Miller continued. “It was icing on the cake.”

It’s been an amazing season for Miller and Harley. They also won the prestigious open English pleasure class at Devon earlier in the year (a complete account of which was featured in the June/July 2018 *TMH*). ■



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