

Nutcracker's Nirvana

2014 Fine Harness World's Grand Champion

By Karen Jones



Nutcracker's Nirvana winning the 2014 Fine Harness World's Grand Championship

"Never lose an opportunity of seeing anything beautiful, for beauty is God's handwriting." ~Ralph Waldo Emerson

Since the establishment of the Fine Harness World's Grand Championship in 1936 some outstanding horses - mares, geldings and stallions - have populated the top ranks of the division. It takes a special individual to be a harness champion. A great harness horse is self-motivated and has an extra dose of elegance and charisma that captivates those who are watching their performance. Those top individuals also have staying power, many of which have won repeatedly and successively. A self-motivated individual is likely to have a long and successful career in the fine harness division. Horses such as ^{CH}Colonel Boyle, ^{CH}The Lemon Drop Kid, ^{CH}Tashi Ling, ^{CH}Meadow Vanity, ^{CH}Radiant Success and ^{CH}Callaway's Copyright were all multiple winners of the World's Grand Championship. When asked how he trained Callaway's Copyright to his record breaking six successive World's Grand Championships, John T. Jones replied, "I didn't train Copy. I just managed his career."

On Saturday night at Louisville all of the World's Grand Championship classes were highly competitive, not the least of which was the



Undulata's Nutcracker, 2001 ch.	^{CH} Will Shriver (WC, WGC)	Callaway's Johnny Gillen
	^{CH} Caramac (WC, WCC)	^{CH} Kate Shriver (WGC, BHF)
	Stonehedge Vanity	Vanity's Sensation Of Crebilly
The New York Times	Christmas In New York ERB	Lofty Elaine
		New Yorker
		Canterbury Lane
Nativity	Nancy O'Lee	Native Promise
		^{CH} Yorktown (WC, WGC)
		Sandalwood Stonewall
Harlem Globetrotter (WC, WCC)	Putting On Airs (BHF)	Mr. Magic Man
		^{CH} Supreme Airs (WC, WGC, BHF)
		Anacacho Denmark
Kingwood's Harlem Harlem, 1990 blk.	Oman's Desdemona Denmark	Reverie's Desdemona (BHF)
		Supreme Sultan
		Molly O'Lee
Martha! Martha!	Nancy O'Lee	

Nutcracker's Nirvana's Dam, Kingwood's Harlem Harlem fine harness championship. Competing with the likes of the mare class winner, Trust My Imagination with veteran fine harness trainer, Nelson Green, and three time World's Grand Champion ^{CH}Wild Carrissima with Bret Day on the lines made this championship an extra tough assignment. But when the judges' cards were turned in and tabulated it was the stunning black stallion, Nutcracker's Nirvana with Jim Stachowski who made the final victory pass. His ring presence and his commanding performance made it difficult to take your eyes off of him and left no doubt that Nirvana had come fully into his own. This was a first World's Grand Championship for both horse and driver, which made it just that much more special. And to add the final special touch, Nutcracker's Nirvana was the very first World's Grand Champion for his sire, Undulata's Nutcracker.

Nutcracker's Nirvana is out of a Harlem Globetrotter mare, Kingwood's Harlem Harlem. She has been a consistent producer for Robert and Margaret King of Fairport, New York, who have been breeding American Saddlebreds for 34 years. The mare also has to her credit the beautiful 2011 World's Champion Pleasure Driving mare, ^{CH}It's Good Karma, then owned and driven by Elisabeth Goth, and also Kingwood's Born A Believer, a fifteen-year-old stallion that the Kings have used consistently in their breeding program. Peggy King recalled that they purchased Kingwood's Harlem Harlem from Joan Hamilton when she was just 18 months old. She was being prepared for the ASHA Three-Year-Old National Futurity but developed shipping fever on the trip to Louisville and ended up spending the next eight weeks in the veterinary hospital while she recovered. That was when the Kings decided to send her home and put her in the broodmare band. She is now 24 years old and Peggy King said that she is still as fiery and full of herself as she was as a three-year-old. "She is the sweetest mare to handle, just a kind disposition but when you turn her out she snorts and flags and trots her brains out!"

Her sire, Harlem Globetrotter, was himself was a five-time World's Champion winning the 1982 Three-Year-Old Five-Gaited stake, the 1984 Junior Stallion/Gelding Stake and the Junior Championship, and twice winning the Stallion Stake, the first time in 1992 and the last time in '94. Larry Hodge showed Globetrotter exclusively for Kalarama Farm.

At six years old, Nirvana has only been shown seven times but he is no stranger to Freedom Hall. He has to his credit a 2012 Reserve World's Championship in the Junior Fine Harness division, a Reserve World's

Championship in 2013 in the Fine Harness Stallion Gelding class and a Fine Harness Reserve World's Grand Championship title the same year. In fact, he has only appeared at one other horse show and that was Rock Creek in 2013 where he was reserve champion in the fine harness stake. Jim and Shawn Stachowski are relative newcomers to Freedom Hall although recently they have been regular contenders in the fine harness division with The DaVinci Code winning the mare stake with Jim, and also with the horse that won the Fine Harness World's Grand Championship three years in a row (2011 – 2013) with Bret Day on the lines, ^{CH}Wild Carrissima. He was Reserve World's Champion in the Stallion/Gelding class with Stachowski in 2010. Given that the Stachowskis' main business is a thriving Arabian training and breeding operation, which includes a training facility in Mantua, Ohio with over 100 stalls and two more locations, one in Scottsdale, Arizona and one in San Marcos, California – imagine the workload - their success with the American Saddlebred breeding and showing program is very impressive.

Melissa Moore started Nutcracker's Nirvana for the Kings who have been clients of hers for 25 years. "He was one of the smartest horses I've ever trained. He was riding and driving, had his tail up over his back – the whole thing - within six months," Moore said. She currently has two full brothers to Nirvana in training, also bred and owned by the Kings.

"Both of his brothers have his same disposition, so kind and easy to handle," Peggy King said. She has been a faithful client of Melissa's and has worked closely with Joan Lurie. "I wouldn't consider working with any other trainer," she said. "Both Melissa and Joan Lurie have been wonderful to us and to our horses. They treat them the way that we do." Peggy King recalled that Nirvana had a great disposition from day one. "He was an outstanding baby, and never went through an awkward stage."

The Kings sent Nirvana to Melissa when he was half way through his two-year-old year. "He was there exactly one day before Melissa called us and said that she had an offer on him," said Peggy. "I said, 'you're kidding me!'" It was another client of Melissa's, Shawn Stachowski, who finally bought Nirvana from the Kings as a three-year-old.

"I first saw him at Melissa's when she walked him out into the arena and was shocked by his extreme presence. Then she stepped on him and I knew we were in the presence of someone special. My first instinct was to

try to breed to him but the Kings were going to show him and didn't want to breed him at that time. I went home and talked to my husband about him. Jim and I went back to Melissa's to look again and that's when we bought him." She echoes the sentiments of Peggy King on Nirvana's kind temperament. "He is super easy to handle, just a dream. He's respectful but all show horse. I ride him and kids can jog him – every day is just fantastic with him. And he always steps to the plate the way they are supposed to. He's just wonderful."

Last year they bred 70 mares to Nirvana. Forty-eight of them were Saddlebreds and eight of those were Shawn's. The other 22 mares were Arabians. "We brought the yearlings in this fall and all of them look talented and charismatic. We're really excited about the babies, said Shawn."

Eighteen registered foals are on the books for Nutcracker's Nirvana so far for 2014 and Jim and Shawn Stachowski have yearlings and two-year-olds sired by him beginning their training and show careers. Given his outstanding show ring performances, his obvious physical attributes and even disposition, the future for this young stallion looks very bright. He has been building a fan base since his first appearance in Freedom Hall and next August that fan club will be waiting to cheer him on again. When asked if they were able to attend Louisville and watch Nirvana win in person Peggy King said, "Oh yes! We were the noisy ones!" They were in very good company!



Jim & Shawn Stachowski with Nutcracker's Nirvana (Funkhouser photo)