

GERMAN DREAMS

In 2003, it seemed that Vanessa Hahn of Duermen, Germany, was about to realize her childhood dream of owning a horse when she bought her first American Quarter Horse. But due to a serious injury, she never had a chance to ride the mare. After two years of veterinary treatment, she had to put the horse down.

Then in late summer 2006, Vanessa was officiating as a ring steward at an AQHA show in Germany when a 3-year-old sorrel mare named Hints Classic Rose entered the ring for her very first junior trail class. Vanessa simply knew "Rose" was the horse she was looking for. She spent the following months convincing Rose's owner to sell her. By the end of 2006, Rose had a new home.

At the time Vanessa was more or less a self-educated rider. With hardly any riding experience and no idea how to train a horse, in the first weeks of 2007 she still was afraid of loping the mare. A friend of the family helped her gain self-confidence and introduced her to training techniques and patterns that were easy for her to practice with Rose.

Rose and Vanessa enrolled in AQHA's Horseback Riding Program and took part in the first organized AQHA Trail Ride in Germany. They also competed as novice amateurs at all of the all-novice shows in Germany.

"Rose is the most trusting horse I've ever met," Vanessa said. "She's always attentive, careful, happy to be with me and has probably the biggest heart an animal could have. To train her is the easiest thing I could imagine.

"She always gives more than 100 percent even when I have a bad

day. Rose taught me this year how to show and survive in the ring. The mare is heaven-sent!"

By the end of 2007, Vanessa's fears regarding her inexperience were long gone. At the 2008 Deutsche Quarter Horse Association Convention, Vanessa and Rose will be named the 2007 DQHA high-point novice amateurs in halter mares 3 and over and in walk/trot western horsemanship.

On top of that, in 2007, Rose was named the first AQHA novice amateur grand champion halter mare in Europe. When Vanessa purchased the mare, she had no idea that Rose was already qualified for the AQHA World Championship Show in aged mares.

During summer 2007, Vanessa traveled to Amarillo to learn more about AQHA and the American Quarter Horse. She is now an AQHA life member.



Vanessa Hahn and Hints Classic Rose, 2007 DQHA high-point novice amateurs in mares 3 and over and walk/trot western horsemanship.

By Juergen von Bistram

WALKING THE LINE WITH SAMMY

Sammy Rhodes, 8, has a special connection with horses.

When Sammy walks into the barn with her smile and the leg braces she wears due to spina bifida, she is greeted with whinnies, according to her mom, Kelly.

Her delicate spine has been cared for by Chips Talkin Gold, aka "Rhett." Sammy and the 1996 palomino gelding have won five leadline classes since their show debut.

"She's a remarkable little girl," Kelly said. "Physically, Sammy has made improvements. Mentally, she is more stimulated and just has a special bond with horses."

"Rhett is so good for this little girl," said Ruth Kaplan, Rhett's owner and breeder. "I raised him; I picked his daddy. He was about the ugliest baby you ever saw."

But Ruth decided to keep the colt and had a friend put 30 days on him when Rhett was 2. Then Ruth trained him the rest of the way.

"The older he got, the better he'd go, and the ugly duckling turned into a swan," Ruth said. "I use (Rhett) in my lesson program now, and he is just such a gentle soul."

At first, Sammy rode Rhett's dam, Sara Jubilee, and then graduated to Rhett.

"Rhett has his mother's disposition, and I still give lessons on her," Ruth said.

Sammy is usually led in her classes by Ruth's daughter, 13-year-old Shelby. Shelby and Rhett won the 2007 Palomino Horse Breeders of America world championship in trail 13 and under.

As Sammy gained confidence, she ventured beyond leadline classes.

"It is a miracle; she's amazing," Ruth said. "She can do showmanship with Rhett. He tries for her. He jogs real soft next to her and doesn't tug and pull away, and he pivots, sets up, backs, he's just wonderful and kind.

"Sammy once said that when she's riding a horse, she's just like everyone else but a little better," Ruth said.

By Megan Brownell



Sammy Rhodes smiles after her first lead-line class with "Rhett."