

GROUND LINE:

Building a Base for Grand Prix Performance

Located in the heart of wine country, American Canyon is just a stone's throw from Napa, California, but it was not the vineyards that attracted Sanjay Bagai to the area. American Canyon is home to an unassuming stable that houses an impressive roster of international-caliber show jumping horses.



Supplied by Sanjay Bagai

Bagai drives 50 miles from San Francisco seven days a week to work and care for his stable of Grand Prix show jumpers. His dedication is commendable, to say the least, but his work ethic is only the beginning of the commitment he has made to his horses.

In his search for Grand Prix prospects, Bagai travels to Germany four times a year. His discriminating eye will filter through hundreds of young horses before he chooses those that he'll ride. And ride he does: it's not unusual for Bagai to try several hundred horses in a single trip. If he is sufficiently interested in a horse after riding it, he will delve into the animal's past. Where was the horse foaled? Was the delivery eventful? Did anything of note occur during its upbringing? Where was the horse trained, and by whom? Who else rode him? What is his nutritional history? Any and all information that can be gathered on the horse is noteworthy to Bagai, and his notes on each animal reveal a detailed developmental history for each equine athlete.

Once a horse has been chosen for inclusion in the stable, it will be cared for and watched more closely than at any point thus far in its life. Not only does Bagai have a weather station that records temperature, atmospheric pressure, and humidity in the stable, but each horse's water system is also monitored closely. Data on weather and water intake are sent to Bagai's home computer and his

One of the promising jumpers in Sanjay Bagai's string of show horses is the Holsteiner gelding Chess, a horse that has excelled in classes held specifically for young jumpers.

PDA (personal digital assistant, a wireless handheld computer that provides a calendar and organizes personal information), thereby allowing the trainer constant knowledge of his horses' well-being, even when he's not physically present.

Bagai's management style might seem rigid, but the results speak for themselves. He qualified for the 2004 Athens Olympic Games although an unfortunate late-season injury to his 10-year-old Dutch Warmblood, May One, derailed his Olympic aspirations. Undeterred, he fully expects to qualify for the 2008 Olympics to be held in Beijing, China, whether on May One or his latest acquisition, Chess, a massive 17.2-hand Holsteiner he is bringing along.

"I'm very excited about Chess. He has so much athletic potential and the right mind to make it all the way," said Bagai of the seven-year-old gelding.

Qualifying for the Olympics is an expectedly difficult task. A horse and rider combination is eligible only if it can complete a CSI™ Grand Prix competition with no more than four faults before the prestigious show in Aachen, Germany, the largest outdoor show jumping event in the world. Alternatively, horse and rider can make the grade for Olympic contention if they show at Aachen and accumulate four faults or less. Of course, Bagai and his horses must first qualify for these four-star events, a lofty task indeed but one that Bagai is optimistic he can accomplish.

It's not surprising that anyone this meticulous about his horses' care is going to be even more concerned about their nutritional state. Eileen Phethean, the technical support coordinator for Kentucky Equine Research (KER), worked with Bagai to refine his horses' diets. "When Mr. Bagai first contacted us with concerns about his current feeding program, it was immediately evident that he had done his homework," remarked Phethean. "He had specific requirements and goals for each of his five warmbloods."

Using Bagai's descriptions and MicroSteed, a software program developed by KER to evaluate equine diets, Phethean found the optimal ration for each horse. She then connected Bagai with a feed manufacturer that produced KER-formulated feeds. KER Team Member Associated Feed of Turlock, California provides Bagai with Equus 3 Performance, a feed that has yielded results beyond Bagai's expectations.

"My horses now have reserves of energy at the end of a training day and at the end of competitions. That's something I didn't have with all of them prior to switching to this nutritional program," said Bagai.

A recent show in Arizona revealed this to be true. "I rode my horses hard every day and never found the bottom," Bagai commented, reflecting on the horses' energy levels. "They were always ready and focused when I asked them."



associated feed

Joins KER Roster

Kentucky Equine Research is pleased to introduce Associated Feed as its newest North American Team Member. Located in the fertile San Joaquin Valley, Associated Feed is centrally located and can readily service the entire state of California as well as portions of Oregon and Nevada. Quality service and products have been paramount to this feed manufacturer since its establishment more than 30 years ago. The company's collaboration with KER bolsters its commitment to more than 130 feed dealers and the thousands of horse owners those dealers serve.

The company's feed line, Equus, features seven feeds that are suitable for all classes of horses, at all stages of life and performance. Equus feeds are specially formulated to provide nutritionally balanced meals. Formulations are based on the latest findings in equine nutrition and exercise physiology research. Kentucky Equine Research is proud to have Associated Feed as one of its West Coast Team Members.

Bagai walked away from the show with eighteen double-clear rounds and several ribbons, but these accomplishments are not where his satisfaction lies. "I'm just thrilled with the way my horses are conditioned, how quickly and completely they recover after a show, and how focused they are, considering they have energy to spare," he said. He credits the improved nutritional program outlined by KER and Associated Feed with many of these improvements.

KER will continue to follow Bagai and his stable of Grand Prix show jumpers as they head towards the Beijing Olympics. 