

sport that there is here, and top class eventers in this country are not bred according to a plan, but emerge through the vast number of participants. Apart from the efforts of a few individuals, this is the situation.

From Pony Club, Riding Club, British Horse Society activities, and the accessibility to thoroughbred blood, as through natural selection, some of our eventers do become the top of the class. There is no doubt that natural selection has its merit, but the disadvantages are a large wastage, lack of predictability, and no economical sense.

The production of horses for the other disciplines is in a much sadder state and although some individuals are genuinely trying to improve the situation, the general feeling is of lack of direction or organisation. Many people noticed that the continental breeders were breeding the better horses, and so they jumped on the bandwagon and bred a warmblood. Unfortunately, using continental blood is not sufficient. The knowledge of how to use this warmblood is far more important.

Some people confuse the technical structure of the continental system with the conception and breeding policy. They think that keeping records, or following technical marketing and selection procedures, will achieve the end aim. Unfortunately this is not so, and it is already noticed that some warmblood originated horses in this country, look as British as some completely British horses.

On the other hand, in the last ten years, the continentals have proved that they are able to produce some top class eventers. Olympic and European Champions and many International winners are statistically a very high incident in a group which is primarily not aiming in this direction.

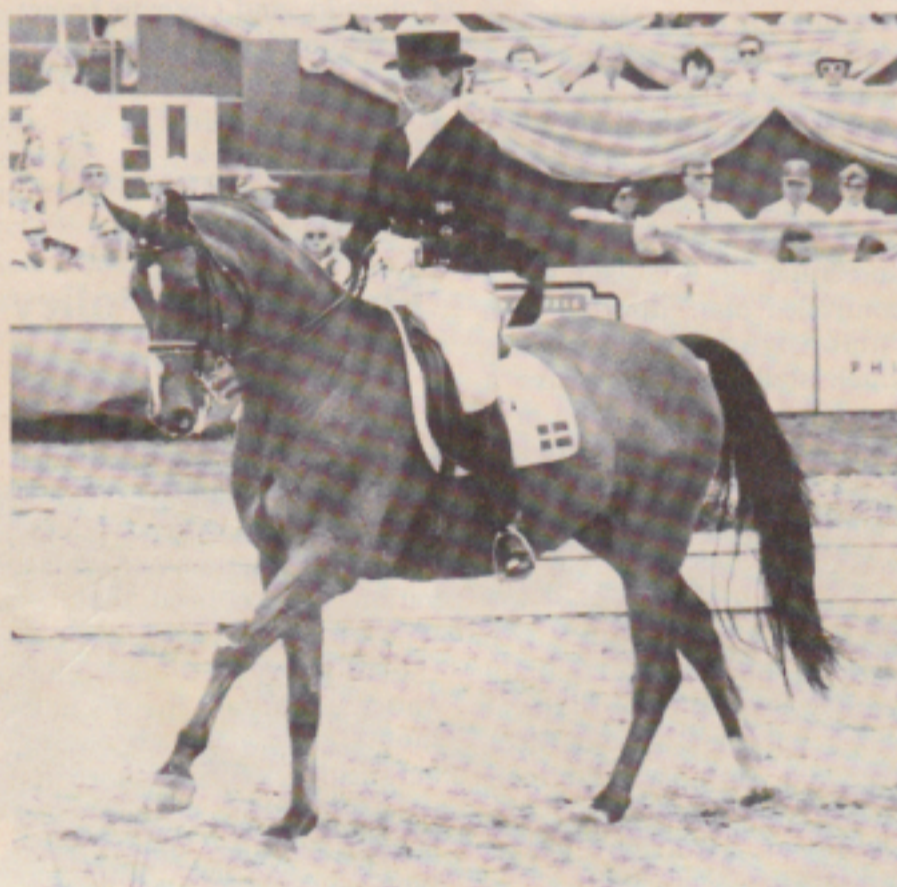
Before this argument is used as an excuse for the lack of British success in the production of dressage horses and jumpers, I will emphasise that from my observation of dressage and jumping, the number of horses taking part in horse shows, or kept for breeding, is much larger in Britain than in any other continental country, and any

other assumption is totally wrong.

The modern sporting horse, and the elegant athletic horse with the temperament and substance needed for modern day competitions, is the aim of modern breeding policies, but in no way will that horse self-perpetuate just by continually breeding within this type.

In order to maintain and further develop this type of horse we must lay down foundations and make sure we maintain them. These foundations are the brood mares with the required qualities, and the sires to maintain them in future generations.

It is a fact that most of the top class continental horses in recent years are by a thoroughbred stallion of classic line out of warmblood



*World Champion, Anne-Grethe Törnblad of Denmark riding Marzog. German stallions appear prominently in Danish blood lines.*

mares which are true to their type, or by an old fashioned stallion with the characteristics associated with that type of horse.

A top class horse is rarely produced by a direct cross of two parents of the same modern type of sporting horse. From a close study of what happens on the continent, especially in countries where breeding is relatively new such as Belgium, Denmark and Holland, it is noticed that although these countries run their own selections, and produce their own stallions, they frequently return to the origin

of the modern warmblood, Germany, and purchase classically bred foundation stallions of the qualities required to maintain the substance and movement of their foundation stock.

It is also noticed that the infusion of classical thoroughbred blood, in recent years, is maintained within the influential lines in Germany. These trends are not an occurrence, they are determined by a conception and a policy which is laid down, but continually assessed and evaluated.

In Britain, even with the fans of the warmblood, there is the misguided idea that simply following the technical principles of the continentals will produce the British sporting horse of the calibre that will be able to compete against the

should be promoted, and by means of premiums, make them available at realistic fees for the average breeder. This should not be confined to only horses of warmblood origins, but to any breed that may contribute towards developing the sports horse.

A breeding policy founded on careful thought, and carried out with the necessary selections, presentations and record keeping, will eventually produce the sporting horse par excellence — made in Great Britain.

## The Irish Experience

In order to demonstrate the importance of a breeding policy or the effect that a lack of one may have, we should study the Irish horse in the last few decades.

Until not so long ago, the Irish horse was the most prominent breed in most equestrian activities including, surprisingly, dressage. Most European countries, before and after the war, brought large numbers of horses from Ireland. These horses were useful cavalry horses and later excelled in sporting activities.

In recent years this dominance shifted completely to the European horses, to the degree that Irish riders like Eddie Macken will often ride German bred horses.

Looking into its background will help us to understand the rise and fall of the Irish horse. In general the best of the Irish sporting horses were out of an Irish draught mare by a good quality thoroughbred stallion. The qualities of the thoroughbred are known, but what is not sufficiently accounted for is the contributions of the Irish draught mare.

These mares were the most amicable tough working horses that could work all day for a week, hunt at the weekend, and be a good doer as well as being easy to handle. Through years of natural selection evolved a horse which was the epitome of what man wanted from a work horse. These qualities, combined with what the thoroughbred had to offer, produced the real sporting horse which represented Ireland so well.

Unfortunately the environment in which this all happen-

continental horses.

Unfortunately it takes more than this to achieve it. To start with, we require a respected breeding committee, which will represent all the breeding factions and will guide as to what is required and should be aimed for. Simply grading stallions because they are nice correct horses is not sufficient. A horse may be a magnificent animal with ability but of the wrong type to influence further generations in the desired direction.

The breeding committee should have the foresight and vision to decide which stallions