

## ROBINSON DELAFONT - A Lusitano horse with French accent

### FRANCE

Chef d'Equipe: Alain Francqueville  
 Rider: Aranud Serre  
 Horse: Robinson delafont de Massa  
 Breeder: Elevage Massa Stud (Sylvain Massa)  
 Breed: Lusitano (bay) – Born in 2005

Baroque Horse Magazine met with Elevage Massa Stud at the WEG and talked about Sylvain Massa and his insight, vision, determination and his quest for perfection.

#### BH: Can you tell us how it all began in the Elevage Massa Stud?

**EM:** At the age of 25, after an already successful and accomplished career as a show jumper, Sylvain Massa discovered the Lusitano breed of horses, their particular charm, gentleness and generosity to their riders. Originally bred as horses for use in war by the cavalry, the qualities of this breed have allowed both horse and rider to perform in harmony in the field of battle. These traits have given them a big advantage. If there is one thing that has been lacking in the breed for succeeding at the top level of competitive dressage, it is the horses' ability and scope to extend its gaits. When competing against German and Dutch breeds, this lack of propulsion becomes all too apparent. Sylvain has made it his mission to correct this deficiency and produce the horse that competes successfully in this modern, competitive dressage world. Sylvain started to study all the horses' traits and eight years later decided to start his own Lusitano breeding programme. He went out and found the best mares he could acquire: a good walk, balanced gallop, impulsiveness and the ability to extend were the traits he was searching for. Those who had short, stocky necks, abbreviated gaits and bent hocks were eliminated. Instead he searched for mares with longer backs, angled shoulders and longer legs.

#### BH: How did you begin breeding with the Lusitanos?

**EM:** Historically the introduction of new blood from other breeds to the Lusitano breed was deemed important and highly sought after. Mares with these characteristics were highly sought after. In the early days, Sylvain was guided by a legendary Portuguese breeder of Lusitanos, Dr. Guilherme Borba. The knowledge Dr. Borba gave to Sylvain on breeding lines and genetics was crucial to his mission and he is very grateful for all that he did for him and the breed. In addition, He agrees to sell some of his best mares to Mr. Massa : Nortada, Guapa, Ortiga, Tempestade, Janota, and his Grand Prix international stallion, Maestro. In 1983, a four year old mare, Prezuda, was the first star of the Massa breeding programme. This magnificent mare went on to breed some celebrated offspring, the most famous being Galopin de la Font and Vendetta. This became the basis for the genetic enrichment of Sylvain's horses. By 2014, eight generations of the Massa programme has evolved.

The Lusitano stallions have also not been neglected. They have been selected for their good character to compete at high level dressage tests. They have formed an important part of the programme, notably Rieto, the star of the breeding programme. His offspring, notably mares, have introduced valuable traits into the



breed. In 2000, Sylvain Massa introduced a registry for the new Lusitano Sport Horse breed which he founded. The registry includes historical blood lines as well as additional information on current blood line inputs from Dutch and German stations. The Lusitano mares have good temperament and collection whilst the Northern European stallions have power and extension.....it is the perfect marriage.

#### BH: And how are the Elevage Massa's Lusitanos of today?

**EM:** Today the Lusitano Sport breed is now nine years old and they have given him great pride. Several international riders have already purchased offspring of the Sport breed. They are impressed with their attitude to working sessions, their strength and impulse on, collection and extensions. The success with the Lusitano Sport breed has encouraged Sylvain to continue on this path.

To sum up he has developed two aspects to the breeding programme: pure bred Lusitanos and Lusitano Sport. The excellent results that have been obtained over time (confirmation, show in hand, and dressage competition) have amply demonstrated the importance of the breeding line that Sylvain had founded. The Lusitanos and the Lusitano Sport breeds are now well established in dressage competitions. A Massa horse is always present in the big international competitions: the Olympic Games, the World Cup, the Nations



Cup, European Championships...

The Massa breeding programme consists of 100 mares and 7 stallions, 50 pct of which consists of Lusitano Sport.

To quote Sylvan Massa;

"What a pleasure it is to watch the birth of a foal! To see the young horse develop from the pastures to the dressage arena fills me with pride and joy. To walk amongst the young horses and hope that each one will bring great pleasure to their future riders and to know that our Lusitanos are true friends.... I will always be indebted to those wonderful mares like Pezuda, Nortada, Herbanaria, Admira, Vendetta.... To develop this breeding programme has been my life's work and dream. Each horse is unique. THIS IS MY LIFE."

WORLD EQUESTRIAN GAMES 2014, Normandy

**BH: Can you talk about how Elevage Massa and its rider Arnaud Serre, experienced this WEG?**

**EM:** It was a great moment for Sylvain Massa to have a horse entered into the World Equestrian Games on the French team. He has already had horses bred by him in the Olympic Games, European Championships and World Cup but for the Portuguese team. This was the first time that he has had a horse on the French team. The WEG take place every 4 years and to have able to be included in the French team, and in France itself, with a French horse from French breeding and ridden by a French rider was an unforgettable moment. Since Arnaud Serre has been given the ride of Robinson delafont de Massa, this combination has always been selected to support the French flag either as a reserve or as a full team member in various nations' cups, such as Rotterdam or Vيداuban. He is a full performing member of the French team. Arnaud Serre and Robinson de Massa have been very consistent in achieving higher scores at each competition. At the WEG on Grand Prix day, there was enormous pressure as they were the last of the French team to enter the arena before the English Olympic winner, Charlotte Dujardin and Valegro. Arnaud and Robinson had achieved the best scores for France and the stadium (the Orano Stadium at Caen, Normandy) erupted in applause. They had achieved 72.843 pct, the best French score, and were placed 20th overall thus qualifying for the Grand Prix Special.

Robinson de Massa is the result of 35 years of breeding selection. Each year we produce excellent horses for high level competition either in the pure Lusitano or Lusitano Sport breeding programme. These horses are easily trainable to reach higher levels. Our endeavour is to produce horses with good temperaments. Robinson was not a horse for low level competition, rising quickly to Grand Prix level at age of 6 to 7. He learned all the movements very quickly without any setbacks. With age he will gain strength and go forward to achieve even better results. A wonderful future awaits! Arnaud Serre knows the Lusitanos well and has established a deep friendship with these wonderful horses. When the movements are established there is no doubt about their execution. Above all, the Massa horses are selected for their power, energy, gaits and temperament and to perform no matter how difficult the task. A lot of horses will follow Robinson's footsteps. Arnaud Serre had very well organised Robinson's WEG training programme. During the run up to the Games, he did not put excessive pressure on the horse but kept the horse calm with the same routine. The real improvements will be worked on this winter. During the WEG it was important to manage stress... Arnaud and Robinson were confident in their routines and partnership. His spouse, Anne-Sophie Serre, was always at her husband's side during the entire training programme, absorbing a lot of the pressure herself. The staff of the French team were exceptional. They took care of our two champions, man and horse! The French Olympic Team Trainer, Jan Bemelmans was also invaluable in achieving our goals for success. He watched and guided our practice sessions and warm-ups giving precious advice at key moments. As a result, Jan, Arnaud, Anne-Sophie, and Robinson made a great team. All went well!

