



Polocrosse in the United States

Article by Jean Still • Photos by Melissa Kay Main

Years of dedication and hard work came to fruition in October 2010, when Marilyn Murphy's Australian Stock Horses proved themselves on the polocrosse field. Firstly, they shone in the polocrosse demonstrations at the World Equestrian Games, Kentucky, and then at the USA National Polocrosse Titles in Huntsville, Alabama.

Leading the pack to the goalposts in the A Division for South Carolina, lefthander Ryan Murphy on KEYSTONE TOP GUN (USA) (BALLANDOWN ZORRO (AUS)/ WENONA AMY (AUS)), closely followed by Dori Johnson for Texas Lone Star, on a mare by BALLANDOWN ZORRO (AUS).



In 2002, Marilyn Murphy of the Keystone Australian Stock Horse Stud imported Australian Stock Horses to the United States. This was a brave move, as the Australian Stock Horse was a very different animal to the types of horses that the American horse riding community were used to dealing with. However, polocrosse was becoming increasingly popular in the US, and those who were keen to progress in the game, particularly on the world stage, realised the need to ride and compete on horses that were most suited to the game. Polocrosse requires a horse that is tough, trainable, athletic and has plenty of stamina.

Following a breeding study and visits to many studs from the Northern Territory, through to South Australia, Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria, Marilyn settled on BALLANDOWN ZORRO (AUS), a yearling colt from Yvonne Freschi's Ballandown Stud in South Australia, BARNETTS MODEL (AUS), a three year old filly by GILGANNON MR MINSTRAL, from Clem Barnett's Gilgannon Stud in Wallabadah, New South Wales, and a yearling filly WENONA AMY (AUS) from Rob and Justine Aitken's Wenona Stud in Narrabri, New South Wales.

BARNETTS MODEL (AUS) left Australia in foal to KIRKBYS STUD THEO (AUS) and on arrival in Pennsylvania produced a bay filly – KEYSTONE FIRST LADY (USA). Affectionately called 'Maggie' in the Murphy household, this mare has played some exceptional polocrosse games for Erin Smoyer, (nee Murphy), and is currently on the USA World Cup Squad, as well as producing foals from embryo transfer.

Marilyn and husband John's stud numbers increased quickly, as she bred from both live cover and embryo transfer. Keystone progeny are now performing in many different fields, including fox hunting, pony club, eventing, jumping and of course polocrosse.

The World Equestrian Games were held in October 2010 at the prestigious Kentucky Horse Park. Nine FEI sports contested the official medals, and many other horse sports were enlisted for demonstrations. An Advanced and a Junior team was chosen for the polocrosse demonstrations at the World Equestrian Games, and what a wonderful experience for this group of riders!

A 'round robin' competition was held between the different teams over the four days. The A grade sections played against one



Above left: the imported stallion HAYDON SATELLITE (AUS) Above right: the imported stallion BALLANDOWN ZORRO (AUS)

another, and the Junior sections played against one another, with the players changing positions each day. On the final day the score was tight – 12 all, and the appreciative crowd joined the swing of the action. When the game went into a 'sudden death' playoff, Erin Smoyer on KEYSTONE FIRST LADY (USA) scored the winning goal!

WEG visitors of all backgrounds were intrigued with the sport, and the polocrosse volunteers were kept busy answering questions and handing out pamphlets. At the end of the matches each player made themselves available for questioning. A large crowd gathered when Clint Anderson, a well known Australian horse trainer based in the US, joined the polocrosse group and played a chukka.

Guy Maclean, another well known Australian trainer, was also a part of the many demonstrations at WEG, and

produced an amazing show with his group of Australian Stock Horses working at liberty. Guy performed at the International Arena in downtown Lexington, and then moved onto the North Arena at Kentucky Horse Park after the polocrosse group left.

After WEG the polocrosse fraternity moved on to Huntsville, Alabama, for the USA Polocrosse Nationals. Set on the magnificent 'Harvest Farms', four superb fields were available for the three days of competition, with the main field having a huge set of lights for night-time games. Here Marilyn was very proud to witness ten progeny of BALLANDOWN ZORRO (AUS) playing, umpiring, or just out for the experience, and what a thrill to have them all in the one photo (see opposite page).

A four year old gelding, by BALLANDOWN ZORRO (AUS) from an Argentine thoroughbred mare, was Best Horse winner

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from the A grade division. KEYSTONE FIRST LADY (USA) was also playing with Erin Smoyer in the A Division, as was KEYSTONE TOP GUN (USA) with Ryan Murphy, making it a total of 11 of the Keystone Australian Stock Horses at the USA Nationals.

WENONA AMY (AUS) has since been sold on to Jacquie McArthur in Canada, and now has the distinction of being a foundation mare of Australian Stock Horses both in Canada and the United States. She was in foal to BALLANDOWN ZORRO (AUS) at the time of her sale, and produced a beautiful filly in Canada. Four of WENONA AMY's progeny were in the Nationals line-up at Huntsville,

including: KEYSTONE ANGELITTA (USA) (B Division), KEYSTONE SWEETHEART (USA) (Umpiring), and KEYSTONE TOP GUN (USA) (A Division).

Another horse showing great

promise is KEYSTONE COMMANDER IN CHIEF (USA), a two year old from KEYSTONE FIRST LADY (USA) by BALLANDOWN ZORRO (AUS), and considered a future sire prospect.

Marilyn is now very excited about HAYDON SATELLITE (AUS) (by HAYDON NIGHTWATCH, who is by HAYDON DRAWN), imported in 2007 from Peter Haydon's Bloomfield Stud in the Hunter Valley, New South Wales. HAYDON SATELLITE (AUS) is being bred to the BALLANDOWN ZORRO (AUS) daughters, and was also recently started under saddle by Greg Russell of the Charlie Horse Stables of Florida. Marilyn says he is showing tremendous athletic ability and a wonderful temperament.

Marilyn plans to run a stallion station offering semen from her group of stallions, and already has straws collected from BALLANDOWN ZORRO (AUS) and HAYDON SATELLITE (AUS). 🐾



Erin Smoyer on KEYSTONE SWEETHEART (USA) (BALLANDOWN ZORRO (AUS)/WENONA AMY (AUS)) at the USA National Polocrosse Titles, Huntsville Alabama, in October 2010.



Ten progeny of BALLANDOWN ZORRO (AUS) at the USA National Polocrosse Titles, Huntsville, Alabama in October 2010. I-r: Marilyn Murphy and KEYSTONE TOP GUN (USA), Ryan Murphy and KEYSTONE ANGELITA (USA), Susan Johnson, Erin Murphy and KEYSTONE SWEETHEART (USA), Victoria Prince, Rhul Desai and KEYSTONE MADALYN (USA), Renee Thompson, Dan Johnson, Barbara Fisk.