

Breeders Frank van der Valk and Jacqueline van Anholt deserve credit for their mare line. Although their good fortune seems to simply have happened, such is not the case. Even with their Ferro-daughter Litchy, it took some time before her quality as a broodmare was generally respected. In the meantime, her critics have fallen silent. Litchy's oldest son, Painted Black, is among the World's top international dressage horses and the Best Royal Dutch Sporthorse in the WBFSH Ranking. Her other son by Gribaldi, Painted Black II (Genesis), is approved by the NRPS, as well as in Oldenburg and Sweden. In 2006, he won the VSN trophy for 3 yr old. To top it all off, Litchy's third son, Zizi Top (s.Tango), was approved by the KWPN in 2007.

THE MARE MAKES THE DIFFERENCE

Conversations about Litchy and Painted Black are never without reference to the breeders of these two horses: Frank van de Valk of Ommel and Jacqueline van Anholt of Roggel. The two purchased Litchy's dam Vrona (Officier x Ransi s.Kristal) in 1989. "We bought Vrona as a ten-year-old, although Jacqueline started riding her when she was three. At that time, Vrona belonged to Harry van Heeswijk. Jacqueline showed Vrona through Z level (3rd/Med) dressage. She was an exceptionally fun and easy mare. She always got noticed at the shows. People often approached me and asked if she was for sale. Vrona was a long-lined, big mare with lovely presence. What's more, she used her hind legs powerfully", explains Frank van de Valk.

"Although Jacqueline could have kept on riding Vrona, we decided to buy her. When Vrona was twelve years old, she got injured, so we bred her to Zuidhorn. Unfortunately, that foal was not born live. Then we decided to breed her to Ferro. At that time, people didn't have much good to say about Ferro. Later, all that bad talk stopped, but he wasn't a very popular breeding stallion at the time. We chose him for his compact conformation. Vrona was very long-lined, and we wanted a more compact horse. Furthermore, we wanted to ensure we got a horse that used its hind legs well like Vrona, which is another reason why we chose Ferro," clarifies Van de Valk. The result was a filly named Litchy. He continues: "Our plan was a success. Litchy was more compact than Vrona. Furthermore, she was a really nice filly—very fancy with powerful movement." Van de Valk and Van Anholt decided to keep Litchy. Meanwhile, they bred Vrona again but this time to Vincent. The pairing produced Marona,

LITCHY'S BIO



Breeding line
287

Breeding value:
137 (49%)

Height:
1.65 hands

Color:
bay

Predicates:
keur preferent sport (dres)

Sport and breeding highlights:
Z2 level dressage

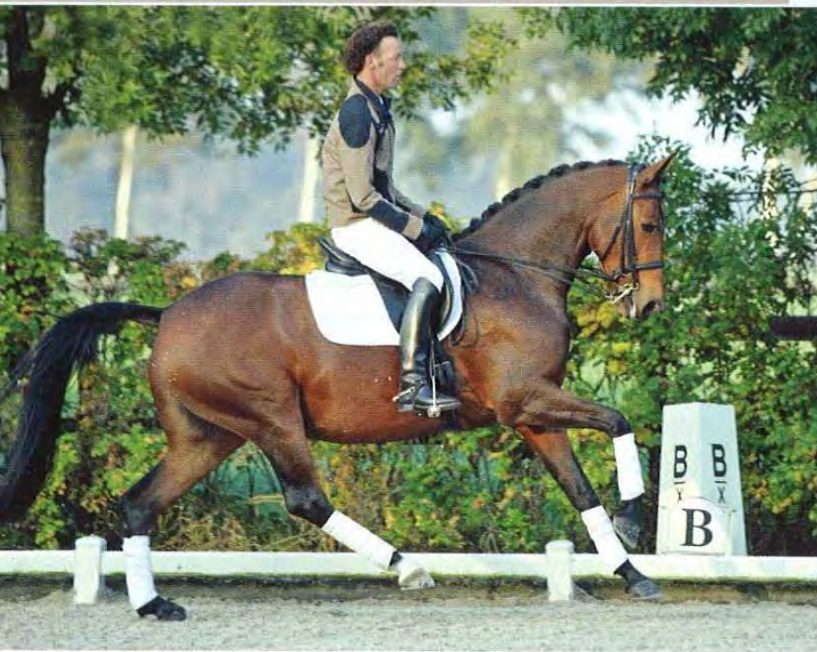
A brief description of Litchy:

A mare with a really nice temperament. She's laid back, but you can make her hot. She could be bigger; however, she has very strong movement and uses her hind legs exceptionally well.

Select offspring:

- **Painted Black** (s.Gribaldi), KWPN approved, international dressage horse with Anky van Grunsven
- **Painted Black II/Genesis** (s.Gribaldi); NRPS, Oldenburg, and Swedish approved; 2006 VSN Cup winner for 3-yr-olds
- **Wiseguy** (s.Gribaldi), 2007 Pavo Cup semi-final with Petra van Esch
- **Zizi Top** (s.Tango), KWPN approved, performance test: 83.5 points

Painted Black's dam-line was developed through the Officier daughter Vrona. Her offspring include Litchy, Painted Black's dam. In turn, Litchy "earned her spurs" as a broodmare by producing three approved sons, one of which is a top international dressage horse.



...y (s.Ferro), pictured here at the Expo Talent Sale, also proved herself in the ...v ring and competed at Z2 level dressage.

...o was sold as a young horse and eventually showed Z2 level ...ssage with her new owner. Marona is currently a broodmare at ...Aerts family's place in Tilburg.

HEALTHY, HEARTY LINE

...er Marona, Vrona produced Nabori, a colt by Houston. "We sold ...as a three-year-old to a buyer in the USA," recalls Van de Valk. ...veral of Vrona's offspring were sold abroad. It's a lot of work ...nd out if they have show careers and at what level they show. ...t's why it took so long to get Vrona's prestatie predicate. The ...ny thing is that now that we've been able to trace almost all of ...na's offspring she's almost double prestatie."

...er the Houston breeding, Vrona was bred to TCN Partout, which ...ulted in another colt: Pointer. Van de Valk: "Jacqueline won the ...nthern Netherlands Championship at L (1st/Nov) level with him. ...n, he was sold through Henk van Bergen to a buyer in the USA. ...recently heard about him again. Lisa Pierson is showing him in ...Small Tour under the name 'Passe Partout'."

...t was Rolex V, a colt by Gribaldi. "We sold him to a buyer in ...many. From Germany, he went on to Spain, where dressage ...r Juan Vidal is showing him in the Small Tour," explains Van ...Valk.

...n came Tjazzy, a filly by Jazz that eventually became a ster ...e. "We bred a colt out of Tjazzy by Gribaldi and named him ...ga Boy. He was recently sold through the Equine Elite auction ...dressage rider Andrea Villaverde. After Zenga Boy, we sold ...zy to Joop van Uyttert and Stoeterij Eureka, where she's conti ...ng her career as a broodmare. This year, she threw another ...by Gribaldi," says Van de Valk. After Tjazzy came Ubangi ...ribaldi). The gelding, who turns seven this year, is qualified at ...vel dressage. Vrona's last foal was another filly, whose name is ...ue (s.Negro). She was declared provisional keur at the keuring. ...ce then, a buyer from the UK has purchased her. "Vrona is 28 ...rs-old now. She's in perfect health, and she still prances every ...when she's led out to the pasture. As far as I'm concerned, a ...e that ages so well tells you something about the health and ...rtiness of her line," asserts Van de Valk.



Anky van Grunsven shows Painted Black at international level Grand Prix. The KWPN stallion is the best Royal Dutch Sporthorse in the most recent WBFSH dressage rankings.

PAINTED BLACK

Back to Litchy. She grew up healthy and happy. Van de Valk and Van Anholt decided to breed her as a three-year-old. Van de Valk: "Jacqueline actually wanted to start showing Litchy, but she was slow to mature mentally, so we decided to first breed her. That gave her another year to mature. We decided to breed her to Gribaldi. It was the first time we chose this stallion. We fell for his beautiful conformation. Like I said, Litchy wasn't very big, so we thought that breeding her to Gribaldi would give us a bigger foal. At the time we chose Gribaldi, he was not yet approved, so we acted a bit prematurely when we decided on him."

A year later, Painted Black was born. "We really liked Painted as a foal. He had plenty of neck, beautiful conformation, and lots of power and suppleness in his movement. We thought he used his hind legs extremely well. Others were later critical of him, something which we have never understood, though he certainly needed some time to channel his energies in the right direction", Van de Valk explains. Painted Black was sold at the foal auction in Liessel.



It is clear where he gets his talent. Zizi Top, who was approved in 2007, is Litchy's second KWPN approved son.

The Awater family and Walter van den Brand purchased him. Van de Valk: "We've always followed him. He was presented at the Stallion Selection as a three-year-old but wasn't approved. Tanja Awater started riding him and gave him an important training foundation. She also rode him in the Pavo Cup, the dressage competition for young horses." When Painted Black was approved by the AES, he was put in training with Hans Peter Minderhoud, who specializes in young horses. The plan was for Minderhoud to present him at the Stallion Competition. And that's what happened. Although he didn't always score high, Painted Black received positive attention at the Stallion Competition time after time. He was a horse for the future. Anky van Grunsven and Sjef Janssen thought so too and purchased him together with Joop van Uyttert and the Kelders family. Van Grunsven captured a silver medal with him at the World Championships for Young Dressage Horses and continued training him through Grand Prix. In the meantime, Painted Black has been approved by the KWPN.

The rest of the story is known...Van Grunsven and Painted Black have scored more than 75% several times at major international shows. There are only about ten combinations in the entire world that can score so high, which makes Painted Black one of the

Dutch breeding has become great because of its strict requirements for stallions. However, mares are just as important as stallions in the quest to breed continually better horses. But who imposes requirements on mares? Stallions are selected through a systematic process; mares are not. Breeders, not the studbook, are responsible for approving mares for breeding. This type of selection structure, in which the best stallions are approved for stud but the quality of new broodmares is unknown, places a crucial responsibility on breeders and the decisions they make. Where breeding is concerned, the mare makes the difference.

best dressage horses in the world. "Some people have told us that getting that kind of a score isn't so difficult when Anky is riding the horse. But that's nonsense, of course. Anky first has to consider a horse good enough before she puts her time and energy into it. And if a horse doesn't have talent, even an international rider like Anky can't work magic. We take such comments for what they are and just enjoy Painted Black and Anky as a team. We've always believed in that horse, so it's nice when his scores prove that we were right all along", states Van de Valk.

WISEGUY AND PAINTED BLACK II

After foaling Painted Black, Litchy showed for several years. Jacqueline started showing her at L level (1st/Elem). She won a lot with Litchy at the lower levels. Van de Valk: "The time came when Painted started doing very well, so we decided to breed Litchy again. It wasn't a good decision because it soon became apparent that combining breeding and showing is difficult." With the saying in mind 'never change a winning team', Van de Valk and Van Anholt chose Gribaldi again. The result was the now provisional keur mare Vanity. "We consider Vanity a successor to Litchy. We think it's very important that our broodmares prove themselves in the show ring, so Vanity is currently in training with Petra van Esch. She wants to show her at Z1 level this year, when she's six years old. Last year, we flushed two embryos from her because we thought it was a shame not to breed her during her show career. So we'll have two foals from Vanity this year: One by Johnson and one by Zhivago", says Van de Valk. After producing Vanity, Litchy was bred again to Gribaldi. "This may sound corny and not very original, but the combination works and we have good horses from it. So why would we want to use a different stallion?", Van de Valk asks himself aloud. He continues: "After Vanity, we bred Litchy again and flushed an embryo from her. In both cases, we chose Gribaldi again."

The foal that Litchy threw naturally was a colt named Wiseguy. "He's a nice horse and did well last season. He made it to the Pavo Cup semi-final with Petra van Esch. We like how things are going with Petra. She trains the horses very nicely, with a soft hand. As a result they're well prepared for a show career", believes Van de



Litchy's daughter Vanity (s.Gribaldi) is currently in training with Petra van Esch. She will have two foals this year through embryo transplant, one by Johnson and one by Zhivago.

Valk. He and Van Anholt still own Wiseguy but plan to sell him eventually. His full brother, who is the same age and out of a surrogate dam, is better known. He is Painted Black II. "He's a horse that definitely has it all, and his movement is huge. He has a super walk, a super trot, and a super canter. Even as a foal, he had a gorgeous stallion neck. In our eyes, he's the best horse we've ever bred," asserts Van de Valk. The now four-year-old Painted Black II, has since been approved by the NRPS (under the name Genesis) in Oldenburg and Sweden. Last year, he stood at stud in Sweden. He is now back in the Netherlands and ridden by Petra van Esch. "We want him to show in the Pavo Cup, and perhaps qualify him for the World Championships the following year. We look forward to a good show career for him. We also hope he has the opportunity to become a KWPN breeding stallion," says Van de Valk optimistically.

LITCHY TO THE AUCTION

Van de Valk and Van Anholt realized it was important for Litchy to prove herself in the show ring. "We're true KWPN breeders; we value predicates. We weren't happy that Litchy still didn't have a sport predicate, all the more because we knew she was good enough to earn one. That's why we rode her for several years after Painted Black II and Wiseguy were born. Jacqueline trained her, and British rider Camilla Sygall ended up showing her at Z2 level a few times," explains Van de Valk. Meanwhile, embryos were flushed from Litchy for two consecutive years—this time not from Gribaldi but from Tango. Van de Valk: "We've had a great relationship with Joop van Uyttert for years, and he wanted to breed Litchy to Tango. And that's what we did." The result was Zizi Top, a beautiful stallion with lots of movement. Last year, the bay impressed all at the Stallion Selection in Den Bosch and was selected for the performance test, which the stallion completed with an excellent score. Zizi Top is Litchy's third approved son and the second to be born through embryo transplant. Litchy's last embryo transplant foal was Alliante, a filly. "Another Gribaldi daughter. We want to present her at the Mare Keuring this year", says Van de Valk. After Alliante's birth, Van de Valk and Van Anholt decided to sell Litchy. "An opportunity arose to sell her through the Expo Talent



Litchy's half-sister Vogue (s.Negro) was declared provisional keur at the 2005 Central Keuring in Sevenum. She has since been sold to a buyer in England.



Wiseguy, a full brother to Painted Black, advanced to the semi-final of last year's Pavo Cup.

Sale in Hengelo. Litchy was 12 years old at the time, and we had two of her daughters to continue our breeding program. We also still had Vrona. Of course, it wasn't easy to sell a horse like Litchy. A home-bred mare that has produced so many offspring is special. Nevertheless, the bills had to be paid, and we were presented with this opportunity", says Van de Valk. Jan de Vries of Scherpenzeel purchased Litchy through the auction. He kept her as a broodmare, and last year, she foaled a Kigali son named Coloured Brown. He was sold at the Prinsjesdag Auction. "We're happy that Litchy has such a good home. I visited her last summer, and she's very well cared for", remarks Van de Valk.

PROUD BREEDERS

What is characteristic of Vrona and Litchy offspring? Van de Valk asserts, "I think their good temperament really stands out. They're all laid-back horses. You can do everything with them. On the other hand, you can also make them hot, which you need for the FEI levels. Furthermore, good hind leg use is really established in this dam-line, and many horses out of this line have looseness and impulsion."

An international dressage horse and three approved stallions out of one mare—that's quite an accomplishment. Did Van de Valk and Van Anholt ever think this would happen? "Developing a line means being very dependent on where and with whom your foals end up. If Painted Black hadn't ended up with Anky, the chance of him becoming a top international dressage horse would have been much smaller. On the other hand, if he weren't such a good horse, Anky never would have started working with him. The line we breed with was rather unknown prior to Painted Black's time, but that was not a reason for us not to breed that line. It's not that we don't think a good dam-line is important; the opposite is true: We chose this line because we were really impressed by the horses out of it. But let's say we bred several foals that weren't good. In that case, we would've decided not to go further with the line. However, the horses we bred were very high quality and developed into beautiful young horses, which motivated us to continue. Our decision to continue the line and our unwavering belief in Vrona and Litchy has resulted in the line becoming well-known and therefore interesting to breeders. And we're proud of that. We're also very thankful for Litchy. Our line has flourished because of her offspring", concludes Van de Valk.

