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Brazilian

The smooth-gaited Mangalarga Marchador has come to America.

By Audrey Pavia

Named the National Horse of Brazil by its native homeland where the breed numbers in the hundreds of thousands and has carried riders through the Brazilian countryside for nearly 200 years, the Mangalarga Marchador has finally come north to the States. With recent appearances in the Rose Parade, horse expos such as Equitana and Equine Affaire, and on television networks such as HorseTV, the Marchador has found its way into the consciousness of horse lovers throughout America. But who is this horse and what is his history? And why has it taken so long for horse people in the United States to discover the Mangalarga Marchador? The answers to these questions reveal a unique and fascinating horse.

Royal Beginnings

The story of the Mangalarga Marchador begins in the early 1800s, when the King of Portugal, King D. João VI, fled his country to escape capture by Napoleon's armies. The king chose Brazil for his exile, taking his family and several of his favorite stallions with him. Known as Alter-Real horses, the breed had been formed from horses native to the Iberian Peninsula, as well as to the Madeira and Canary Islands. With its elegant stature, and docile temperament, the Alter-Real was a breed developed exclusively by the king.

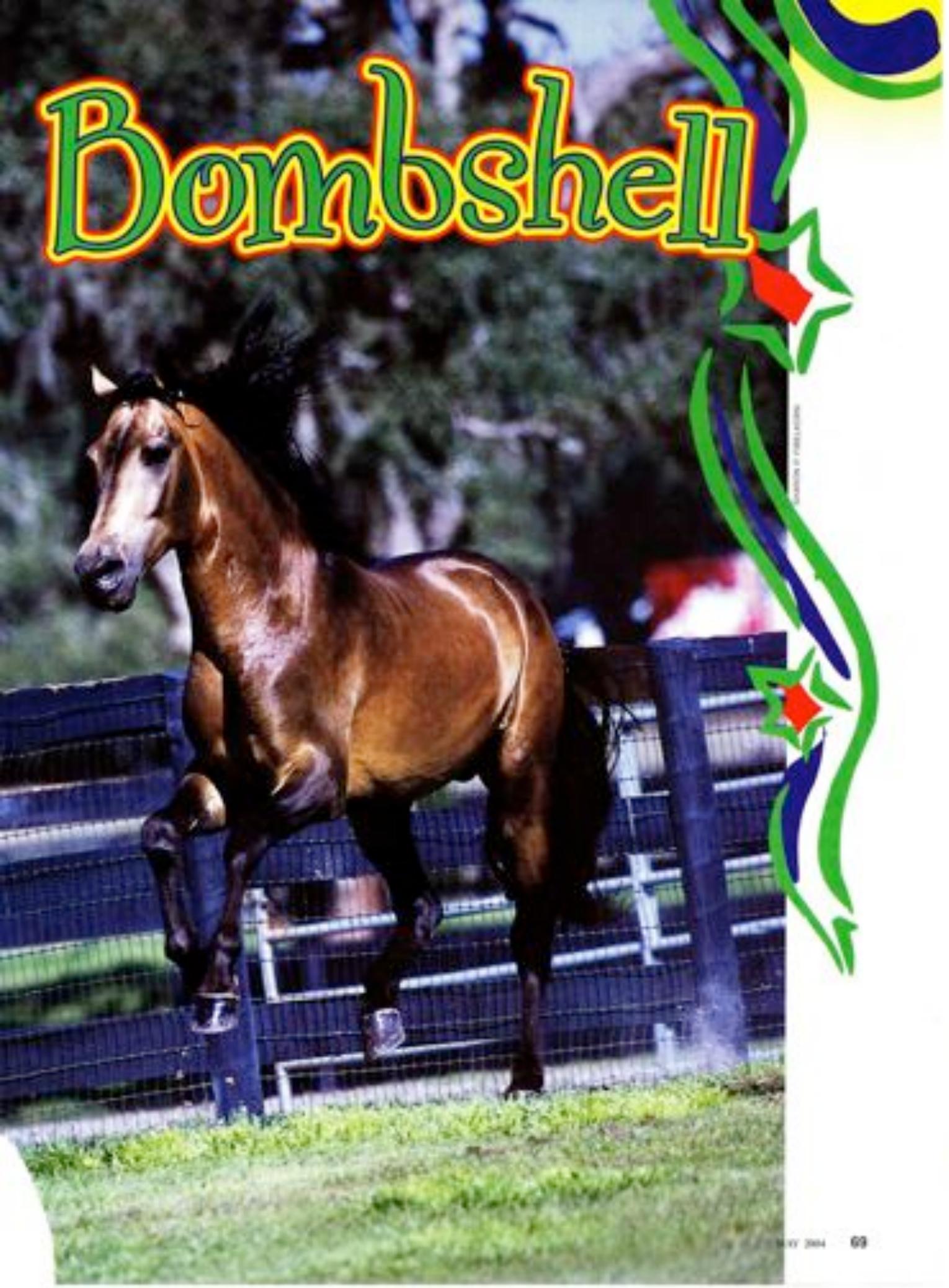
Once in Brazil, King João resolved to continue his breeding program and cross the Alter-Real stallions with Barb mares that had been imported from Africa. One of the results of these crossings was a stallion named Sublime who was bred to Barb mares—as well as Spanish Jennet mares (gained horses that came from Spain with the European conquerors). The resulting horses, called Sublime Horses, were fast and smooth gaited. They also possessed incredible stamina.

The Sublime Horses did not go unnoticed in the Brazilian countryside: The owner of a farm near Rio de Janeiro, called Mangalarga Farm, began breeding these horses in earnest. The farm produced so many of these horses that the breed lost the name "Sublime Horses" and became known as Mangalarga Horses instead. The breed maintained this name until the 1930s, when "Marchador" was added to distinguish the horse from a related breed known as the Mangalarga Paulista, developed by breeders who crossed the Mangalarga with the Thoroughbred, Arabian and Standardbred.

In 1949, the Associação Brasileira dos Criadores do Cavalo Mangalarga



Bombshell



PHOTOGRAPH BY JEFFREY L. KLEIN



Though only 60 Mangalarga Marchadors exist in America, 350,000 reside in their home country of Brazil where they've been carrying riders through the countryside for 200 years.

Marchador (ABCCMM), the breed association for the Mangalarga Marchador in Brazil, was formed. The organization's goals were to establish breed standards for the Marchador and to promote the breed, particularly its smooth gait or "march." Some 4,000 people are members of the ABCCMM in Brazil, and 350,000 Marchadors are registered in that country.

Coming to America

Although the Mangalarga Marchador is the National Horse of Brazil, it was relatively unknown in the United States until 1999 when Marchadors first made their way to American shores.

First imported to Florida by the Guerra family of Miami, the Marchador's presence remained low-key with only 10 of these unusual horses on American soil. The breed began to break out of anonymity in 2000 when the Mangalarga Marchador Horse Association of America (MMHAA) was formed. More horses were imported, and a major marketing campaign was launched to bring the breed to the American consciousness. The MMHAA affiliated itself with the ABCCMM and became the official registry for the breed in the United States. The American organization even went so far as to trademark a brand that can only be applied to pure-breed Marchadors that have been imported according to association rules or born in America and approved by a Brazilian inspector.

The plan to promote awareness of the Marchador breed in the United States included a number of public exhibitions. In 2002, Marchadors appeared at the Pasadena Tournament of Roses Parade, the Western States Horse Expo and Equine Affaire. Since that time, the MMHAA has acquired a handful of members and to date, 60 Marchadors can be found in the United States.

Marchador Traits

Although the Mangalarga Marchador is one of several South American gaited horses, the breed is truly unique when compared to the Peruvian Paso, the Paso Fino and even the closely related Marchador Paulista.

One of the most unusual aspects of the Mangalarga Marchador is the breed's gaits. Naturally born with the abil-



The Marchador's heritage includes Andalusian blood and other stock native to the Iberian Peninsula, as well as Barb horses imported from Africa.

ity to perform the *marcha picada* and the *marcha batida*, the Mangalarga Marchador is the only South American breed that can perform these marches.

The *marcha picada* is a four-beat lateral gait, meaning it has a four-beat rhythm produced by the legs on one side moving in the same direction at the same time. Although this gait appears similar to the pace at first glance, it is different because each foot touches the ground individually. (The pace is a two-beat gait where the legs

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on each side of the horse move in unison.) Because the horse always has three feet on the ground at any given moment, and actually overreaches the hind foot, the resulting march is very smooth.

As the Marchador performs the marcha picada, his front end elevates as he drives from behind. Marchadors can maintain the marcha picada for long periods of time at significant speed.

The marcha batida differs from the marcha picada in that it is a four-beat diagonal gait. Although the marcha batida appears similar to a trot, it differs in that it is a four-beat gait and one foot is always on the ground at a given time, whereas the trot is a two-beat gait that places the horse completely in the air at one point during the sequence. Marchadors performing the marcha batida give the impression that they are cantering in the front and trotting in the back. This is because the front legs make a semi-circle while the rear legs provide power to propel the horse forward.

In addition to their special marches, Marchadors are also able to perform the conventional walk and canter seen in non-gaited horses.

Many Uses

In their native country, Marchadors are hard-working horses used primarily for moving cattle and for transport across rugged terrains. They are also shown in Brazil, where they are judged on conformation and performance.

In the United States, Marchadors are being marketed for a number of sports. They are naturals for endurance riding and make excellent trail horses.

The Marchador's strong cow sense make it suitable for cut-



American Mangalarga Marchador enthusiasts such as Linda Tellington-Jones are just as passionate about the breed as their Brazilian counterparts and are working hard to increase the Marchador's popularity.

ting, penning and other work with cattle, as well as reining.

Although they are gaited horses, Marchadors can be trained to trot. Marchadors are good jumpers and many seem to enjoy sailing over rails and oxers at the prompting of their riders. They also make good polo ponies.

The Marchador's willing and calm temperament makes it suitable for just about any sport. Although the Marchador's numbers are few in the United States, the efforts of those who cherish this breed are certain to result in greater awareness of this horse's fine qualities. Like the Paso Fino and Peruvian Paso before him, the Marchador is bound to become a favorite South American import.

For more information, contact the Mangalarga Marchador Horse Association of America, P.O. Box 770955, Ocala, FL 34477; (352) 368-5786; www.mmhaa.com.

*Suey Peiss is the author of *Horses for Dummies*.*



Breed Characteristics

The Mangalarga Marchador's unique marches are supported by conformation exclusive to the breed. The breed sports a long pastern and forearm that are well muscled. The cannon bones are short, and the pasterns and hocks are at a lower angle than those seen on non-gaited horses. The back is medium in length, and the loins are short and well-muscled. Marchadors with ideal conformation sport a distance from the back to the loins that is of lesser or equal distance to the length of the croup. In other words, the distance from the horse's back to his loins must be longer or the same as the entire length of the horse's croup. The croup is slightly sloping and long, and the tail is set at a medium height.

To add to the breed's high head carriage, the neck comes out from the top third of the chest. The neck is medium in length and is well arched and muscular.

Mangalarga Marchadors have thick manes and tails, particularly the stallions. Their heads are triangular in shape, and feature a large, flat forehead that tapers to a small, fine muzzle. The profile is straight, and the large eyes are set wide apart.

The average height for the Marchador is around 15 hands, but horses in the breed can measure from 14.2 to 17 hands. They weigh anywhere from 850 to 1,100 pounds.

Marchadors come in many colors, including black, chestnut, bay, buckskin, dun, grulla, gray, pinto, palomino, perlino, cremello and a seal bay coloration.

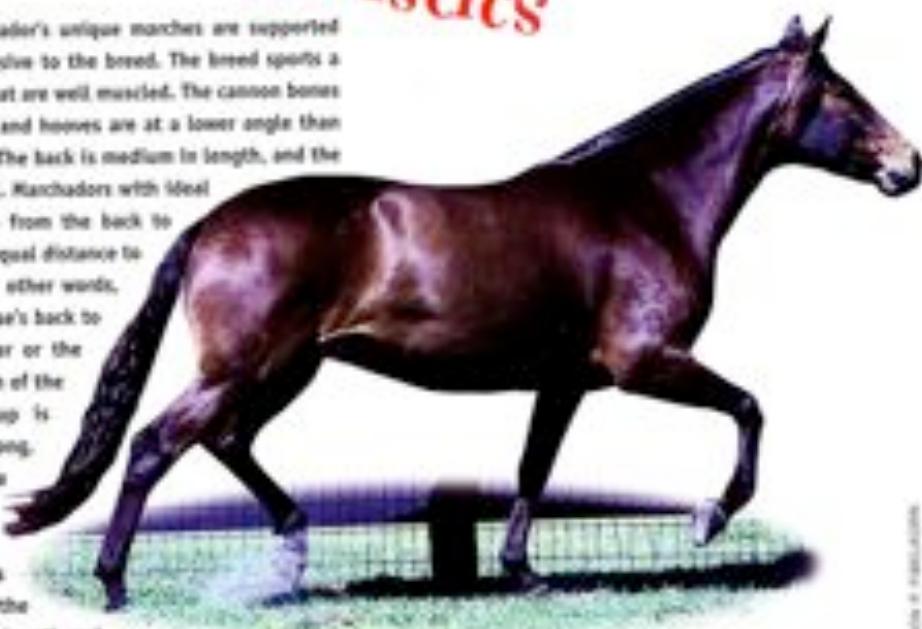
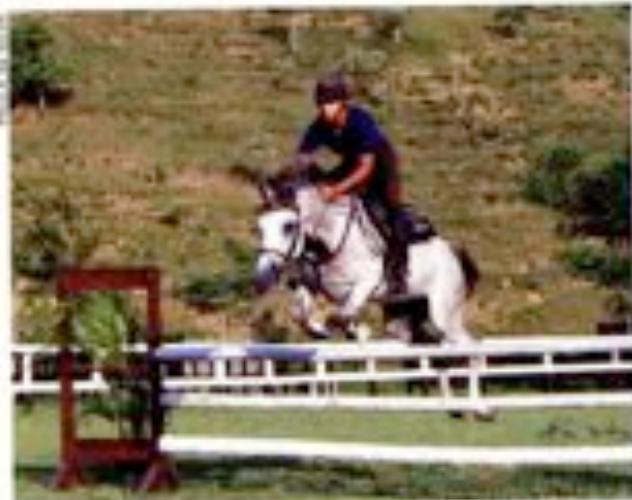


Photo © iStockphoto



In Brazil, annual breed association tests for Mangalarga Marchadors include cross-country jumping.

Fast Facts

■ Three Mangalarga Marchadors were recorded in the Guinness Book of World Records in 1994 after being ridden 9,000 miles in a two year time span. Guided by three Brazilian riders, the horses traversed country that encompassed temperatures from 0 to 115 degrees F, and altitudes from sea level to 15,000 feet.

■ The Brazilian registry for Marchadors, Associação Brasileira dos Criadores do Cavalo Mangalarga Marchador, holds annual tests for the breed that require horses to march while being judged for head carriage, "bris" (spine) and elegance, all with consistent timing of the gaits and covering a wide range of speeds. Cross-country jumping, endurance and reining tests are also part of the evaluation.

■ In their native country, Marchadors are ridden in Brazilian saddles, which are similar to Australian stock saddles. Riders wear traditional Brazilian cowboy attire, which features a colorful neck bandana.



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