

*Arabian Horse World presents*

**BELIEVE IN YOUR DREAMS —**

**HOW A**

**BLACK STALLION**

**PROVED THAT SMALL BREEDERS CAN WIN**

**BIG**

BY BARBARA SUVAKA

PHOTOS BY

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**C**an a small breeder with just a couple of horses and limited means, breed, raise, and campaign a stallion to the top of his field and achieve both an AHA National Title and two USEF National Champion Arabian Horse of the Year Dressage honors? Our stallion, Tuxedo Thyme ABA (Pyro Thyme SA x SMA Alad Khelima) showed us what's possible when you believe in your dreams.

I grew up in the small town of Mosinee in central Wisconsin. My sister and I fell in love with Arabian horses when we were very young after reading the Walter Farley books and watching the Black Stallion movies. We were lucky to have a mom who wanted to keep her teenage daughters busy so she got us involved with horses. Luckily, they were Arabians. Eventually the horses got sold and off to college we went. Many years later, when my husband, Dan, and I began



looking for more space, we found a horse property outside of Milwaukee. I immediately started thinking about owning horses again ... and of course they would be Arabians. So in 1993, with the help of my mother, I purchased two mares that I found in newspaper ads. One was SMA Alad Khelima (Alad Khemofix x Aldebaran Scarlet). I spent the first few years doing pleasure riding with Khelima and my other mare Kismet, and in 1998, we had our first foal from Khelima, a very nice filly, who got me interested in doing more with my horses.

It wasn't long before I sent one of my fillies to trainer Mike Neal in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, and I quickly got introduced to the wonderful world of Arabian horse showing. I learned a lot from Mike and will be forever grateful to him for getting me started in Arabian showing.

During this time, Mike received a new yearling colt in his barn — Pyro Thyme SA (Pryme Thyme x Holly Onfire JW). The moment I saw him, he took my breath away and I knew that he was going to be the next stallion I'd breed to Khelima. So when Pyro was ready to breed in 2003, I bred both Khelima and her first daughter to him. In 2004, Khelima finally foaled a black colt, who we fittingly named Tuxedo Thyme ABA (ABA is for Absolutely Arabians). My second Pyro foal was born five days later, a beautiful bay filly, Storie Thyme ABA. It was truly a joy to watch these two play in the field.

When Tux and Torie were yearlings they both went to Mike Neal's for training. Both did well at shows early on and Tux capped off his yearling year with a Top Five Yearling Colt at Region 10 (third out of nine colts). I knew that owning a stallion had its challenges, but I really couldn't see gelding this beautiful black stallion. So after quite a few discussions with Mike, family, and some friends, I decided I would keep Tux and see where it took me.

Darcy Grey, who worked for Mike at the time, felt that Tux had the mind and conformation to do dressage and suggested I contact Kim Barteau from KYB Dressage. After talking with Kim, I knew that this was the place for Tux. Kim and his wife Yvonne had

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**Tuxedo Thyme ABA** (Pyro Thyme SA x SMA Alad Khelima), pictured here with trainer Jamie Lawton, is the top winning son of Pyro Thyme SA.

In 2013, Tux was Sport Horse National Champion Stallion In-Hand ATH, plus he won Top Tens in Sport Horse Show Hack, Dressage Intermédiare I, and Prix Saint-George, and the AHA Legion of Supreme Merit and Legion of Supreme Honor Awards.

In 2014, Tux won four Top Tens at Sport Horse Nationals, and eight Regional Championships in Sport Horse in Hand, open and ATH, Dressage Intermédiare 1, Show Hack, and Dressage Prix Saint-George, as well as the AHA Legion of Masters and Legion of Excellence Awards.

Together with his Regional wins, his accomplishments have also earned him 2013 and 2014 USEF Horse of the Year National Champion Arabian Dressage FEI Combined Level, 2013 and 2014 USEF Region 10 Champion Dressage FEI Combined Level, and 2013 USEF Region 11 and 2014 USEF Region 12 Reserve Champion Dressage FEI Combined Level. Tux was also named USDF All Breeds Champion

Arabian in Prix Saint-George and in Intermédiare 1.



been the head trainers at the Arabian Nights Dinner Show in Orlando for years, so not only did their working students teach Tux the basic skills under saddle and show him in training level dressage, Kim also taught him some liberty tricks. Tux took to them quickly and to this day loves to “play” at liberty in front of crowds.

By the time Tux was six, Kim felt that his stepson, Jamie Lawton had the skills and work ethic that would match with Tux. “We’ve done Arabs for awhile and they are really smart horses,” says Jamie. “I have a lot of luck teaching them and getting them to move up the levels pretty fast. Because if you know what you’re doing, they pick things up really fast. There aren’t many Warmbloods I know like Tux who could start as a training horse and move to pretty much a Grand Prix horse within three years or so.”



“Tux is definitely an Arabian stallion; I mean he’s like the black stallion in real life,” says Jamie. “He was just full of himself in the beginning and pretty soon the working students didn’t want to work with him. So I said, ‘Well, let me take a shot at him,’ and I just got along with him and figured him out. He’s not one of those horses you can muscle into something, and say, ‘you’re going to do it,’ cause he’ll just say ‘no.’ So you have to play with things and make it his idea. He’s real clever, and he’s my first FEI partner that I’ve trained all the way from scratch.”

Jamie and Tux quickly formed a bond that you see right away when they are together. Within a few weeks Tux began talking to Jamie when he heard his footsteps, and Jamie looked forward to seeing Tux every day. In 2011 we hit the show circuit, a first for Jamie, who had never shown before. We were, and still are, a small presence at the shows as it’s just the three of us. I did the hauling to shows and helped with care and grooming and also showed Tux in the Sport Horse In-Hand ATH class. Jamie showed



in the Dressage, Show Hack, and open Sport Horse In-Hand classes. In 2012 and 2013, Tux earned 12 Regional Championships (plus numerous Reserves and Top Fives), in Sport Horse Show Hack, Sport Horse Stallion In-Hand, open and ATH, Dressage Third Level, Prix Saint-George, and Intermédiaire I.

In 2013, after winning three Regional Championships, three Reserves, and three Top Fives, we decided it was time to take Tux to the Sport Horse Nationals. There, Tux did what I had always dreamed of — he not only won a National title, but with me at the lead he won National Champion Sport Horse Stallion In-Hand ATH. Two things made that experience so very memorable. One, my husband Dan was there watching, and two, my name was announced as the winner, the owner, and the breeder of this amazing stallion. We also took home three National Top Tens in Dressage Prix Saint-George, Dressage Intermédiaire I and Sport Horse Show Hack. Then in December, to make 2013 even more amazing, we learned that Tux and Jamie also won USEF National Champion Arabian Horse of the Year FEI Combined Level Dressage as well as USEF Region 10 Champion and Region 11 Reserve Champion FEI Combined Level Dressage. And, they earned enough points to earn the AHA Legion of Supreme Merit and Legion of Supreme Honor Awards. It was definitely a busy, fantastic year.

Going to Nampa for the 2014 Sport Horse Nationals was a huge decision, because I can only afford so much being a small-time breeder. Luckily some good friends of mine (Antearmann Arabians) had an open space in their trailer so I decided we would make the trip. We brought home four more

National Top Tens and we earned enough points to get the AHA Legion of Masters and Legion of Excellence awards. But that wasn't all we did in 2014. In October, Tux was named USDF All Breeds Arabian Champion in both Prix Saint George and Intermédiaire 1, and in December he was once again named USEF Horse of the Year National Champion for Arabian Dressage FEI Combined Level.

As of this writing, Tux and Jamie are in Wellington, Florida, competing on the open dressage circuit. "We've taken him to some pretty tough open shows, where he competes against a lot of super nice Warmbloods," Jamie says. "He can go in there and do a clean test, but even if the Warmbloods make a few mistakes, their gaits are so much bigger that the judges toss out the 8s or 9s a lot more freely than they do for Tux. He's often the only Arabian out there, but everyone mentions how cute and pretty he is.

"Before Barb retires him I want to get him to be one of the few purebred Arab stallions to show Grand Prix and do well. He's schooling all the movements right now and he has a really good Passage. His Piaffe is getting really close to being show ready. The one thing I really need to work on with him are his tempi changes. He's great with his two, three, and four tempis but I need to get him more relaxed for the one tempis. It will have to be his idea, and since he's a smaller horse, those one tempis will have to be really quick and he has to be on the aids.

"Tux is a great horse," continues Jamie. "He has taught me a lot, probably more than any other horse has because of his little challenges and his intelligence. He figures out how to do something ... and how to *not* do it, just as quickly. Because competing with Warmbloods means that everything has to be on point and really good, I think he's made me a better rider."

As his owner, it's still hard for me to believe that "Team Tux" has done so well. Over the years Tux has gained quite a following and it's so rewarding to own a horse of this caliber, not to mention owning my very own black Arabian stallion. His foals are proving to be very talented and easy to work with so we're eager to get more on the ground.

We are also hoping to find more clients for Jamie because he is an exceptional trainer. But the most important message of our story is to believe in your dreams. This horse is living proof that small breeders can win big.



Owner Barb Suvaka with Tuxedo Thyme ABA, right.

