

# THE SPECIAL DISPLAYS

and

## The Spanish Purebred



In addition to the entertainment proffered by the competitions themselves, we were delighted to discover that other displays – especially those featuring the Spanish Purebred (or PRE) - were not exclusive to the Opening Ceremony. On the contrary, the rest periods between sections of the dressage or during the early evening provided moments as memorable as some of those within the competitive arena.

Not unreasonably, the Spanish took the opportunity to display and promote their ‘wares’ – in their case their own magnificent breed of horse, the Spanish Purebred or PRE as it is now known. More popularly known as ‘the Andalusian’ in reference to the region of Southern Spain where the breed originated, the Spanish breeders decided it should be given a more general name to reflect its wider distribution nowadays – so PRE it is! The breed’s own Association, ANCCE (Asociacion Nacional de Criadores de Caballos de Pura Raza Espanola) was responsible for showing us superb specimens of their breed which, incredibly, is not recognised as such by the Spanish Ministry of Agriculture - an astonishing fact, given the status of these amazing horses throughout the world. There are approximately 70,000 of them scattered around the world in about 54 countries, some of which have excellent breeding programmes for the PRE of their own, the USA and Mexico in particular. This is hardly surprising, given the fact that these very same horses were a vital factor in Cortez’s successful conquest of the Americas. Even today the Spanish Ministry of Defence has control of the management and registration of the Spanish Purebred since their use in war was an essential part of their development and there is a large military stud at Garrapilos which has historically exerted considerable influence in maintaining bloodlines. However, it is not as a warhorse that we think of the PRE these

days. In fact, the ANCCE is anxious to promote the versatility and value of the Spanish Purebred in the modern world of equestrianism and to move this ancient breed firmly into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

That the PRE is particularly suited to dressage was borne out in magnificent style at these very Games since two of Spain's team, namely Invasor and Granadero, were ranked in the top 25 horses in the world. Amazingly, Invasor has been competing at championship level since

he was just **7 years old** – a testament not only to his physical attributes but also his mental toughness and ability to learn. Movements that require collection in any form come more naturally to this breed than any other and thus they are able to make piaffe and passage, which require suspension and elevation to be seen at their best, look easy.

This is also a breed well suited to work in harness and the Spanish were able to field a team of Purebreds in the carriage driving event competed by Antonio Carrillo Bae. The showiness of these horses has obviously been seen to good effect in private carriage driving but the rigours of the marathon and obstacles of the cross-country phase of an International Driving Event are quite another matter, proving once again the mental and physical toughness of the breed.

## DOMA VAQUERA



reflexes, extravagant lateral movement, courage and responsiveness to the rider, to name but a few.

Demonstrations of these were given by a few superbly mounted horsemen to whom Spanish walk (or trot) apparently come as naturally as the conventional rising trot does to the average rider. Sliding halts from full gallop presented no problem either, nor passage and pirouettes, all ridden one-handed. A group of four riders using the Garrocha performed carousels and other movements and a group and



*Antonio Carrillo Bae competing in the Carriage Driving event*

breeding stallions were shown in-hand by some extremely athletic handlers who put to shame the efforts of most exhibitors in the UK who, all too often, seem either unable or too afraid to allow their horses to really **move**.

Once you see horses demonstrating their potential like this you realise the limitation that the majority of riders place on them the moment they climb into the saddle, however advanced their riding skills may be (but invariably are **not**). These stallions were quite superb and obviously loved playing to the crowd since the greater the applause the more extravagant their paces became – just another delightful aspect of their nature. Incidentally, charges commonly made to the effect that the PRE cannot show good extension are surely questionable after the stunning movement shown by these individuals.

The cobras of beautiful mares first seen at the Opening Ceremony were repeated courtesy of the military stud at Garrapilos and the famous Yeguada de la Cartuja - Hierro del Bocado, renowned throughout the world as the greatest producer of Cartujano horses anywhere. The stud was established by the 15<sup>th</sup> century next to the site of the Carthusian monastery near to Jerez. Here the horses thrived on the rich pastures provided by the marshlands of the river Guadalete. It quickly developed into the major centre for the breeding of Jerezano horses. Today it maintains a herd of over 200 horses with the aim of preserving the genetic pool of these beautiful and yet powerful horses for generations to come. The docility and noble nature of the stud's horses could not have been better demonstrated than by the cobras of the mares. Their good temperament was much in evidence, both on and off- stage since they were required to wait for lengthy periods both in and outside the stadium before entering the arena and always did so with the minimum of fuss.

At the opening ceremony, we had seen a rider mounted on a stallion controlling the cobra of a dozen mares as they made huge wheeling movements around the stadium, but by way of a variation on the theme a rider mounted on a stallion drove the mares in front of him. Admittedly the latter was showing some signs of being excited by the exercise but it never interfered with his obedience to his rider. It was an extraordinary sight.

Other stallions performed airs above the ground in hand – courbettes and caprioles – to complete a magnificent demonstration of the many attributes of Spain's most noble breed of horse.





## DANCE AND THE PRE

It was evident from posters around Jerez that at least one nightclub was putting on a floorshow featuring horsemen and flamenco dancing. Sounding as though it was essentially a tourist attraction, it came at a tourist's price – expensive! However it proved unnecessary to be indulgent since the floorshow, or its equivalent came to the stadium one evening.

Far from being “tacky”, it was a very enjoyable display. The horseman, superbly mounted on a bay stallion, performed a well-choreographed piece with a lone flamenco dancer. They were obviously enacting a tale of love, pursuit and seduction and it was very well done. I really couldn't take my eyes off the horse which was quite stunning and he and his rider interacted with the dancer in such a harmonious way that the result was both dramatic and quite balletic.

## PONY POWER

During a break in the dressage competition one afternoon we were treated to a display by a young boy on a small pony, both of whom were lavishly attired in gold – brocade jacket, bridle, leather boots – there was even a gold pattern on the pony's quarters! They proceeded with great aplomb to perform a very competent display of dressage – certainly canter half pass held no fears for them.

Beautifully schooled, this combination ably demonstrated that **any** equine and **any** rider can advance to a competent level of horsemanship with application and intention. Most ponies of this stature in the UK are confined to gymkhana events! Unfortunately, we were not given the name of the young rider in question but I have no doubt that he will go on to greater things in the future. Even if performing at the WEG was a thrilling occasion for him, he evidently was not overawed by it.



## Turville Valley Stud

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