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## Morgan Pony Stallion Forsite Renoir Aims for Repeat at National Dressage Pony Cup

National Dressage Pony Cup proves talent comes in many breeds and sizes

by Glenye Oakford | Jul 3, 2017, 10:15 AM EST

When the pony-sized Morgan stallion Forsite Renoir takes to the ring at the Kentucky Horse Park July 7-9 National Dressage Pony Cup, he'll be gunning for his second consecutive Fédération Equestre Internationale (FEI) Open Championship win at the competition. The 13.3-hand stallion also will be carrying on a great Morgan and pony legacy in the sport of dressage for breeder, owner, and rider Debra M'Gonigle.



Forsite Renoir and Deb M'Gonigle at the 2016 National Dressage Pony Cup  
(Jennifer M. Keeler Photo)

"They have all the same qualities as horses: they can move big for their size," M'Gonigle, who owns Mohawk Farm in Woodstock, Illinois, said of ponies.

M'Gonigle is bringing two stallions to the National Dressage Pony Cup this year, Forsite Renoir and Forsite Zephyr, a first-timer at the competition. Both will show in the FEI classes.

US Equestrian members can watch the National Dressage Pony Cup via the USEF Network live stream.

M'Gonigle's devotion to pony-sized Morgans goes a long way back to her first pony, a Morgan named Black Magic that her father gave her in 1974, when M'Gonigle was 14.

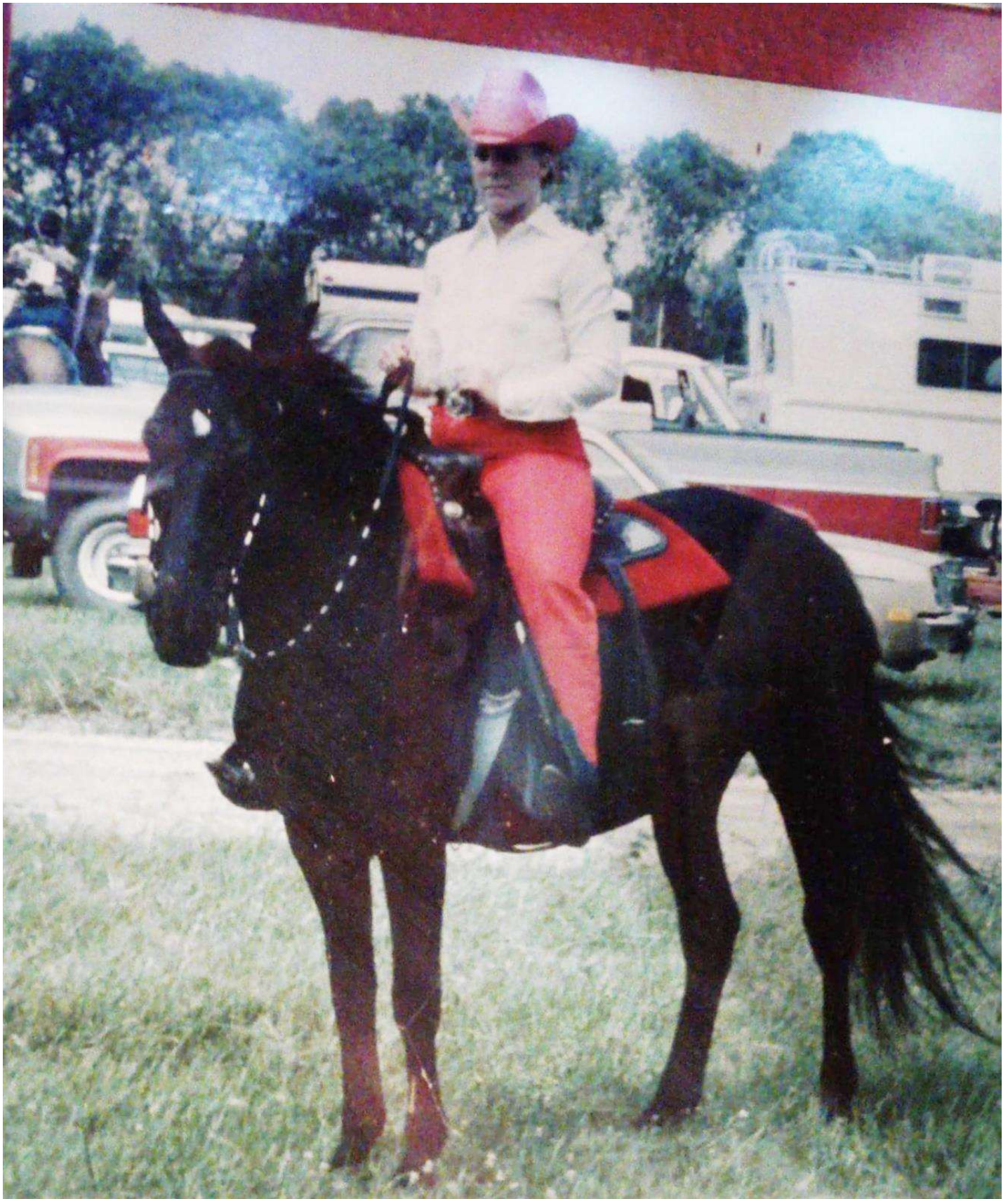
"She was given to me by my father, and she was 14 hands," M'Gonigle said. "I was riding hunter jumpers back then, and she was considerably smaller than the Thoroughbreds that filled the hunter jumper barns around us then. She looked like Black Beauty, a beautiful blue-black with a white star that was the only fleck of white on her.

"We tested the waters in everything. We joined the local saddle club, which was a Quarter Horse club, and they taught us barrel racing and pole-bending and more. They gave me a little insight into Western pleasure."

Black Magic and M'Gonigle had plenty of adventures together. M'Gonigle's first saddle was a \$50 Western parade saddle her parents bought her. "Then they bought me a Toot-a-Loop AM radio, and I could fit that around my saddle horn," M'Gonigle said. "I dialed in the local rock station, and I'd listen to Elton John and Aerosmith in my saddle while I was riding. But because the tuner was a dial, if I did too much trotting or cantering, it would change stations!"

Black Magic was a green four-year-old when the equally unschooled M'Gonigle received her, which made for some hairy moments. M'Gonigle, who had little formal riding instruction as a child, often hopped on bareback for long trail rides, and along the way she figured out how to stay on and ride, literally, by the seat of her pants.





Black Magic and Deb M'Gonigle in 1980. "She gave me her all," said M'Gonigle.

"She taught me patience," M'Gonigle said. "When we're children, we want it all yesterday. I learned that what we did together didn't happen on my time; it happened on her time. I had to wait for her to learn."

"She also taught me that when I made a mistake, she was tolerant that I didn't know anything. I really owe her my life. God makes them perfect, so they know things we don't know. It's up to us to discover what those things are. She and I had a lot of those times when I had my arms around her neck, pouring out my heart or telling her what my hopes and dreams were, even on trail rides. She was a very good listener, and she made me a very good listener.

"She gave me her all," M'Gonigle added. "This little Black Magic was the precursor for what I'm doing now and why I have sport ponies today."

M'Gonigle went on to try dressage, and there she found her passion for the discipline. She also eventually discovered the Morgan who would become the foundation sire for her breeding program—and the grandsire of Forsite Renoir.

That was Rapidan Imperial, a former park horse who "moved like a grand prix dressage horse," according to M'Gonigle.

"It took me three years to retrain him," M'Gonigle said, "and I ended up with Karl Mikolka at Tempel Farms around 1992."

Getting to work with Mikolka, who had trained with the great dressage master Alois Podhajsky at the Spanish Riding School in Vienna, required more than showing up for a lesson.

"I had to write a one-page essay about why I deserved to ride with Karl Mikolka and fax it to him," said M'Gonigle. Mikolka told her that Rapidan Imperial was the first Morgan ever allowed to board at Tempel Farms, home of the Tempel Lipizzans. "He told me, 'I hope that you understand what you represent,'" M'Gonigle remembered. "I most certainly took it very seriously."

M'Gonigle has no doubt that Morgans and ponies have what it takes to compete in dressage, and she welcomes the opportunity the National Dressage Pony Championship provides to showcase the talents of various breeds and sizes.

She's not alone.

"I am thankful to have found a way to contribute to the promotion of ponies in the wonderful and exciting sport of dressage," said National Dressage Pony Cup founder and president Jenny Carol. "Pony Cup competitors, breeders, and owners from all over the United States are yearning for a way to compete. Ponies deserve to be respected and honored for their achievements. The National Dressage Pony Cup is celebrating its 10th anniversary this year, and, in addition to our Annual Championship Show, we're proud to offer a plethora of pony-friendly programs, including Partner Shows in every United States Dressage Federation region, year-end awards and prize money for ponies and small horses, generous Annual Show prize money, gorgeous ribbons, a fun atmosphere, and serious competition at all levels and in every division.

"We are dedicated to educating people about the many talents of ponies for dressage and their ability to help their riders of all ages to achieve their goals."

"What do I love about the National Dressage Pony Cup?" asked M'Gonigle. "The opportunity to compete with a smaller horse on a level playing field, with other riders and lovers of smaller breeds of horses. We all enjoy these ponies, love sharing our stories, and love seeing so many different types of ponies represented! We have loads of fun, and of course I love the people involved with the National Dressage Pony Cup!"

The National Dressage Pony Cup also illustrates something M'Gonigle considers a defining philosophy. "It isn't about the breed of the horse you're riding," M'Gonigle said. "It's about what dressage has done for that particular horse. If you have the correct training and your horse is a decent enough mover, you can improve upon whatever you have and go out there and have fun and show, whether it's at the FEI level or at a local schooling show."

To learn more about Morgans, check out the American Morgan Horse Association's website. To find out more about dressage, visit our dressage page and the United States Dressage Federation. For more information about the National Dressage Pony Cup, check out the show's site here.

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