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Morgans Capture Three at Live Oak Trials

Proving again that Morgans are among the finest driving horses in the world, Fred Merriam drove Nicholas Mercede's Gaitwood Lightwing (TOFR Black Wing x Gaitwood Leflame), a 1995 bay gelding, to finish first in the FEI Single Horse Division. Lisa Singer finished first in the FEI Pairs Division driving Mimi Torrington's chestnut geldings, Count On Me (Kennebec Count x Nemours Isabella) and LR Ami Bengali (HRM Eye Of The Tiger x LR Amie Allynda). Sara Schmitt was first in the FEI Single Pony Division driving her High Country Doc (Paradox Madison x MIR Roy Crystal), a 1996 bay, who also had the best marathon score. Suzy Stafford was right behind them, placing second driving Beverly Lasher's Courage To Lead (Courage Of Equinox x Hartland Sable), a 1997 chestnut mare. Courage to Lead was the USEF Single Pony Champion in 2004. Shelly Temple came in sixth driving her LR Ami B-Line (Tanglwood Trade Wind x Melissa's Nora Bea), a 1998 chestnut gelding, who also had the best Dressage score of the event. Twenty five percent of the horses competing at the Live Oak CAI were Morgan horses.

Since the late eighteenth century, Morgans have been recognized as superior driving horses. In the early 1800s, these hardy animals pulled heavy wagons and stagecoaches around New England, snatched logs to clear the land for farming all week, and then showed their elegant trotting style while transporting the family down the rough roads to houses of worship on the Sabbath. Later, harness racing became very popular and the true-trotting Morgan horses earned many titles and great respect as the fastest trotting horses in the world at the time.

Throughout the twentieth century, Morgans continually have reasserted their dominance as a driving horse, which is not surprising, considering a recent survey by the American Driving Society, revealed that Morgans were by far the most popular breed owned by their membership. In 2002, two of the three spots on the U.S. Singles team that competed in France were Morgans (Canequin's Look Out, owned and driven by Nancy Johnson and Gaitwood Lightwing, driven by Fred Merriam). Merriam and his Morgan brought home the individual bronze medal, missing the silver by only fractions of a second.

In 2004 the United States Equestrian Federation named Gaitwood Lightwing and Merriam; Bethesda After Dark, a black gelding bred by Kathryn and Robert Iorio of Waukesha, WI, and driven and owned by Scott Monroe of Sharon, CT; and Collector's Right Stuff, a bay gelding bred and owned by Woodrow and Sharon Davis of Southern Pines, North Carolina, and driven by Scott Padgett to be the team that competed in Astorp, Sweden representing the United States at the World Singles Championship competition. Truly, the Morgan is America's Driving Horse.

In addition, the Florida Morgan Horse Association, in cooperation with the American Morgan Horse Association, sponsored one of the hazards at this year's event, The Gulch.

Founded in 1909, the American Morgan Horse Association is a non-profit organization serving more than 50,000 Morgan horse owners, breeders, exhibitors, and enthusiasts throughout the United States. AMHA serves as a parent organization to more than 90 recognized Morgan horse clubs and national service organizations. It also provides an important link to foreign Morgan horse registries and clubs.

For more information on America's original horse breed, contact the American Morgan Horse Association Inc.© , 122 Bostwick Road, Shelburne, Vermont 05482; 802/ 985-4944; info@morganhorse.com.

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