

## Morgans Win USEF National Pairs Championship

Alan Aulson and his team of hearty Morgans, Nordby Coalie's Duke (Caduceus Falcon x Coal Creek Sabra's Coalie) and Meddo's Chief George (Del View Ebony Fox x Skybeck Alouette), proved to be winners as they earned the 2006 USEF National Horse Pairs Championship on October 6-8 at the Shady Oaks CDE in Lodi, California. A Massachusetts native and the owner of Black Prong Equestrian Center in Bronson, Florida, Aulson also was a member of Team USA at the 2005 FEI World Pairs Driving Championships held in Salzburg, Austria.

Aulson praised his California hosts Fritz Grupe and the team at Shady Oaks, explaining, "They welcomed us and all the competitors very warmly and made us feel at home at their vast and delightful facility. At both Shady Oaks and the Horse Park in Woodside, California, where we competed before the national championships, our West Coast counterparts appreciated that we made the trip. When we won, they were happy for us, but understandably disappointed to see the trophy go back East!"

In support of other advanced-level drivers working toward qualifying for the world championships, Aulson has added advanced levels to the 2007 Nature Coast CDE in January and

the 2007 Black Prong CDE in March, making them qualifiers for the 2007 pair and pony world championship contenders. These events will provide a valuable opportunity for drivers to qualify themselves and their animals before the first selection trial at Live Oak.





# Meet David Saunders

*The man at the reins of America's great hope.* By Stephen Kinney

**T**he Aulson Four-In-Hand is unique. It is the only four-in-hand of an American breed competing for inclusion in the upcoming World Equestrian Games. It represents a new level of competition for the Morgan breed and gives those of us in the community a symbol on which to pin our aspirations going into this international competition on home soil.

David Saunders is the charismatic, internationally known horseman at the reins. A trip to [davidsaunders.com](http://davidsaunders.com) will show you the near daredevil level of his expertise. Here's a chance to meet the man at the lines of the Morgan breed's great hope, The Aulson Four.

**You are a horseman with an international reputation, but the American Morgan community may not know you well. Give them the book jacket bio on David Saunders.**

I am a lifelong horseman. I started when I was 14 years old. I was an army brat, born in Egypt where my father was a soldier on the Suez Canal, I had varied experiences: I started working with polo ponies, then as an apprentice farrier, I worked in the film and TV industry, including with many movie stars, then worked 20 years for the Queen, driving at royal weddings and ceremonies. My main job was as the Head Coachman To His Royal Highness The Duke Of Edinburgh. While with HRH we won one gold, two silver and a bronze at various world and European championships. I have driven myself at three world championships, twice for Great Britain and once for the USA, becoming a U.S. citizen in 2001. I first drove at the World Equestrian Games 20 years ago and I hope we will drive at the 2010 WEG.

**Did you find the Aulson horses or did the Aulson horses find you? Is this your first experience with Morgan horses?**

I have known the Aulsons for 10 years and have helped them on and off training and competing. I had not had much to do with Morgans until I met the Aulsons.

**What are the qualities you look for in a CDE horse?**

Combined driving is the most comprehensive driving sport. Based on combined training, it starts with the precision of the dressage, the power and determination of the marathon, and finishes with the absolute concentration of the cones. To be a member of a four-in-hand the horse has to be a great team player, but have the courage and fortitude to take the lead and think for itself. And, when you're at the last marathon obstacle, it has to dig deep and give you the same power as at the first obstacle. The horse has to be calm and yet explosive in the dressage and be focused, patient and fast in the cones.



**What assets, specifically, does the Morgan horse bring to the job?**

I can't tell you how many people told me two years ago when we started, "Those Morgans will never pull that 1,400 pound carriage around the 12 mile marathon course." Well, we proved them wrong. Not only do they do it, they do it fast; we beat Chester Weber through two of the seven marathon obstacles at the last competition—and he drives big warmbloods. What the Morgan brings to the table is unfailing heart and determination, plus on the marathon they are much



*David Saunders at the reins of The Aulson Four.*

shorter and more agile than some of the bigger horses.

**What has surprised or impressed you most about working around this breed?**

I have said before the Morgan is about work. Their attitude is one of "Just tell me how hard I have to work and I will do it." The best quality the Morgan has is its loyalty and determination to please. ■

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*The Aulson Four has officially been selected to compete at the World Equestrian Games. The trek to Kentucky is an enormous endeavor, both physically and financially. To support their efforts, please contact [MorganDrivingTeamUSA@gmail.com](mailto:MorganDrivingTeamUSA@gmail.com) or visit [www.blackprong.com/team](http://www.blackprong.com/team). You can also become a fan of the Morgan Team on Facebook by visiting their fan pages: Morgans to the WEG and USA Morgan Driving Team.*