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THE EUROPEAN VIEW ~ By Klaus Koch

Commander Crowe - The Undefeated Wonder

Through all times horses who stay undefeated from their first career race and a long time forward or are victorious in a long consecutive series of races are much admired. Currently North America has Dewey, Deweycheatumnhowe, who managed to stay undefeated through 17 races from his debut. The 16th was the Hambletonian. But a month later in the elimination of the Canadian Trotting Classic came his first defeat (to Crazy). However, in the final Dewey was back in the winner's circle, from post position 10 to begin another streak.

In Sweden we have an equine similarity to Deweycheatumnhowe, the now five-year-old gelding Commander Crowe. This horse also had a winning streak from his first performance, which includes the biggest victory a Swedish bred horse can achieve, the Derby (for four-year-olds). However, Commander Crowe remains undefeated in 23 lifetime races.

Otherwise the similarity to Dewey differs a lot at one point. Commander Crowe was still unraced at the time of life when Dewey will have finished racing! To explain: Deweycheatumnhowe will cease racing after the Breeders Crown in November as a three-year-old.

Commander Crowe had his first lifetime performance in December at the same age.

Commander Crowe was bred by his trainer since day one, Petri Puro, a native of Finland who had his whole apprenticeship in Sweden and remained in the country in order to become a professional Standardbred trainer more than 20 years ago. The 49 year-old Puro now trains a stable of 57, and the number keeps on growing along with the success he achieves with his horses.

In the beginning of the 90s he purchased the young Mack Lobell filly Somack (out of the Speedy Somolli mare Somolli Ribb) from Finland and bred her as a three-year-old to a local stallion called Pintado.

That foal, Mack Peter, developed into a decent free for all trotter. Somack only had three other foals (two of them unraced) until she gave birth to Commander Crowe in 2003. As a sire Puro had chosen the French trotter Juliano Star (co-owned by the two champion trainers Jean Pierre Dubois (France) and Stig H. Johansson (Sweden), who is a son of Buvetier d'Aunou by Royal Prestige. Commander Crowe thereby has Speedy Crown quite close on both sides of his pedigree.

He was born on April 21, 2003 and it was no surprise that the colt was chestnut. His sire Juliano Star is a chestnut as are almost 50 per cent of the French horses. Many of the best sires in Scandinavia have been chestnuts as well. Pay Dirt (born 1964), maybe the best of them all, was an American bred son of Florican. French bred Tibur (1966), who





Photo by Stefan Melander

The undefeated Commander Crowe was named for one of Hollywood's bad boys after the horse's breeder and trainer watched the movie *Master And Commander*.

evolved the Swedish breed, was a chestnut, and many of our champion trotters have been that colour which is so hated in North America including Permit, Adept, Une de Mai, Ourasi, Lurabo, Tarok, Queen L, Giesolo de Lou, Dino As, Defi d'Aunou and Hilda Zonett.

It was due to his chestnut colour the colt got his name. Petri Puro had just watched the movie "Master and Commander" with Russell Crowe starring as a well built red haired gentleman, as the colt was born.

The way to the stars, however, hasn't been totally straight for Commander Crowe. He had to be gelded as a three-year-old after causing many troubles in qualifiers and work outs. According to trainer Puro, he would never have been the champion he became as an entire horse but he waited as long as he possibly could before gelding him.

Even in Sweden a first lifetime performance in December as three-year-old is extremely rare. But the gelding started to win, and it was soon plain to see that this was a very special trotter. He didn't even come close to a defeat in spite of the tough competition.

In Sweden it is said, that the 12

finalists in the \$500,000 Derby (in the beginning of September) are as good as any horses in the world and they are extremely peaked for the assignment. In his 11th lifetime start Commander Crowe went to the gate as a 5:4 giant favourite, and he didn't disappoint anyone.

After the Derby win he went on to break the "unbreakable" record of Legolas, who managed to win his 19 first lifetime races. Commander Crowe not only broke the record, he continued on

to 22 before being caught by illness. He has struggled with a sore throat this entire summer and was off from July 5 until late September. He returned to the races on September 29 where he extended his unbeaten streak to 23 with a very impressive performance against a strong field at his home track, winning over the mile and 5/16 with a mile rate of 1:57. According to observers, he looked stronger than ever.

So far Commander Crowe has

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earned approximately \$640,000 (US). He was elected Horse of the Year in Sweden in 2007. This season he won his eight starts and has earned \$97,000 (US).

When he came back his ownership had changed somewhat as Petri Puro sold most of his part of the horse (people are speculating in large sums) to a famous business man, Björn Nordstrand, the man who created the biggest TV channel in Scandinavia, Swedish TV4. Nordstrand owned horses with Sören Nordin when he was training in North America. The price tag on Commander Crowe remains a secret.

Now an important question remains: Is Commander Crowe the best trotter in Sweden? In Scandinavia? In Europe? In the world? That's difficult to answer. As said, he is not a miler (yet), and he hasn't raced against the absolute top older horses, but Petri Puro is confident that his horse, when back in top shape, will be ready to take on the best. He is a big, long stretched, but yet elegant trotter, just the kind of horse you would think could keep on improving.

The popularity of Commander Crowe is so big, that he has his own internet site www.commandercrowe.se and his own tune, which is available on CD. A lot of fans are longing to see him back, and most of all to see him race against the very best trotters in the world. Already this year fans were begging trainer Petri Puro to race his chestnut in the prestigious Elitlopp, but he declined the invitation. Commander Crowe is so far not a miler. He prefers distances from one and a quarter miles and upwards, but it is said that all top horses can win the Elitlopp in spite of not being milers. The Elitlopp demands a lot of staying power as well, something Commander Crowe seems to have in abundance.

This was all this time. Please do not hesitate to comment on my articles. My e-mail address is ontrack@telia.com and as usual I would be more than happy to get reactions from the North American harness racing fans. 🐾

Till next time,
Klaus Koch



Klaus Koch

Klaus Koch is one of Scandinavia's leading racing administrators and is perhaps best known for his former role as director of racing at Solvalla Racetrack. His duties included orchestrating the Elitlopp, one of the world's most prestigious races, and attracting North American and Australasian horses to compete in the event.



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