

UNDULATA'S NUTCRACKER

THE PEOPLE'S CHOICE *Sire Of The Year*

WILLOWBANK FARM

THE PEOPLE'S CHOICE *Breeder Of The Year*

BY SARA PIZZUTO

Those in attendance at any major equine competition, or those who happen to glance through the pages of any horse related publication, may have noticed a common denominator of the winning Saddlebreds in the industry. Many have direct roots to Willowbank Farm, and many are sired by Undulata's Nutcracker. For decades, horses bearing "nut" names have graced the winner's enclosure on the breed's biggest stages with world's and national titles to their resume. The efforts of both Undulata's Nutcracker and Willowbank Farm have aided in the promotion and development of the Saddlebred breed, cementing them both as dominant forces in the industry and now as the People's Choice Sire Of The Year and the People's Choice Breeder Of The Year.

The Woodleigh Farm LLC owned Undulata's Nutcracker, is one of over a dozen stallions that make their home base at Willowbank Farm. Since 1981, the Simpsonville, Kentucky facility has been one of the industry's premiere locations for breeding champion American Saddlebreds. Joan Lurie has been at the helm of Willowbank since its inception. Her interest in breeding was piqued by the Morgan Horse, Wham Bam Command, who would continue on to be linked to such show ring Morgan notables as Century Free Spirit, Tug Hill Whamunition, Liberation Starbrite,

Liberation First Star, and Hyland Acres Command.

Though Wham Bam Command gave Lurie her initial start in the breeding business, she soon made the transition to focus on the American Saddlebred breed instead. Undulata's Nutcracker is one of the farm's most famed sires. However, Willowbank Farm also prides themselves on standing other prominent Saddlebred sires including A Rare Temper, Deep Blue, Glamorous Nuts, Sedgefield's Legacy, and Arrowhead's Bateleur among others. Willowbank trainer Darrell Case explained that each stallion at Willowbank is managed with equal care.

"We treat everyone equally and each day we do the best we can for every horse and person," he said.

The best care is needed for Undulata's Nutcracker, who has spent decades as a leading sire of world's and national champions. Nancy-Leigh Fisher, of Woodleigh Farm LLC, is the proud owner of this son of CH Caramac and Christmas In New York ERB, who is known by the nickname of "Nut."

"Well, who wouldn't want to own him," Fisher said. "He was going to be sold and I wanted to buy him so that for the rest of his life, he would have Joan Lurie taking care of him."

Just as Fisher requested, Nutcracker has stayed under the care of Joan Lurie and the Willowbank team

for the majority of his life. Due to injury, the stallion never had a chance to showcase his talents in the show ring, yet he has passed his extreme athleticism and stunning conformation onto his offspring.

"He is extremely intelligent," Case said. "He has long front legs, a laid-back shoulder, and is very upright."

Nancy-Leigh Fisher explained that Undulata's Nutcracker's intellect is noticed especially during breeding season. The stallion has caught on to his weekly schedule and knows exactly what to do and when to do it.

"During breeding season, he knows which day he breeds-Mondays Wednesdays and Fridays-so he goes about his business," she said. "They have to work him every day. He knows how many times he has to go around, and he then turns around and goes the other way and he stops at his stall, and he's done. He knows he's done. He is a unique individual. I have never seen anything like him."

Fisher also is quick to mention Nutcracker's quirky demeanor and his obsession with a particular fruit.

"To be honest, I think he is the smartest horse I have ever been around," she said. "He will try to bite you, but he won't ever try to kick you if you're in the stall brushing him. Anybody can walk him around."

Willowbank Farm is one of the premiere destinations for stallion services in the American Saddlebred breed. Many of the industry's world's champion performers have direct roots to Joan Lurie's farm.



Undulata's Nutcracker has enjoyed great success and dominance in the breed as a sire. He has been linked to a myriad of top campaigners, with many bearing "nut" show names.

After he breeds, it takes a lot to get him there, but he breeds and when he's done, you can hand him to someone who is just learning to walk a horse and he will walk gently with them. He loves watermelon. He will give anything for watermelon. I am not there a whole lot because I don't live down there but if he sees me coming, he starts neighing and having a fit because he knows that I probably have a watermelon for him. He is a very unique guy."

Undulata's Nutcracker is rewriting history in the Saddlebred world with his complete dominance over the industry. He was the proud sire of a myriad of top performers in 2022-campaigners that became world's grand champions as well. The stallion excelled in the Three-Gaited World's Grand Championship as the sire of the winner, The Crowd Went Nuts, and the reserve world's grand champion, HS Close Enough To Perfect. Just as Undulata's Nutcracker celebrated a tricolor sweep in the Three-Gaited World's Grand

Championship, his offspring also claimed the top two prizes in the prestigious 2022 Fine Harness World's Grand Championship with Soul Desire earning the roses and HS Daydream's Heads Up following in reserve. Nutcracker sired get also secured the first and second place positions in the 2022 Fine Harness Stallion/Gelding Stake as well as the 2022 Fine Harness Mare Stake. HS Daydream's Heads Up led the way in the stallion/gelding class, followed by Moon Trac. HS Honor Thy Mother marched off as the Fine Harness Mare World's Champion, with Clara Lynn in reserve.

Other show ring world's champions sired by Nutcracker in 2022 included CH Katharine The Great, the Junior Exhibitor Three-Gaited 14-17 World's Champion of Champions, and Undulata's Cherry Garcia, the 13 and under world's champion of champions. He also had reason to be proud of fellow three-gaited victors, Hallelujah Moment, Crossfire's Black Mamba, Good Luck Chuck, Sedgfield's Best Story Ever,

and CH Nutorious as well as five-gaited entries Eeta Sachon, CH Undulata's High Society, We Must Be Really Nuts, and Undulata's Down And Derby.

"All I can tell you is that when you are sitting there watching a class at any horse show, you can usually pick out his horses, the ones that are by him," Fisher said.

Undulata's Nutcracker has left an undeniable mark on his offspring and continues to produce future champions. Darrell Case hinted at some exciting youngsters that he is looking forward to working with and Fisher also mentioned thrilling prospects.

"I have seen a lot of really nice young horses," she said. "Joan has a couple that are absolutely wonderful. I have one that I am really crazy about. I think the Nutcracker mares are also crossing well with a whole lot of different studs. It is my pleasure to own him. It's his world and everyone else is living in it. He is the king of the farm."

Undulata's Nutcracker is in a league of his own when it comes to the breeding industry in the Saddlebred breed. He has reigned supreme as a sire and left a legacy of brilliance with each of his offspring that continues as each new show season unfolds.

"No words could describe what Nut means to us," Case said. "He is just special. I like to think of him as the 'goat.'"

Fisher echoed this statement. She feels fortunate to be a part of his widely successful career under the expert care of the team at Willowbank.

"I just feel lucky to be part of his life," she said. "He is one of a kind. I don't think there will be another one like him. There hasn't been another one like him."



Woodleigh Farm LLC is the proud owner of Undulata's Nutcracker who is one of many top sires that stands at the Kentucky based Willowbank Farm.