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THE EUROPEAN VIEW ~ By Robert Okpu

THE VIKING RULES

Viking Kronos is dominating the sire ranks in Europe these days and his book is more than full and closed, it's by invitation only.

Photos by Claes Kärrstrand

North Americans tend to believe that all of the great sires reside on this continent. Not everyone agrees particularly Lutfi Kolgjini a significant shareholder in Viking Kronos who is easily Europe's most dominant stallion. In Sweden he is considered the sire of sires.

Interestingly, he currently covers just 70 mares a year so a foal by Viking Kronos is the privilege of a select few and by invitation only.

Viking Kronos burst onto the world stage in 1998 when he produced an undefeated season winning all six starts for his Italian ownership. His trainer-driver Kolgjini became almost as recognizable for making bragging gestures to the crowd as he posted win after win. The horse drew some attention in North America being by Hambletonian champion American Winner.

Like almost all great sires, Viking Kronos was an exceptional racehorse. He won all six starts as a two-year-old and 12 of 14 lifetime starts, despite being hampered by an injury throughout his career.

Kolgjini, still a 22 per cent owner in the stallion, says: "Never mind my Nat Ray Trot winner Revenue or three-year-old world record holder Going Kronos, Viking Kronos is for me, the horse of a lifetime."

Currently Viking Kronos is topping the stallion lists in Sweden where race-tracks have been overflowing with Viking Kronos superstars such as Triton Sund (career earnings of more than two million), Thai Tanic, Maharajah, Fama Currit, Going Kronos, Order By Fax, Garland Kronos, Turbo Sund, Gift Kronos, Yield Boko, Micro Mesh and the list goes on.

"For me he is not only the best sire in Europe but also the best trotting sire in the world," said Kolgjini.

The horseman is not known for mincing words and on occasion tends to exaggerate, but he did concede: "It is not fair, really, to compare North American and European stallions. In North America the focus is on producing horses that can perform as two or three-year-olds, the rest is irrelevant.

"In Europe we want horses that can compete for up to 10 years. And as far as producing those kind of horses goes, I am quite sure Viking Kronos would be a better sire than the best of the sires from North America."

Viking Kronos, by American Winner and out of the Bonfish mare Conch, should have been co-owned by Kolgjini and Lou Guida of Mack Lobell fame at the beginning of his career. But fate intervened.



"He had a problem with osteochondrosis (OCD). Lou Guida had him x-rayed and the x-ray images were sent to a specialist," Kolgjini said.

The advice from the specialist was crystal clear: operate on the horse or drop him.

Kolgjini was not interested in having Viking Kronos be operated on at the end of the three year-old racing season.

"Horses die on the operating table, some never wake up after sedation. For me that was not an option," Kolgjini explained.

Guida opted out.

Today Menhammar Stuteri, which belongs to shipping heiress Margareta Wallenius-Kleberg, owns 50 per cent of

Unlock the door to breeding success with a 2010 WINNING KEY STALLION



AMERICAN WINNER

3,1:52.3 (\$1,302,451) • *Super Bowl-BJ's Pleasure*
By a Hall of Fame sire and mare, this Hambletonian winner is the sire of Credit Winner, and the broodmare sire of leading "Horse of the Year" candidate Muscle Hill as well as Sand Vic, Classic Photo & Celebrity Secret.
Standing in Pennsylvania at Lindwood Farm
2010 Fee \$4,000

AMERICAN MIKE

3,1:54.3 (\$430,450) • *American Winner-Sweet Michelle*
This half-million dollar winner's first small crop are two-year-olds in 2010.
Standing in New York at Rodney Farms
2010 Fee \$3,000

BJ'S MAC

2,1:57.4 (\$376,210) • *Super Bowl-BJ's Pleasure*
By a Hall of Fame sire and mare, this Peter Haughton winner is the sire of World Champion Mac's Crown K 3,1:54.3h (\$482,827) and 7 winners in 1:55 or faster.
Standing in Pennsylvania at Winning Key Farm
2010 Fee \$3,000

BJ'S SUPER STAR

3,1:57.4f (\$348,481) • *Speedy Somolli-Tie Score*
Sire of 17 \$100,000-plus winners, his average earnings per starter stand at over \$36,500.
Standing in Pennsylvania at Winning Key Farm
2010 Fee \$1,750

FAME N FORTUNE

4,1:57f • *Super Bowl-BJ's Pleasure*
By a Hall of Fame sire and mare, he is the sire of 11 in 2:00 and 3 \$100,000 winners from just 52 starters.
Standing in Pennsylvania at Winning Key Farm
2010 Fee \$2,000

MAC'S CROWN K

3,1:54.3h (\$482,827) • *BJ's Mac-Angela Crown*
This World Champion's first small crop of two-year-olds raced in 2009 and included stakes placed So Precious K 2,Q2:04.4f-'09.
Standing in Ontario at Kendal Hills Stud Farm
2010 Fee \$2,500 Cdn.

PLEASURE AND POWER

3,1:55.1 (\$140,923) • *Super Bowl-BJ's Pleasure*
By a Hall of Fame sire and mare, he is the sire of 4 starters from 11 foals of racing age, including NYSS Fair Stakes winner Payd Kash 2,2:11.4h (\$10,185) and NYSS stakes placed Fun N Pleasure (\$22,227).
Standing in New York at Rodney Farms
2010 Fee \$2,000

SUPER PLEASURE

3,1:58f (\$827,238) • *Super Bowl-BJ's Pleasure*
By a Hall of Fame sire and mare, he has sired the career winners of over \$18-million, with 54 \$100,000-plus winners.
Standing in Ontario at Taylorlane Farms
2010 Fee \$3,000 Cdn.

STAR CHALLENGE

1:54.2 (\$292,665) • *BJ's Super Star-Amity Flo*
From just 34 starters, sire of the trio of multiple stakes winners Tweedle Dum 1:53.2f (\$326,555), Lovely Challenge 1:57f (\$120,848) and Impressive Jill 4,1:55.4-'09 (\$85,401).
Standing in Indiana at Schwartz Boarding Farm
2010 Fee \$1,500

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Viking Kronos. Veterinarian Johan Hellander is the manager of the Menhammar farm, Sweden's most successful stud farm and is always happy to talk about the farm's crown jewel.

"Margareta acquired a 50 per cent interest in Viking Kronos in 2003. He came back from Italy in 2004 and is now in his seventh consecutive year for us," Hellander explained.

Viking Kronos is currently priced at 175,000 Swedish Crowns (slightly less than \$25,000 Canadian), the farm's most expensive stud fee. But the amount is just theory, really.

"Since he is just going to cover 70 mares this year, it is not going to go beyond mares belonging to the owners and the different connections of the owners," Hellander said.

Dr. Hellander does not deny the fact that Viking Kronos has relatively poor fertility, but adds that this fact has also been somewhat exaggerated through the years.

"Two years ago his crop was 100 foals and that is not poor. But in his case, he needs a long season. Preferably from the 15th of February to the 1st of September. And we work hard with him, collecting semen almost daily and being very dili-

Viking Kronos was top racehorse during his career, winning 12 of 14 lifetime starts but it's been in the stallion barn where he has truly excelled. "For me he is not only the best sire in Europe but also the best trotting sire in the world," says his trainer/driver Lutfi Kolgjini who still owns a significant share in the horse.

gent in examining the mares he is going to cover, and so on.

"The demand for his services is currently way higher than the supply, and considering the way his offspring are performing in Europe right now, that is probably not going to change," he added.

When asked about the traits that are typical of a Viking Kronos offspring, Dr. Hellander said: "Talent wise, they are early birds by European standards. Most of them are very strong. But many of them also have a special psyche. If handled right it should result in a special relationship with a very special kind of individual. But if handled wrong it can easily result in poor showings on the racetrack."

Viking Kronos is of course extremely popular at Menhammar. The farm is also the Swedish home of the Italian superstar Varenne, Viking Kronos' toughest competitor during the three year-old season in Italy (Varenne is priced at 150,000 Swedish crowns).

Claes Kärstrand, the retained pho-

tographer at Menhammar Stud and Sweden's most famous stallion photographer, follows Viking Kronos on a weekly basis since he lives very close to the Menhammar farm.

"He is a very special character, he has a lot of nerve in him and it's not that easy to take pictures of him. But he is a nice individual. There is a Shetland pony on the farm called Poolman who keeps the stallions company.

"I remember Mack Lobell treated Poolman very badly when he was here, but Poolman has now found his age-mate Viking Kronos to be a much more agreeable character and they are very good friends," Kärstrand said.

The reader will by now have realized that the possibility of covering a top North American mare with Viking Kronos is next to nil.

"That is a real pity, because as far as the best North American stallions are concerned, I know that he can easily compete with them," said Kolgjini.

The Viking Kronos five-year old



Viking Kronos' reputation as a super sire is due to his offspring such as two million dollar winner Triton Sund, Thai Tanic, Maharajah, Fama Currit, Going Kronos, Order By Fax, Garland Kronos, Turbo Sund, Gift Kronos, Yield Boko, Micro Mesh and many others.

oughbred and harness racing) on TV 4, Sweden's leading TV channel. He started his career as an entertainment and news reporter, but later turned to his hobby (being a small scale horse owner) for a living.

Maharajah (featured in the March issue of *The Harness Edge*) is all the buzz in Sweden this year, everyone is expecting the winner of the Swedish Derby and the European Derby to go toe to toe with Lucky Jim in the Elitlopp in May.

But Lutfi Kolgjini believes the best is yet to come out of Viking Kronos.

"I do not think we have found the best bloodlines for him yet. In order to produce a real top European horse I believe we should try and breed him to more mares with French blood."


No article about Viking Kronos is complete without Lutfi Kolgjini's favourite anecdote.

"Some years ago when I had problems financially, I owed some guys who had done work on my farm a little more than \$10,000 (US). I had no idea how I was going to pay them, so I told them, 'I have acquired a fantastic stallion recently. I can give you 25 per cent ownership in this stallion for your work.'"

The workers declined the offer, and told Lutfi instead that he could pay up when he had the cash.

They are still good friends and they all laugh at the lost opportunity when they retell this story over a beer. 🍺


Mr. Robert Okpu, 40, is a well known Swedish horse racing journalist and author. He has written books about the Swedish trotting stars Järvsöfaks and Victory Tilly. Robert now works full time as a TV editor and producer for horse racing shows (Thor-



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PUT ON A SHOW

p,2,1:51.4 (\$776,498)

Rocknroll Hanover – Stienams Place – Artsplace



Photo by New Image Media

1. At times we have used a blind or a Kant See Back bridle on her. She's calm and relaxed during a race.
2. Shin and knee boots are used as precaution especially after she hit her ankle in a race.
3. Vet wrap is used on her hind legs for support.
4. She wears a burr headpole on the inside. Like most horses she corners the turns and she also bears in late in the mile.
5. Last year I used a Zilco heavy hopple but this year she is going with a lighter hopple. They measure 59 and a half inches.
6. She has had a Houghton bit along with a plain overcheck bit since day one.
7. Full swedge steel shoes are worn on all four feet.
8. Jody Jamieson uses his Advantage race bike on her. All drivers are convinced this is the greatest bike ever invented.
9. Ear plugs are used on her to wake her up in a mile as sometimes she gets too relaxed. She switches into a new gear when you pull them.

Trainer Chris Ryder's comments:

"Put On A Show has been trained down to 2:05 as of the first of April. I'm looking to qualifying her in about three to four weeks. Her first major stake race will be the Miss New Jersey at The Meadowlands. She's staked to everything so she should have a prosperous three-year-old season.

"She wintered very well. She filled out some and matured into a nice three-year-old. She has always been a good feeling filly and since she's been back in training she hasn't missed a day.

"She had a very good freshmen season with earnings over \$750,000. We had a few issues with her tying up but hopefully that's behind us now. She got beat in the Breeders Crown final to Fancy Filly but she still finished the year strong. That means a lot to me when I see a two-year-old end their season on a very good note. It makes me ever more optimistic about her sophomore campaign."

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Supplementary Entry Fee \$4,000 due prior to closing (added to final)

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1. All races are to be raced at a distance of one mile.
2. The rules of the Ontario Racing Commission at the time shall govern this event.
3. A maximum of (8) eight horses will start in each elimination and the final. In the event that there are (9) nine or fewer declared starters for this event, it shall be conducted as one race only. In such case, all nomination, sustaining, and starting fees will be added to the purse for the one final event.
4. All horses must be declared to start in the eliminations by regular box closing time. The final will be drawn after the eliminations.
5. The top (8) eight finishers in the eliminations will be eligible to be declared to start in the final. Should one or more of the top (8) eight finishers not declare for the final, the next top finisher in order will be eligible to enter for the final.
6. All ties drawn by lot. There will be a first and second also eligible horse in the final race that will be drawn after the eliminations.
7. There must be (5) five or more starters declared to start or, the race will be declared off and all money returned as paid.
8. Purse distribution will be on a 50, 25, 12, 8 and 5 percent basis.
9. Fillies and colts will race together in the eliminations and final.

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