

# Storming Europe



The beautiful Kreuth facility offers perfect conditions for an event of the size of the European Championship.

HORSEMOTION

*For two decades, the European Championship has recognized top American Quarter Horses overseas.*

**By Ramona Billing**

DAVID AVERY HAS SEEN A LOT OF HORSE SHOWS AND A LOT OF European Championships of the American Quarter Horse.

So when AQHA's director of international affairs says, "(It was) the best I've seen so far," he should know.

Europe's biggest Quarter Horse show on August 15-23 in Kreuth, Germany, was a true festival celebrating America's Horse with more than 470 Quarter Horses from across the European continent.

And it was a big milestone for the show, which started in Europe 20 years ago.

Today, the European Championship is the fourth largest show put on by AQHA and has become a must-see for Quarter Horse fans across Europe.

The show began in 1989 in Aachen, Germany, by Hans-Peter "H.P." Reiss, a Swiss entrepreneur and renowned breeder of American Quarter Horses. He founded the Federation of European Quarter Horse Associations in 1987 and was its president for many years.

"We already had an open European Championship at that time, the Americana," H.P. said. "But the American Quarter Horse deserves an optimal platform for showing, which means top conditions for preparing and showing. This can only be done if you have an event specially dedicated to this breed. That's why we created this show."

From the start, the new event was accepted well by the European affiliates and international competitors, with entries in 1990 at 882.

In 1997, the European Championship found a new home at the show facility in Kreuth near Nuremberg, Germany.

"By then, entries had climbed to such numbers that the Aachen facility was no longer possible," H.P. said. "We had to find a new place. Kreuth was the perfect facility for a show like this. It is unique in Europe. And I can't thank the owner, Ernst-Werner Schmidt, enough for the great support he gave us from the start."

The new facility attracted even more competitors, and the show set a new record of 2,110 entries at that first Kreuth show. The facility also attracted Italian competitors who previously had not been able to come to the Aachen show. Big Quarter Horse breeders like the Giraudini family of CPR Quarter Horses, the Cozzos of Casanova Quarter Horses and

the Prevedels soon became regulars and successful EC competitors, both in halter and performance.

Through the years, Antonio Giraudini and his daughter, Miriam, were among the most successful competitors, collecting more than 140 medals during their show careers at the European Championship.

Other long-term and successful international competitors are Roseanne and Francesca Sternberg from Great Britain, who have won many medals in various disciplines. Gerold Dautzenberg of Austria and his daughter, Bibi, have been among the top five competitors at the EC for about 16 years now, collecting more than 120 medals altogether. Gerold's mare, A Passing Melody, was the first horse in the FEQHA Hall of Fame.

In 2003, the European Championship moved to Italy for one year. More than 290 horses from nine countries were nominated for this 14th European Championship at the facility at Reggio Emilia. The EC was organized together with other events including the FEI European Reining Championship.

One year later, the European Championship returned to Germany, and the German Quarter Horse Association organized the event for the FEQHA in 2004 and 2005, which was the largest EC with almost 590 horses from 16 nations competing. The show included the Deutsche Quarter Horse Association Futurity/Maturity as well as National Snaffle Bit Association and National Reining Horse Association events.

"During the last 20 years, Europe has grown together, and the European

Championship played a very important part here, bringing together breeders and trainers from all over Europe," said long-time DQHA international director Ulli Vey. "The event promotes the whole scene, whether it is showing, breeding, stallions, whatever. The European Championship of American Quarter Horses has opened the way for all the other international western events."



Standing with FEQHA Vice President Paul Didier and his wife, Nelly, the founder of the European Championship Hans-Peter Reiss was inducted into the FEQHA Hall of Fame in 2008.

*Ramona Billing is a special contributor to The American Quarter Horse Journal. To comment, write to [aqhajrnl@aqha.org](mailto:aqhajrnl@aqha.org). To read more about the 2009 European Championships, go online to <http://americashorsedaily.com/european-championship>. Get complete competition results at the European Championship Web site: [www.ecqh.eu](http://www.ecqh.eu).*