

Of
Royal
birth

Color Me Smart is
APHA's first \$2 million
cutting horse sire.

By CHANDRA L. ORR

It's often said that great horses know they are great from the moment they are born. This self-assurance is seen in their walk, the presence they possess, the look in their eyes, as well as in their desire to accomplish all that is asked of them.

If you think back on most legendary horses—Impressive AQHA, Man O' War JC, Yellow Mount and Cherokee Indian—this self-confidence is often cited in reference to them.

But even more important than these outstanding horses' accomplishments in the arena or on the track is the legacy they have left behind through their offspring.

Color Me Smart will definitely go down as a legend in Paint Horse history. The 15-year-old bay tobiano stallion is already well on his way to

legendary status. His offspring have tallied more than \$2.2 million in earnings in the National Cutting Horse Association (NCHA), National Reining Horse Association and National Reined Cow Horse Association, as well as in the rodeo arena.

Royalty in the making

In the cutting horse world, Smart Little Lena AQHA reigns supreme as king of the bloodlines. He is one of only three horses to win NCHA's Triple Crown—the Futurity, Derby and Super Stakes.

"Sue Dunn Stevens was very perceptive to breed Doxs Painted Lady to Smart Little Lena," said Color Me Smart LLC member Craig Morris, the current owner of "Color." "It was a great decision because, at that time APHA and AQHA didn't approve the use of embryo transfer and would

only allow one foal to be registered per year from a mare."

This rule resulted in many cutting-bred horses being excluded from registration, forcing the owners to document the horses' pedigrees through the DNA Registry.

"Color was really bred to fill a niche in the cutting horse world," said Morris, "because when he was born, he was the only colored son by Smart Little Lena. But by having a Paint stallion with an exceptional pedigree, it gave cutters the opportunity to get two registered foals out of their Quarter Horse mares each year instead of having DNA foals."

Just as impressive as Color's sire was his dam, Doxs Painted Lady. She was also proven in the cutting arena and earned \$27,685 during her career.

"Doxs Painted Lady was a wonderful mare," said Steve Williams, one of Color's first owners. "She had a great show record and tremendous pedigree that goes back to Doc Bar. The little mare was just as cowy as Smart Little Lena."

Headed for syndication

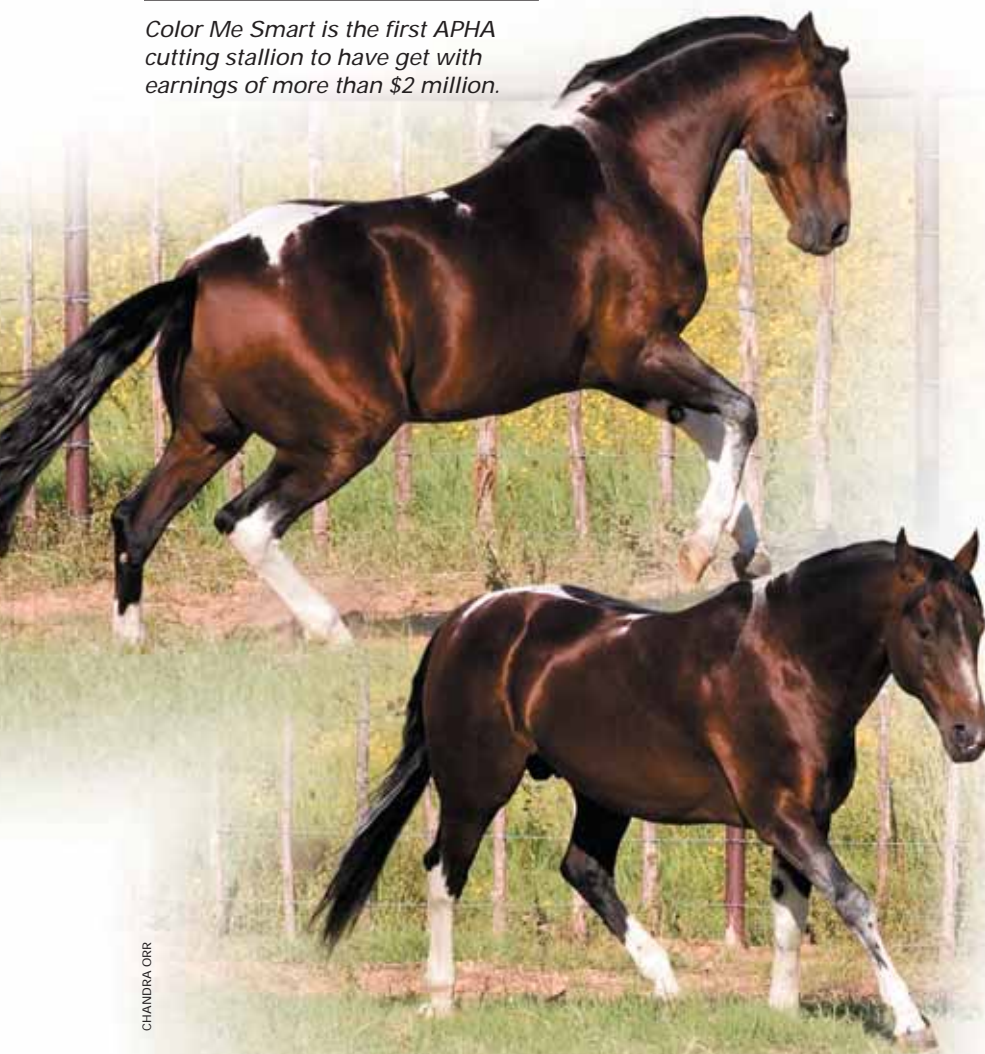
The unique combination of sire and dam, as well as the tri-colored Paint markings, were what drew Williams to make a trip to look at Color before the colt was even weaned.

"I bought the stallion when he was still on his mother's side," said Williams. "I had it in mind when I purchased him that I would end up syndicating him. I thought it would work, as no one had any breedings to him yet, and I just felt that he would end up being a very in-demand sire."

Williams' foresight proved correct and he offered his friends the chance to purchase lifetime breedings to Color before the horse was even 2 years old.

"He was just a yearling when we first syndicated him," Williams said. "In the first offering, we sold 10 shares. Each share gave each buyer two lifetime breedings for \$5,000. Then, in 1994, we had our second offering and made it into a true syndicate."

Color Me Smart is the first APHA cutting stallion to have get with earnings of more than \$2 million.



"In the second offering, we sold shares for twice the money, but for only one lifetime breeding. It was a fantastic deal for the first 10 because some of them were able to double their money or even more."

The shares sold quickly and through the syndication process Gerry Gillock, the syndicate's attorney, also became Williams' partner in the stallion.

"At that time, Gerry and I were joint owners in Color," said Williams. "But my wife, Shelly, and I kept controlling interest of the horse."

Unfortunately for Gillock, divorce forced him to sell his share. It was George Jensen who ultimately capitalized on Gillock's misfortune. Once Jensen acquired Gillock's share of the horse, the Williamses formed a four-person limited partnership with Jensen and his wife, Marcia.

Pathway to success

At the time Color was placed in syndication, he was still in Utah and his training had yet to begin. However, when the stallion turned 2, it was decided that he should be sent to Earnest Wilson in Tolar, Texas, to begin his cutting training.

"He was very, very cowy from day one," said Wilson. "He played all the time and would chase anything that moved, whether it was a piece of paper, a dog or someone walking down the fence. He was just eat up with cow."

In fact, Color was so "eat up with cow" that Wilson had to start training him in front of one.

"It was just part of him," said Wilson. "He was so ornery that I could hardly get him broke without sticking him on a cow. That was the only way to get his full attention."

While Color was still in training with Wilson, Jensen decided to move his entire cutting horse operation from Utah to Texas. Once Jensen was closer to the horse, he played a larger role in Color's career.

"It was decided that Color would be sent from Earnest Wilson to Dell



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First syndicated when he was a yearling, "Color" was marketed as a sire before he turned 2.

Bell to continue training," said Williams. "Everybody in the syndicate had ideas on who they wanted the horse sent to, but it was finally decided that we would send him to Dell.

"Dell took the horse to his first show, which was the Pacific Coast Futurity. We had planned on Dell showing him in the NCHA Futurity, but we didn't know that he had prior commitments with two of Frank Merrill's horses."

Once the syndicate found out that Dell would not be able to take Color to Fort Worth, it was decided to send the horse to Ascencion Banuelos for finishing. Banuelos would later ride the stallion at the APHA World Show.

"He was hard to get shown and was studdy all the time," said Jensen. "He was just hard to handle as a 4-year-old. But he got a lot better as a 5-year-old, and Ascencion was able to really get along with him."

Banuelos seemed to understand Color and his mindset so well that he

was able to show the horse to an Open world championship at the 1997 World Show.

Unfortunately, Color's show career was relatively short-lived because of events outside the cutting pen.

"I think if he had been in different hands as far as his owners, he could have been a contender at the Futurity," said Williams. "However, Color's show career only lasted about a year and a half and he earned just under \$10,000."

This was because even before he was proven in the cutting pen, Color was already in high demand as a sire.

"We started breeding the horse as a 4-year-old," said Jensen. "When his first foals hit the ground, it became very obvious that we had a tremendous breeding horse on our hands."

"All of his foals had excellent conformation. It didn't matter what we bred him to, his first foal crops were spectacular in the cutting arena."

In fact, Color was bred to halter, cutting, jumping and many non-



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Lasso My Colors and Craig Morris cut their way to a 2006 APHA world championship in the Junior cutting challenge.

proven mares just to see what the offspring would be like.

“He was such a strong sire and consistently outproduced himself every time,” said Williams. “We had a standing line for his foals, colored or not. Some of them even changed hands two or three times before they were weaned.”

Color’s popularity as a sire inspired Jensen to begin assembling a high-powered broodmare band for the stal-

lion, as well as buy up as many of the syndicate shares that he could. Eventually, he bought almost everyone else out and was the stallion’s majority owner.

It was then that his prepotency as a sire and his value as a breeding animal began to overshadow Color’s show career. He was soon retired to stud.

“We bred him for a few years and had his studbook up to 168 mares the last year we owned him,” said Jensen. “In fact, any

horse by him with a ‘JR’ in its name is one that I bred.”

Financial problems forced Jensen to make the difficult decision to sell Color in 2000.

“We sold him to Esperanza Ranch for \$2.75 million, and I kept 13 lifetime breedings to Color,” said Jensen. “That was, and is, a lot of money, but he was worth every penny.”

After Esperanza Ranch had owned Color for a few years, AQHA changed its rules to allow multiple foals to be registered from one mare each year.

“Esperanza took the horse and he did really well before that rule changed because the big-time Quarter Horse mare owners wanted more than one registered foal each year,” said Pat Curry, who is also a member of the Color Me Smart LLC. “Unfortunately, Esperanza didn’t realize how this would directly affect Color’s studbook and the number of mares he bred.”

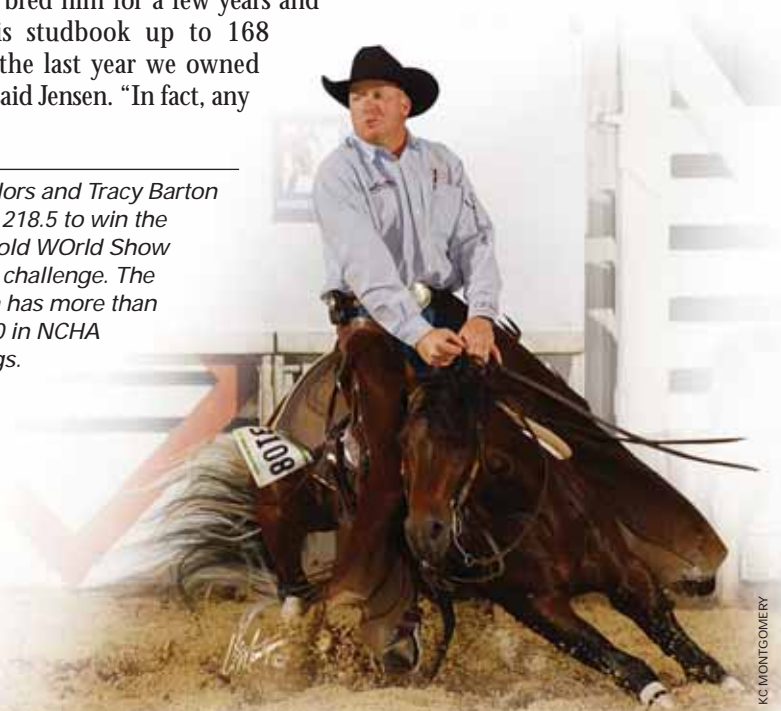
As the number of mares that Color bred began to dwindle, so did the level at which Esperanza Ranch promoted the stallion.

“Through my association with Esperanza and riding a few horses for them, I had a little bit of insight that the stallion might be for sale,” said Morris. “Even after AQHA’s ruling, I still felt that Color was an exceptional sire and a tremendous individual, and

Top offspring by earnings

1. J R Playboy By Color—\$259,270
2. J R Colord Rambo—\$170,170
3. JR Red Diablo—\$157,680
4. Budasa Little Smart—\$144,974
5. JR Colord Prom—\$141,966
6. Special Order Paint—\$110,423
7. J R Smart Smokin—\$102,583
8. A Special Color—\$83,797
9. JR Colord Haida Boon—\$73,939
10. J R Little Termite—\$54,260

Ten Colors and Tracy Barton mark a 218.5 to win the 4-year-old World Show cutting challenge. The stallion has more than \$36,000 in NCHA earnings.



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that there was definitely a place for him in our world.

“So, I got together a group of guys—Pat Curry, Jerry Durant, John McClaren and myself—and we bought him and formed the Color Me Smart LLC.”

It is under his new ownership that Color’s career as a sire is starting to blossom again.

Color’s legacy

To date, Color has sired more than 600 foals, with more than 60 percent color—57 percent being tobiano or tovero.

Color’s 93 performing offspring have earned more than 1,700 performance points, 51 Registers of Merit, eight Superiors, nine APHA world championships, as well as 10 reserve world championships. The average earnings for his get is \$23,656.

“In the early years, Color wasn’t bred to the best mares,” said Morris. “We did some statistics last year. In his first three foal crops, 85 percent of the mares that he was bred to were either non-performers or non-producers, and he sired more than a million dollars worth of winners out of those.

“That, in today’s world, is unheard of for as much emphasis as we place on mare power. We’re just now beginning to see some of the foals out of the really great mares in the show pen, such as Shania Cee AQHA. The cutting horse world is just starting to see the caliber of horses sired by him that can win in today’s competition.”

Just as an example, Color’s offspring won all but the Senior cutting at this year’s World Show. Ten Colors won the 4-year-old cutting challenge, Double Durn Smart won the 5- and 6-year-old cutting challenge, Lasso My Colors won the Junior cutting and Cee No Color Here won the solid Paint-bred cutting. In fact, 19 of his get placed in the top 10 in the cutting classes.

Outside of APHA competition, Color’s offspring have placed the stallion 23rd on the five-year leading cutting sires’ list for all breeds.

“For a long time, Paints have been regarded as the ‘red-headed stepchild’



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Color is now 15 years old and stands in Weatherford, Texas.

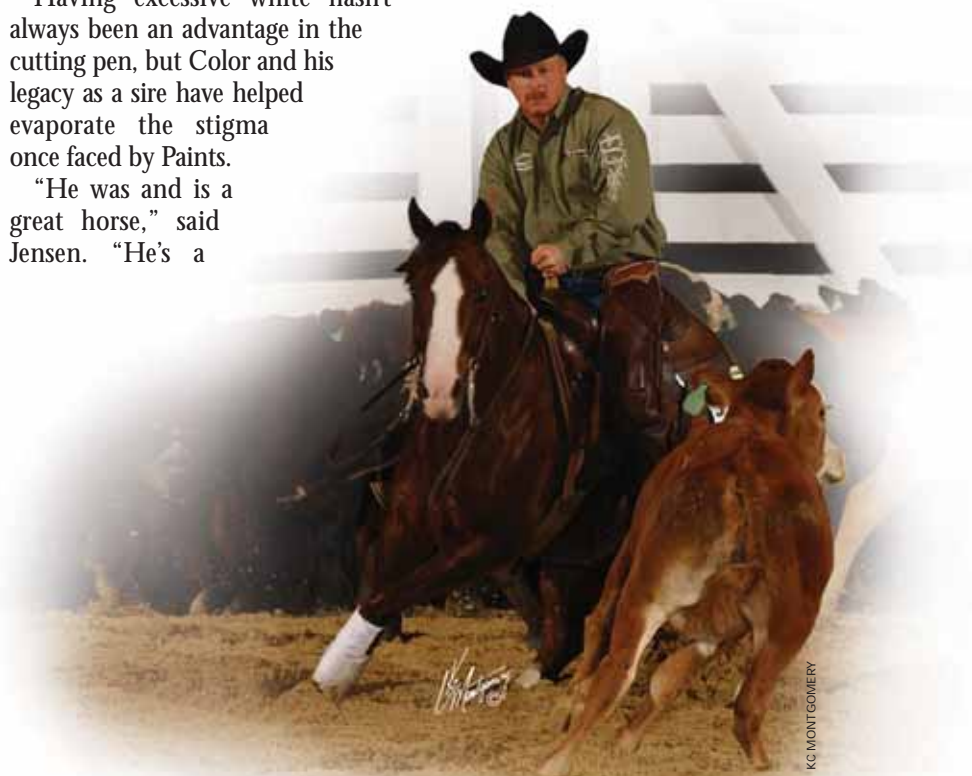
in cutting,” said Morris. “But in today’s competition because the horses are so evenly matched, so well-trained and so closely related that it comes down to being able to get them shown. Having the advantage of a little extra flash, as far as being a horse with a different color, is a slight advantage when you get scored.”

Having excessive white hasn’t always been an advantage in the cutting pen, but Color and his legacy as a sire have helped evaporate the stigma once faced by Paints.

“He was and is a great horse,” said Jensen. “He’s a

magnificent horse that consistently sires some of the best babies to ever hit the ground. Color Me Smart will go down in history and be remembered as one of the purest breeding stallions ever.” **PHU**

Cee No Color Here captured the solid Paint-bred cutting world championship. The gelding has earned nearly \$40,000 in NCHA events.



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