

Odermus R and Mermus R: The Legacy of Two Half-Brothers

Last winter, Stal Roelofs sold two of its stallions to buyers outside the Netherlands: Odermus R was purchased by the Swedish National Stud in Flyinge, and Mermus R was acquired as a breeding stallion by an Irish buyer. Fortunately, both stallions will remain available for Dutch breeding, but a feeling prevails that the half-brothers have received fewer opportunities than they deserve. “There’s more work for them here in the Netherlands than has come their way”, according to Arnold Kootstra, Stal Roelofs’ manager. Even so, the two half-brothers have created a legacy.



Odermus R was the best horse of his birth year in the performance test and earned high scores for dressage. He became an international show jumper and is now standing at stud at Staatsstoeterij in Flyinge.

Both Mermus R and Odermus R were born at Stal Roelofs and were products of the Roelofs’ breeding philosophy. The stallions’ dam is Dwermie whose lineage boasts Joost x Abgar xx, a ‘blood’-combination that has made Stal Roelofs great. Dwermie’s great-granddam Dermie was among the first group of mares Mr. Roelofs purchased to breed to the Thoroughbred stallion Abgar xx. Only the best mares were kept, and the fact that Mr. Roelofs made the right decisions is evidenced by the numerous approved stallions, sporthorses, and grading champions that have come from Roelofs lines. The horses are bred not so much for

conformation as they are for sport. In addition, Roelofs values health and therefore requires its broodmares to have clean radiographs. It is a philosophy that works, and its proof is a Roelofs stallion at almost every Champion Selection. Stal Roelofs usually breeds its own stallions to its mares but brings in fresh blood on occasion. Odermus R and Mermus R are examples of offspring by fresh blood with their respective sires Calido and Burggraaf. Additional stallions that Stal Roelofs currently brings in to advance its breeding program include Mr. Blue, Calvaro Z, Lord Z, Chellano Z, Nabab de Reve, Lasino, and Colman.

A Proven Dam-Line

Stal Roelofs’ mare Dwermie produced several approved stallions. Her own lineage boasts predicate stallions such as G.Ramiro Z preferent, Joost preferent, and Abgar xx keur. Dwermie’s sire G.Ramiro Z competed successfully in international show jumping under Fritz Ligges. The stallion has greatly influenced breeding both in the Netherlands and around the world. Among his most famous offspring is the legendary Ratina Z (ds. Alme Z), who won the individual silver medal in the 1992 Barcelona Olympics and the team gold with Piet Raijmakers. Four years later, she captured the team gold again at the Atlanta Olympics under Ludger Beerbaum representing Germany. Other examples of highly successful G.Ramiro Z offspring are Nirmette and Royal Bravour.

Dwermie passed away last year. “She was totally done,” said Kootstra. “She was a beautiful mare, not very big but she had a lot of blood and a nice head. A dominant mare, she knew what she did and didn’t want. She was also dominant in passing on her traits to her foals.” Besides Odermus R and Mermus R, Dwermie produced a colt by Ladalco in 1991 that was selected for the performance test and subsequently competed in national show jumping under the name Joker. Other Dwermie offspring in the sport include horses sired by Namelus R and Contender. Dwermie’s half-sister Fwermie (s.Ladalco) is dam to Jill Henselwood’s famous Grand Prix jumper, Toyz R Us

(s.Caretino) who competed on the Canadian team. Examples of sporthorses out of this line are legion.

Mermus R's Sire-Line

Currently, Mermus R's sire Burggraaf ranks seventh in the World Breeding Federation for Sport Horses (WBFSH) standings for jumper sires. Burggraaf competed in Grand Prix show jumping under Roelof Bril. The preferent stallion boasts about 100 international show jumper offspring, including Real Eagle (rider: Robert Puck), Sungraaf (rider: Philippe le Jeune), and multiple Grand Prix winner Peppermill (rider: John Whitaker). Van Schijndel's Now or Never, Piet Raijmakers' mount, is also a Burggraaf offspring, as is Malcolm Cone's horse Ole, who helped Canada win the team silver at the Hong Kong Olympics. Burggraaf's sire is the Holsteiner Landgraf I. He and Lord are the two most successful breeding stallions by the Thoroughbred Ladykiller. For years, Landgraf I topped the list of sporthorse sires. He is also the sire of Libero H, the preferent stallion who won the 1994 World Cup and sired many approved stallions and sporthorses. Through Burggraaf's dam Loan-da, Mermus R, as well as Odermus R, trace their lineage back to Cor de la Bryere. The Rantzau son Cor de la Bryere is found in the pedigrees of many sporthorses and is one of the most influential Holsteiner stallions. Among his most renowned offspring is the KWPN stallion Corland, who proved himself in both sport and breeding.

Odermus R's Sire-Line

Odermus R is by the Holsteiner Calido, who scored a 10 for jumping at the stallion test in Germany and placed first in jumping. In the 2008 WBFSH standings, Calido ranked 13th, placing him among the top jumper sires. His sire Cantus (s. Caletto I) also produced Willie Melliger's mount Calvaro, who won the silver in the 1996 Atlanta Olympics and competed in many European Championships, World Championships, and World Cups. Another Cantus son is Come On whose achievements include representing Germany under Ralph Schneider in the Nations Cup. Cantus' sire Caletto I was an international show jumper and a son



The Burggraaf son Mermus R has a high jumping index thanks to the outstanding performances of his offspring. They are known for their good jumping form at the selections and in sport.

of the famous Cor de la Bryere. Calido's dam-line includes Kollet, who also produced Little Rock (s.Landaris), the six-year-old winner of the Young Horse Championship in Lanaken with Dutch rider Jenny Zoer. Following that achievement, the pair competed on the national team before Princess Haya took over the reins in the show ring. Kollet is by Roman (s. Ramzes x) who we see back in her pedigree twice. He also produced Monoline, Cantus' dam. Ramzes x (s.Rittersporn xx) ranks among the greatest post-World War II German jumper sires. Roman's half-brother Farn preferent (s.Fax) sired horses

such as Nimmerdor, the Stallion of the Century, and the keur stallion Wolfgang. Furthermore, Farn is grandsire to more than 30 KWPN stallions, including Heartbreaker, Ferro, Goodtimes, and Ahorn.

The Importance of Thoroughbred Blood

The half-brothers Odermus R and Mermus R have a great deal of Thoroughbred blood. For example, Odermus R's sire-line traces back to the Thoroughbred-cross Ramzes x who appears twice in the sire-line as the sire of Roman. Another Thoroughbred in the sire-line is Rantzau xx, who



Photo: Karin van der Meul

Dwermie pref prest (s.G.Ramiro Z), the dam of Mermus R and Odermus R, was a beautiful mare with lots of 'blood'. She passed away last year.



Mermus R's son Sam R is a KWPN approved stallion and a good jumper sire. In his performance test, Sam R scored 10 for push.

produced Cor de la Bryere. Mermus R's pedigree includes Aldato whose sire Anblick was a Thoroughbred, as well as Rantzau xx and Ladykiller xx. In the dam lines of both Odermus R and Mermus R is Ramzes x, the sire of B.Raimond. Of course, there is the blood of Abgar xx, the prized stallion of the Roelofs' breeding program. Topping off the Thoroughbred influence is Cottage Son xx. "In our view, sporthorses need a lot of blood for the higher levels," explains Kootstra. Roelofs' choice of stallions and the resulting pedigrees certainly reflect this statement.

Quality Stallions from the Start

Both Mermus R and Odermus R proved themselves quality stallions from the start. "Mermus R was a fairly well developed and long-lined foal. He always free-



Rubert R (s.Mermus R) enjoyed an impressive show jumping career under Ben Schröder before an English buyer purchased him. Representing the U.K. with rider Peter Charles (photo), Rubert R's wins include the international team competition in 2008.



Zilverbea N (s.Odermus R) is both a beautiful horse and an excellent jumper as she proved by placing fifth in the National Mare Keuring and winning Reserve Champion in free-jumping.

jumped very well and showed a lot of scope with a good hindquarter technique. As a foal, Odermus R wasn't very big but had a lot of presence and very good movement. He also always free-jumped very well with good scope and did so extra carefully," according to Kootstra. Both Odermus R and Mermus R were quickly approved for KWPN breeding at age three. In 1999, Odermus R won Performance Champion. Under Peter Geerink and then Jeroen Dubbeldam, Odermus R competed in international show jumping. The stallion would have continued to advance had an injury not derailed plans. "Odermus R struggled with cracked heels. He had a cut in the hollow of his pastern that kept opening up when he jumped. As a result, he experienced so much pain that he eventually lost his desire to jump. That's

when we decided to stop showing him. It was a very unfortunate situation because both Peter, Odermus R's first rider, as well as Jeroen were crazy about him. He was a very careful jumper, just like Mermus R who competed up to Z-level. They didn't

Approved (Grand) sons

Mermus R:

- Sam R (mv.Abgar xx)
- Within Temptation (mv.Nimmerdor) (Zangersheide)

Grand sons:

- Zahros R (Sam R x Rebel Z)
- Arthos R (Namelus R x Mermus R) (kampioen HK)

Odermus R

- Olympic Fire (mv.Indoctro) (Berlin-Brandenburg)



Zwinderman (Odermus R x Notaris) competed in the Champion Selection of the 2004 National Foal Selection.



The selected stallion Wender (Contender out of Dwermie) is a half-brother of Odermus R and Mermus R and was also selected for the performance test. Wender finished fourth in the Champion Selection at the Stallion Show.

have to do the major shows for us”, explains Kootstra.

The stallions come from a good line which has produced many sporthorses and always ranks high on the index. Nevertheless, breeders have not flocked to Odermus R and Mermus R. Kootstra laments: “It’s a shame that the stallions have had few opportunities. There is certainly more work for them than they’ve received up to now, and I think, definitely on the dam-side, that they can do a lot of

good things. Our stallions can certainly supply the blood that’s needed for the sport and that everyone talks about all the time.”

Odermus R is now in Sweden where he is also approved for breeding. Mermus R is currently standing at stud in Ireland. The decision to sell the horses was not an easy one. Kootstra puts matters into perspective: “There comes a point at which you have to make choices. Our stallions obviously have similar blood, and our young

stallions have taken the place of the older ones.” Will the half-brothers be valued for their worth abroad? “It’s difficult to say because our studbook is much bigger and therefore offers a bigger selection of stallions,” Kootstra notes. Regardless, Stal Roelofs has not lost the stallions’ blood. “We try to keep the blood through the dam’s side by holding on to the blood-type broodmares with dominant genes. These mares, which aren’t too big, often make the best broodmares”, asserts Kootstra.



Jill Henselwood’s Grand Prix jumper Toyz R Us (Caretino x Ladalco) is a close relative of Odermus R and Mermus R. His dam is a half-sister of Odermus R and Mermus R’s dam. Toyz R Us competed on the Canadian team.

Heritability Data

Arie Hamoen, Chair of the Stallion Selection Committee, discusses the stallions’ heritability data: “Odermus R has a jumping index of 146 with 89% reliability, and 91 of his registered offspring compete in show jumping. His oldest offspring are nine years old. His dressage index is 116 with 68% reliability, which means that Odermus R is pretty much an all-around sire. For conformation, his breeding value is 107, and for movement it’s 104 which makes him well above average with 87% reliability. In free-jumping, he has a good index of 114. With respect to height, he passes on slightly below average. In addition, Odermus R passes on a vertical neck with a tight back and hindquarters. Regarding the front legs, his offspring is a bit back-at-the-knee with upright pasterns and high heels. The canter is clearly better than average, and Odermus R-offspring also scores well in the jumping tests in which he was noted especially for his suppleness and open hindquarters. “Mermus R has a jumping index of 138 with 91% reliability, and his offspring are age 10 and older. Given his dressage index of 82 with 72% reliability, he is clearly less of an all-around horse than his half-brother. His conformation index is 107, and for movement it’s 100 with 89% reliability. In jumping, he has a high index of 113. Height is a consideration as Mermus R, in general, sires slightly smaller offspring. He passes on rectangular-shaped conformation with a straight croup, broad feet, and low heels. His walk stride shows average length, but he toes-out. The trot and canter are slightly above average. In the jumping tests, Mermus R scored very well and received an especially high score for his front leg technique. “The two stallions pass on totally different traits with respect to conformation, but both produce jumpers.”



Selien (Mermus R x Voltaire) is one example of the top selection horses that Odermus R and Mermus R have produced. She finished Reserve Champion in free-jumping at the National Mare Keuring.



The elite mare Zersante (Mermus R x I Love You) scored in 82.5 points in the 2008 IBOP in Helden, ranking her among the better mares of the past year.

Jumping Talent

According to the indexes, both Odermus R and Mermus R pass on their jumping traits very well, a fact also evidenced by their many offspring that excel at the selections and in sport. Sam R is Mermus R's approved son - and certainly an outstanding one. Sam R received the much-coveted score of 10 for push on his protocol and a 9.5 for talent as a jumper. Additionally, Mermus R's son Within Temptation is approved by the Zangersheide Studbook. Mermus R also boasts two KWPN-approved grandsons: Zahros R (Sam R x Rebel I Z) and the Roelofs-bred champion stallion Arthos R (Namelus R x Mermus R), who was registered in the studbook last year. Odermus R does not yet have any KWPN-approved sons. However, his son Olympic Fire won Champion in Neustadt/Dosse, Germany. Both Mermus R and Odermus R are well represented at the National Mare Keuring by mares including Zilverbea N. (Odermus R x Corland), who finished fifth in the 2007 National Mare Keuring and second in the National Free-Jumping Championship; Vubertha (Mermus R x Joost); Virginity (Mermus R x Nimmerdor); and Vita Virdonie (Odermus R x Dillenburg), who competed in the 2005 Free-Jumping Championship. Furthermore

Offspring in the Sport

Mermus R

- Rubert R (Mermus R x Joost) GP, his achievements include finishing first with the National Team in Dublin under Peter Charles.
- Santana (Mermus R x Zuidhorn) GP with Alastair Hippiusley Gatherum
- Sebastian (Mermus R x Eusebio) International jumper with Scott Brash.
- Anuberta (Mermus R x Joost) International jumper with Mylene Diedrichsmeier.
- Solita GP (Mermus R x Rossini) International jumper with Chris Moyce.
- Ramazzotti (Mermus R x Zeoliet) International jumper with Anna Giugno.
- Rembrandt (Mermus R) International jumper with Omer Karaevli.
- Salerno (Mermus R) International jumper with Kevin Melby.
- Talent (Mermus R x Julio Mariner xx) International jumper with Nina Fagerstrom.

Odermus R

- Unico (Odermus R x High Hopes s.Wuzo) International jumper with Kevin Olsmeijer
- Up to Date (Odermus R) 1.35m with Caroline Poels
- Uptown Boy (Odermus R) finished second in the Ascona young horse classes with Janika Sprunger.
- Vribalia SHB (Odermus R x Burggraaf) competed in the six- and seven-year-old division in Roggel with Luc Steeghs.
- Vivio C (Odermus R x Animo) showed in the six- and seven-year-old division in Arezzo, Cervia, and Bagnaia with Andrea Bartoletti.
- W.Rubertha (Odermus R x Joost) finished third in the six- and seven-year-old division in Zwolle with Anne-Liza Makkinga.

Odermus R and Mermus R offspring excel in the mare tests. Zarina (Mermus R x Onze Fons) scored 85.5 points in the IBOP to finish fourth in 2008. Zersante (Mermus R x I Love You) also did well in the IBOP, earning 82.5 points. Recently, Odermus R's son Bentley won the Limburg Open Free-Jumping Championship. Bentley (ds.Concorde) is out of the same dam-line as the international jumper Overa (s.Hemmingway) and the KWPN-

approved stallion Jethro. "Odermus R produces foals with a more elevated forehead, just like he has. They're careful, have good movement, and more blood than Mermus R offspring who have more horizontal body types and a very good hind-quarter technique over jumps. In general, they have easier temperaments than Odermus R offspring which are a bit more sensitive, a quality that can work for you or against you," says Kootstra decisively.



Winning Friesland Champion and finishing in third place at the National Mare Championship for keur and elite mares are among Vribalia SHB's (Odermus R x Burggraaf) achievements, who subsequently excelled in the young horse classes in Roggel. She is currently a Z-level show jumper.