

THE IMPORTERS—CC BELLANDI MARCHADOR FARM

by Darby Minow Smith

CC Bellandi Marchador Farm is both a USMMA and ABCCMM member and breeder.

Ocala, Florida, is the horse capital of the world. More horses live in Marion County than any other county in the U.S., and the breed variety seems pulled from the stable of an overenthusiastic Breyer Horse collector. Along white fences, Paso Finos, Hanoverians, Tennessee Walkers, and Irish Cobs graze. This is the home of two Triple Crown winners, and thoroughbreds step among the live oak's low mossy branches. As the horse capital, and an international destination for the world's top equines, it should be no surprise that it's also the location of a critical Marchador importation hub. But CC Bellandi Marchador Farm happened through chance—and a lot of hard work.



Claudia on Marchador stallion Capitão do Porto Palmeira

Claudia Bellandi has always known horses. Her father first put her on a horse when she was 6 months old. Claudia became a jockey at 21. Female jockeys were rare in Brazil, as they are in the United States. No one wanted to hire a female jockey, so she bought her own horses. She worked hard to prove herself in the male-dominated sport. Success meant retiring from jockeying—she had too many horses to train to continue riding in the races.

It was her love of thoroughbreds that brought her to the U.S., yet it was Marchadors that kept her here.

She purchased the farm in Ocala in 2009 for raising racehorses. She brought a few Marchadors along, but didn't pay much attention to the breed. Claudia appreciated the Marchadors' temperament, gait, and endurance, but she loved the speed and adrenaline of thoroughbreds. She quickly found buyers for her Marchadors.



Marchador stallion Haiti do Porto Palmeira

In order to receive her U.S. visa, she needed to prove she was a good businesswoman. She remembered the speed of the Marchador sales, and decided

that would be her enterprise. “Destiny will take you another way,” she said of her switch in horse breeds.

Claudia thoughtfully built a successful stable. In 2014, the ABCCMM asked Claudia to show her stallion Imperador das Aguas JM and her mare Irána das Aguas JM as representations of the breed at the PBR Finals Week in Las Vegas. Her ambassadorship of the breed was made official in 2016; Imperador was selected as the model for the Marchador Breyer Horse. Little girls stretched out for hours to meet Imperador, and to have the plastic bellies of the model Imperadors signed.



Claudia with a young fan and the Imperador model

Many of her buyers are people in the 55+ crowd who are looking for their forever horse. Marchadors' good disposition and smooth gait made for the perfect match for those with sore backs. Once, one of her Marchadors was in the parade. The ride went smoothly, despite the fact that the Marchador had only been ridden 20 times, and the rider had never been on a Marchador before. Claudia showed me a video of one of her horses being readied for breeding. Workers soap up the horse; he waits patiently. The video pans over to the nearby mare. She's in heat just a few feet away, but the stallion is still calm and gentle.

Even though thoroughbreds were Claudia's first love, Marchadors kept her riding. When she injured her knee a few years ago, Claudia could barely walk, and certainly couldn't ride her larger, faster horses. She could still ride the Marchador, however.

Claudia has affection for the breed, yet she is first and foremost a businesswoman. "I don't breed horses. I breed bloodlines," she said. Her Marchadors come in pinto, palomino, black, and gray, and she often gets compliments on their colors. That's beside the point. It "doesn't matter if the horse is orange" to Claudia so long as the horse has a good disposition and march.

She takes several trips to Brazil every year to keep up with the market. Thirty years in Brazil is much different from 30 years in the U.S., given how many top-notch farms have 200-400 horses, a massive number to Marchador breeders in the U.S. The Brazilian market moves much faster.

Another difficulty comes from convincing Brazilians to part with top-notch horses. In Brazil, it's common practice to sell 50% of a horse, so a farm can keep a

great horse in rotation for half of the time. That's, of course, unthinkable given the import process in the U.S.



Gloria do CC Bellandi, born of Moleca das Aguas through imported semen from Zinabre Calambau I

Claudia imports a few horses every year, both for herself, and for customers. Importation is a stressful, difficult endeavor, owing to piroplasmiasis. “If not for piro, the population of Marchadors in America would be huge,” she said. She rents out stalls in a jockey club for the horses to keep them away from ticks. During this time, leading up to the C-Eliza test, she knows all the horses’ health stats. She hired women to live in the barn to listen to the horses in order to flag any slight change in them.

As a result, she's had great success with importing, although she still doesn't sleep for the seven days that horses are under USDA quarantine. She gets phone calls in the middle of the night from worried customers and her handlers in Brazil.



Capitão do Porto Palmeira

She recounted one difficult, expensive lesson in that process. She was importing a stallion and a mare. The stallion had piroplasmiasis levels that fluctuated near the USDA limit of 39, but the mare's levels were low. She declared the horses on the same form, so their fates were tied. The mare tested fine, as expected, but the stallion tested at 45. Both horses had to wait for an additional week in the

expensive, windowless rooms. The next time, the stallion tested at 40. So close! The horses waited an additional week. This next time, the stallion tested at 30. It was such a drop, the testers wondered if they'd mixed up the tests. So they tested the mare. 60. The stress of quarantine caused her number to skyrocket. In the end, the stallion made it into the U.S. Claudia had to pay \$12,000 to send the poor, stressed mare home.

Today, Claudia has moved away from selling horses to selling embryos. She has 40 horses, which include 23 Marchadors and 8 surrogate mares. Her dear friend and Hall of Fame jockey Jacinto Vásquez works on the farm. Many people visit Ocala for the horses, and Claudia frequently hosts clinics and visitors.

The Marchador finds fans in the young and old, Brazilians and Americans alike. “It’s a very special horse for people who like to ride,” Claudia said.



Claudia started importing from Aguas JM as their fast marcha Batida gait was highly sought after in the U.S. They are also visually striking horses, as evidenced by Imperador das Aguas JM, the Breyer horse model. Aguas JM horses come from the traditional 53 bloodline combined with SM (the stallion Talento Dourado SM) and São Francisco de Uberaba bloodlines. Claudia's mare Moleca das Aguas JM foaled the other mares in her stable.

To this rich bloodline, Claudia has brought stallions from Porto Palmeira. This is one of the hottest farms in Brazil, with regular National Champions, including Delete Caxambuense and Extrato do Minatto. Claudia says that although most other horses must be heavily trained up to become National Champions, Porto Palmeira horses are born naturals. Their gaits are dissociated, so their marches are as far from trotting or jogging as possible. The breeder has been raising horses for more than 30 years, and he uses the foundation bloodline JB.

Imported horses:

Imported Stallions:

- 1: Haiti do Porto Palmeira
2. Capitão do Porto Palmeira
3. Hermoso do Porto Palmeira
4. Delmug dos Bugres
5. Imperador das Aguas JM
6. Naire das Aguas
7. Lendario das Aguas JM
8. Hiato do Porto Palmeria

Imported Frozen Semen:

1. Zinabre Calambau I
2. Fabuloso dos Bugres

3. Vidente MMB

Imported Mares:

1. Moleca das Aguas JM
2. Irána das Aguas JM
3. Dayana da Coxilha Grande

Imported Fillies:

1. Inka do Porto Palmeira
2. Lá Cucaracha dos Burges

Imported Geldings:

Húngaro do Porto Palmeira

Offspring:

CC Bellandi's horses have had a significant impact on the U.S. Marchador gene pool.

Haiti do Porto Palmeira's offspring include:

Brandy do High Country F-23 (female born in 2023)

Comanche do High Country M-23

Kiowa do High Country M-23

Pistol do High Country F-23

Sassicaia CC Bellandi F-23

Tennessee Uisque Daisy's Folly M-23

Touro Negro Daisy's Folly M-23

Bandit do High Country M-23

Ornelaia do CC Bellandi F-23

Capitão do Porto Palmeira's offspring include:

Hannalisa do Monarch Marchadros F-23

Herubi do Monarch Marchadros F-23

Lirio de Pascua Daisy's Folly F-23

Gunny do CC Bellandi M-23

Delmug dos Bugres' offspring include:

Corazon de Los Cielos F-20

Diamente do CC Bellandi M-19

Rubi do CC Bellandi F-20

Topazio do CC Bellandi M-20

Zriracha do Inmotion F-22

Ametista do CC Bellandi F-19

Lendario das Aguas JM's offspring include*:

Avalon do CC Bellandi M-17

Dia Vista da Serra F-19

Enamorado do Inmotion M-17

Lona do High Country F-19

Shawnee do High Country F-19

*After being sold to Flying Oaks, Lendario has had over an additional 23 registered USMMA offspring.

Naire das Aguas' offspring include:

Sueno de los Cielos M-20

Vasudeva do Rancho Linda Marchadores M-19

Zinabre Calambau I's offspring include:

Gloria CC Bellandi F-20

Milgre CC Bellandi F-22

Linda CC Bellandi F-22

Princesa CC Bellandi F-22

Abiquiu do High Country F-21

Cochise do High Country M-22

Criolo do High Country F-20

Embaixador USA do Mineirão M-22

Moleca das Aguas JM's offspring include:

Ametista do CC Bellandi F-19

Gloria do CC Bellandi F-20

Milagre do CC Bellandi F-22

Rubi do CC Bellandi F-20

Safira do CC Bellandi F-19 (imported in-utero; stallion Sincero do Marama)

Irána das Aguas JM's offspring include:

Embaixador USA do Mineirão M-22

Dayana da Coxilha Grande's offspring include:

Avalon do CC Bellandi M-17

Tennessee Uisque Daisy's Folly M-23