

Dales Pony News *By Anna Pennell*

Ornella Zak – a Dales Pony as a western horse

Manuela Zillober and her Dales Pony Zak are successfully competing in western riding competitions in Bavaria she tells us how she found Zak and their journey to success.

Zak was born on May 15th 1999 in Westwick Farm, Barnard Castle. In May 2005 he was brought to Germany and on his second day here we had a look at him, slept over our decision for a night and then bought him without having ever heard of the breed before. A section A Dales Pony was very rare in Germany at that time.

After taking him home to Upper Bavaria, together with our trainer we started training him on the ground according to the methods of Pat Parelli. Right from the start he was very eager to learn and a very sensitive pony who needed an attachment figure. Walking with him a lot on the halter showing him things from the ground was what we did before we trained him (English) under saddle.

After a short time we found out that working with poles was a lot of fun to Zak and we included it in our training regularly.

This is how we took to western riding. So when after about three months of training when he started to change shape and our English saddle needed re-fitting, we bought our first western saddle. We took a lot of training lessons with different western trainers as well as courses that lasted a few days in a row. Of course, as a distraction, we went for rides in the surrounding countryside as well as horse trails that lasted several hours.

In 2008 we attended a western competition for the first time: we took first place in trail and second place in western horsemanship. What

a beginning! In the following years we attended a lot of shows all over Bavaria successfully and specialised in the disciplines of trail, western horsemanship and western pleasure.

Since 2012, we have concentrated on three big competitions every year, which take place near Regensburg. That is, where together with AQHA (American Quarter Horse Association) and the Bavarian Western Riders Association (VWB) organise the "Bavarian Spring Classic", the "Bavarian Championship" and the "Bavarian Summer Show". Among others, there is a "Golden series Trail".

The first two competitions serve as qualification rounds to determine the finalists in the summer show. Due to the prize money of 15,000

Euros, this discipline is frequented by professional trainers from all over Europe. This year's trail saw 42 competitors and after the second show we ended up qualifying for the final in seventh place. There are now 15 horse-rider-combinations competing for this very attractive prize money.

Beside the golden series trail, we also participated in the open and amateur trail as well as in western riding, which is a discipline with a series of eight flying lead changes in a row. Here we took the reserve Bavarian champion in June this year.

Starting from 2008, Zak and I have won 74 bows (which you get when you are placed) and 13 cups for winning a competition.

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