

RELATIVELY *SPEAKING*

text and photos by Judy Wardrope

Conformation and pedigree expert Judy Wardrope analyzes the conformation of three horses who have pedigrees featuring Argentinus. Learn how to recognize the traits this stallion does and does not pass to his get. Then apply the same principles when breeding this season.

The three horses we'll use in this article are related, they have some physical characteristics in common, and yet, they have some differences.

Regarding bloodlines, Arko III and Special Ed are both by Argentinus and Quantum Tyme's dam is by the same stallion. Although more distant, Arko III and Quantum Tyme both trace to the Selle Francais, Ibrahim, but Special Ed does not.

Let's look at the physical characteristics that help them do what they do well and see if we can attribute some of the characteristics to their common ancestor, Argentinus.

Arko III (Argentinus/Beach Boy) is currently one of the top show jumpers in the world and is ridden by Britain's Nick Skelton. If you are looking for a Canadian connection, his broodmare's sire, Beach Boy, stands in Alberta.

As always, we'll start from the hindquarters, where we find a well-placed lumbosacral joint (LS), stifles well below the level of his sheath for scope and an equilateral triangle (point of hip to point of buttock to stifle and back to point of hip). These are top show jumping characteristics, and his current standings prove that.

Up front we see an elevated humerus that results in a high point of shoulder. His humerus is shorter, however, than that of the other two. This shorter humerus makes him faster with his front legs and loftier on the forehand. His pillar of support (a line drawn from the middle of his knee upwards) emerges well in front of his withers for lightness of the forehand. The lower portion of his pillar of support (mid-knee to ground) intersects the rearward portion of his heel, which adds to soundness. Too far forward and concussion is increased; too far rearward and strain on tendons and ligaments is increased.

His neck is longer than that of Quantum Tyme, which is an asset (as a counterbalance) for a show jumper.



Arko III

Special Ed (Argentinus/Grannus)

started out as a dressage horse, but was converted to show jumping with Jill Henselwood and will likely represent Canada at the World Cup in Kuala Lumpur next month.

His LS appears to be directly above his point of hip – excellent placement. His 'triangle' is fairly close to equilateral, but the ilium (point of hip to point of buttock) is slightly shorter than the other two sides, and his stifle is not quite as far below his sheath as that of Arko. Although these differences are slight, they would indicate a slight tendency to get rails behind, especially over oxers.

Again we see an elevated humerus, but, in this case, we see more relative length to it. He is built to have a long stride and to be able to elevate the forehand over fences. His pillar of support emerges in front of his withers at the top and intersects with his heel at the bottom for soundness and lightness of the forehand.

He has a long neck, which aids in both takeoff and landing.

Quantum Tyme (Quattro B/Argentinus) excels in dressage with Canada's Evi Strasser and represented Canada at the World Cup in April of 2005 at only 10 years of age. Incidentally, another of Stasser's dressage horses, Justin Tyme, is also by Argentinus.

As with the other two, we find a well placed LS that is directly over the point of hip; however, we do not find an equilateral triangle or a stifle well below the level of the sheath. A triangle with the ilium as the shortest portion is typical of upper level dressage horses, as is a stifle at or just below the bottom of the sheath. This configuration makes compression or loading of the hindquarters sustainable for longer periods, while the equilateral triangle and lower stifle placement of the showjumper compress as the coils of a spring but is released almost immediately.

Like the show jumpers, he has an elevated humerus, but his humerus is longer than Arko's and closer to the relative length of Special Ed's. He is built to have the ability lighten the forehand and reach with the forelegs in extended gaits. His pillar of support emerges in front of the withers and intersects the heel – light and sound.

His neck is considerably shorter than the two show jumpers, which is not uncommon in dressage horses. In fact a long neck is a disadvantage in a dressage horse; it makes them more difficult to keep straight.



The Argentinus Influence

While a sampling of just three horses is far from definitive, we can hypothesize that the excellent LS placement can be at least partially attributed to Argentinus, especially combined with his success rate as a sire of top performance horses.

We can also assume that he adds qualities that aid in lightness of the forehand such as an elevated humerus and a pillar of support that emerges in front of the withers.

The things we cannot say are Argentinus traits include stifle placement, length of ilium and length of neck, and, as a result, the discipline best suited to the particular horse. The list of international horses by him include Albano (dressage), Ameretto (dressage), Anka 191 (2003 World Cup champion show jumper), Aachen (show jumping) and Justin Tyme (dressage).

If there is a lesson to be learned, it may well be that even with a stallion like Argentinus prominent in a pedigree, we still have to judge each horse individually from a functional conformation basis. 