

Remy Bastings

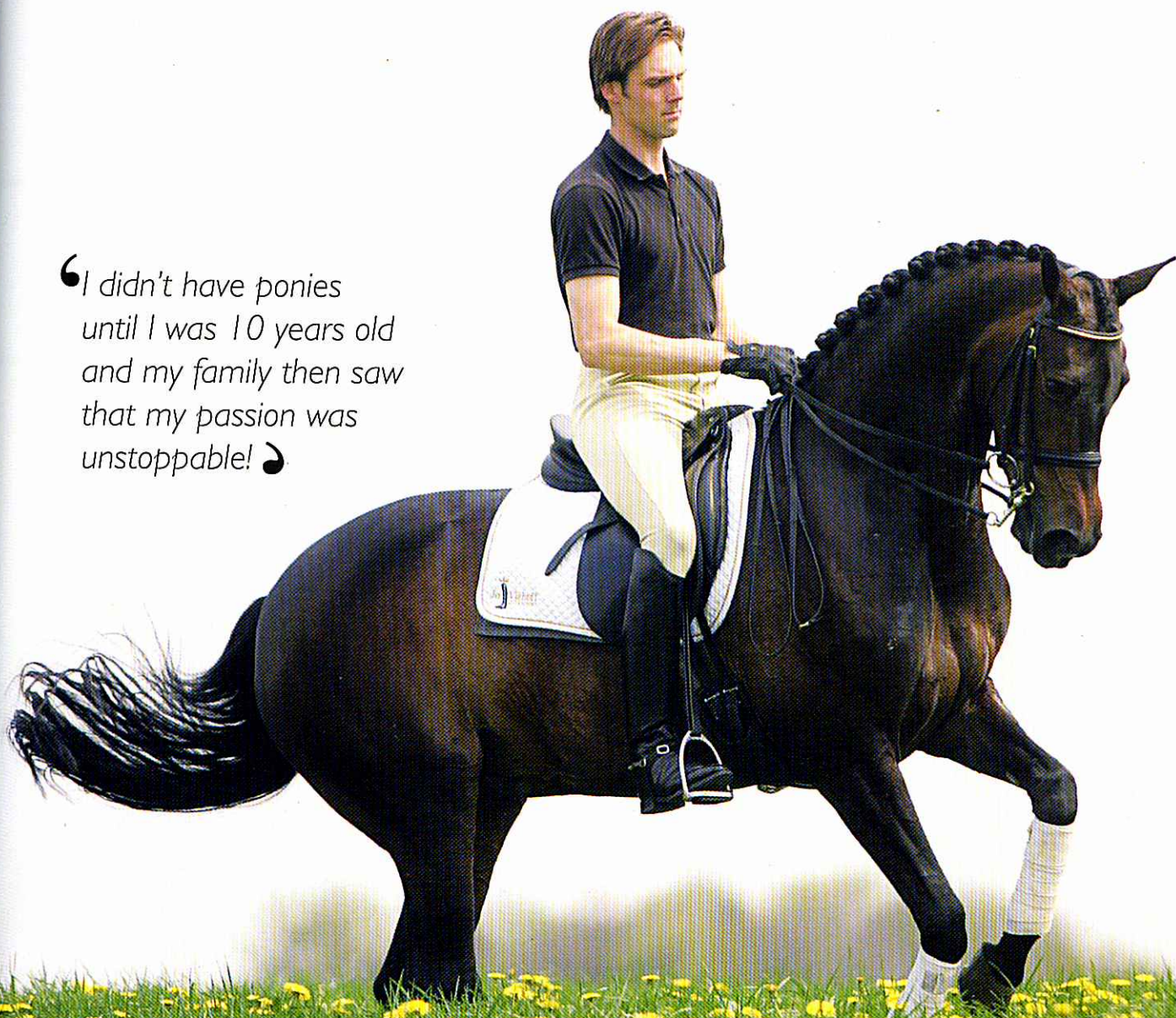
By Jenny Taylor

The Beginning

Remy Bastings was born on 2 September 1975 in the Dutch city of Maastricht. Remy cannot recall when he started riding – both his grandfathers had horses and he sat on them before he could walk. They were always in his life. "Things really got going when I could ride my bicycle on my own and cycled to my grandfather's stables without my mother even knowing! After that, I spent most

of my spare time with my grandfather who let me play and have fun with the horses," remembers Remy. "I didn't have ponies until I was 10 years old and my family then saw that my passion was unstoppable! I did everything with the horses. Riding, driving, hunting, circus tricks but – oddly enough – no sports!"

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At 16, Remy went to the Dutch School for Professional Riders in Deurne and graduated in March 1996. The school let Remy finish six months early to go to the Olympics as a groom for Canadian rider Leonie Bramall. "The school covered a wide range of equestrian skills – not just dressage and jumping, but also lessons in lunging, vaulting, driving, grooming, management and teaching, as well as many theory subjects. We had an unbelievably strict regime six days a week. We had to be in the stables by 6 in the morning, make everything spick and span and then breakfast at 7.30 and lessons at 8 in uniform. Discipline was very important. I think it still is..." laughs Remy. "In September 1997 they hired me as a teacher and I spent the next four and a half years teaching there. That was when I really learnt to think about riding and how to explain it, not only do it!"

And Currently

In August 2010, Remy took up residence in a beautiful stable yard in Ulestraten, a village in the Dutch province of Limburg. The yard boasts 40 boxes and a fantastic 20m x 60m indoor arena (with one long side all window and the other long side all mirror), as well as a good 20m x 60m outdoor arena.

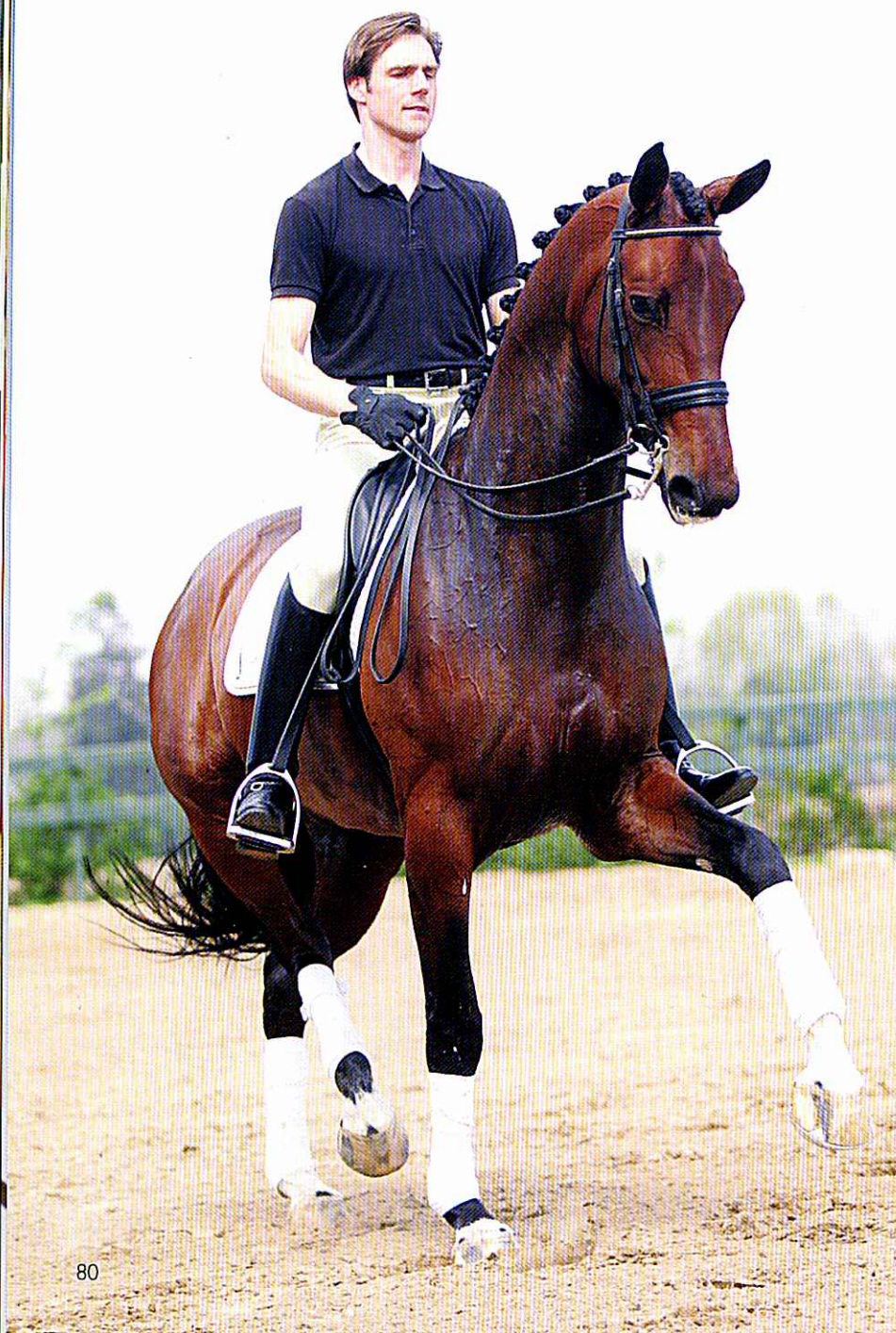
Remy has nine of his own horses in the barn as well as horse owned and ridden by people working for him and his student. Altogether he has more than 20 sport horses in his barn and over 15 of them are trained to Medium level. "The rest are still too young to work at that level but are in training," he says proudly.

Remy's Horses

"I am lucky that I compete on a range of horses at all levels. Riverdance is a 12-year-old gelding (by Volkentanz II) competing at Intermediare II level, but at home we are training at a Grand Prix level. Travolta is a 10-year-old stallion (by Olivi) competing at Small Tour level and is also doing Grand Prix work at home. Taramanda is a 10-year-old mare (by Ferro), her son Zippo a six-year-old bay gelding (by Rubiquil) and Zecchino a six-year-old stallion (by Krack C), all competing at Medium or Junior level on the Small Tour. Small Tour is when you ride up to Prix St George/Intermediate I and Big Tour is when you ride Grand Prix, Special Test and Kur. In the Netherlands we call the Intermediate II Middle Tour," explains Remy.

"Ambassador," continues Remy, "is a five-year-old gelding (by Rhodium) and is only training at home. I love him! He's 1.85m high, very athletic and already willing to do a few piaffe steps and a big pirouette! All this even though I have never pushed him in his training because he's so huge! Beckham is a four-year-old gelding (by Flemmingh) and was placed 14th at the PAVO Cup, the National Championship for young horses. I was very pleased with him since I haven't pushed him at all, yet he received a super score of 78%, competing against many better prepared horses.

"Finally, I have two three-year-olds that are just playing around: Chagall (by Negro), a mare born at my stable and a stallion called Chinsky (by Tuschinsky)."



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Remy trains with Hans Peter Minderhoud who is the four-time winner of the World Champion Young Horses competition, a perennial member of the Dutch team, participated in the Hong Kong Olympics and has been selected for the Dutch team for the WEG in Kentucky. "I believe he is the best rider we have. I try to work with Hans on a regular basis but since he is a 200 km drive away and we are both very busy, it is not as regular as I would like!" laughs Remy. "But at least once a month and I try for every two weeks."

Remy's Students

Remy's students – of which there are more than two dozen – are a cosmopolitan bunch. There is 22-year-old Spanish national Ainhoa Prada Ortiz who rides a six-year-old gelding at Medium level and a 12-year-old gelding at Grand Prix level. She and Remy are looking for a second Small Tour horse that they can prepare and train up to Grand Prix level. Ainhoa was on the Spanish Junior and Young Rider teams for many years. She also trains four or five of Remy's horses every day.

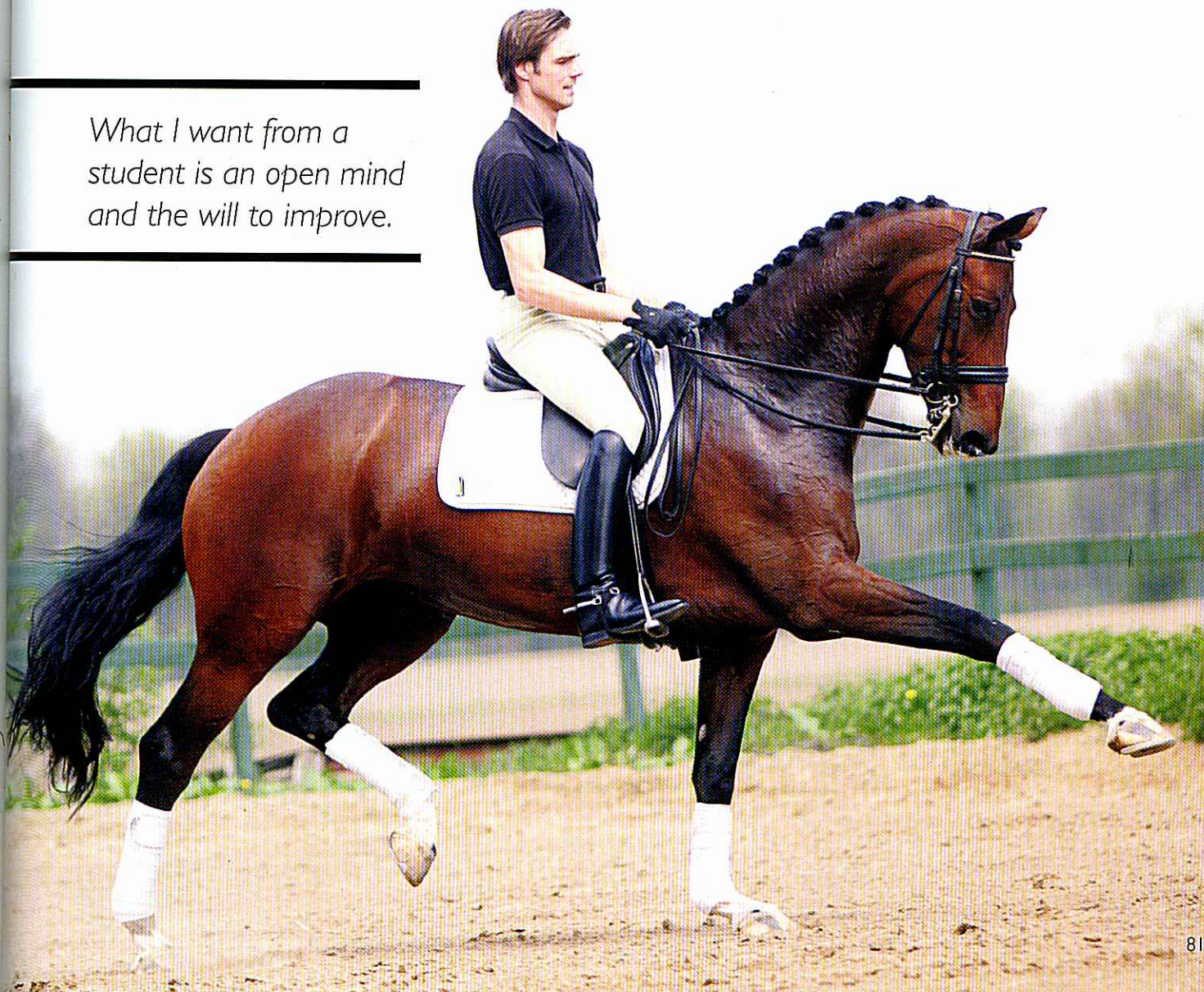
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Fifteen-year-old Belgian Michel Muyters has been training with Remy for two years. Michel has a five-year-old gelding that was the Beginners level Belgian Champion last year. He also rides two of Remy's horses at International Junior level for Belgium and trains two or three of Remy's young horses at home. "Michel is very talented and just plays with all the Grand Prix exercises," says Remy.

Remy's groom is Dutch national Shirley Pijnenburg, who rides at Medium level. His partner Johnny Stassen (also Dutch), competes at Medium level, "though I believe he's ready to compete on the Small Tour," adds Remy.

"When I sold Marinier (who belonged to Jenny Neill) to a rider in Spain, I travelled there to help the girl who bought the horse," says Remy. "Every time I went there I was asked to help more and more riders! So, now when I go to Spain every two months or so, I run a clinic from Thursday to Sunday." Remy also conducts regular clinics in Slovenia and occasionally in Finland and Poland but, he laughs, "those countries are too cold for me in the winter!"

What I want from a student is an open mind and the will to improve.



On Coaching

"Teaching is for me almost as rewarding as riding," says Remy. "I'm always keen to make my students and their horses better. When they make mistakes I ask them, 'Don't you want to be better than me?'. And if we compete at the same level at shows, I'm happy if they do better than me. It's a success for me too when they do well and it keeps me sharp and encourages me to keep improving my own riding!"

"I don't mind what level my students and/or their horses are. What I want from a student is an open mind and the will to improve. I have had high-level students who thought they knew it all. That's no fun. Someone who seems to be 'green' but wants to work on themselves – that's fun!"

On Breeding and Type

"There's not one breeding line I must have," says Remy. "I have had several Jazz offspring – I really like them but they can be difficult as young horses in that they can be very spooky and hot. Not easy for someone inexperienced or with a strong hand. But on the flip side, if you are too soft they play with you! I also like the Ferro and Negro lines. I will never buy a Sandro Hit because if you see the number of offspring he has and then look at how many compete at a high level, it's shocking. They are beautiful-looking horses but mostly not fit for the high level of dressage competition."

"When looking for a horse for a student," advises Remy, "what I recommend really depends on what the student wants or is able to cope with. I personally like 'hot' horses, though for a nervous rider I would recommend a quieter horse. For a small woman I would not recommend a huge 1.85m horse and for a man with long legs I would find something big enough to accommodate his length."

"People must be careful buying young horses for inexperienced riders. One often thinks it would be nice if the horse and rider can grow together but that's very, very difficult. It takes a lot of experience and feeling to train a young one and you only get this after many years of practice."

On Initial Backing and Training

"For the Stallion Test in Holland and Germany the horses have to be backed at the age of two and a half. And that's too young for me. I don't like to back them before the summer of the year they turn three and, depending on the horse, they may go back in the field for a few months before starting proper work."

Remy believes the problem is not in starting horses young, but in asking too much of them at a young age. "Playing with a two-and-a-half-year-old is fine," states Remy, "however, doing competitions and shows and trying to collect horses at three and four years of age is a big problem. A talented young horse will offer a lot. It's very tempting to keep asking and using what they offer. Until the point where it's too much and the horse gets an injury or starts to resist and then it's said to be a difficult horse! I had a horse come to me with that kind of history. The owner got to the stage where she never wanted to sit on him again – she was so afraid of

him. She even took him to a vet because she thought there was a physical problem! It took me a year and a half to make him forget all his trouble and to let me mount him without problems. Then six more months to make him understand that a flying change is an exercise he could get rewarded for, not punished. Now he is the sweetest horse and will try to do anything you ask of him."

"I have found that if you take your time in the first two or three years of basic training, adding some dressage exercises – not by pushing but by playing – then their progression is really fast when they are six or seven. The long way there is definitely faster!"

Remy's own horses don't really have to go anywhere before they are ready for Medium level. "Most owners want their horses to go to the competitions for four- and five-year-olds," explains Remy, "which is no problem if you only do it every now and then."

If a horse and rider partnership does well at Medium level, they will compete in the two classes between Medium and Small Tour in Holland. These classes are called ZZ licht and ZZ zwaar. Only if and when they do well with those competitions would they move on to Small Tour and then later Grand Prix. "For the average horse in an average situation, as a six-year-old they reach Medium level, at seven or eight they'd be ready for Small Tour and at eight or nine for Big Tour. And then a few years more to become good at that level. But if the training doesn't develop like this, it doesn't have to be a problem," says Remy.

On the World Equestrian Games

"I'm not going to Kentucky," laughs Remy. "I don't have a horse for the team. It's not easy being a Dutch dressage rider at the moment... We are leaving Anky off the team, so you can imagine how high the level is!"

