FEATHER SOUND NEWS

Serving the Tampa Bay Area, Florida

A DREAM SURVIVES

DeLania's Dream was born under a very different name. A given name full of plans from her breeder encompassed her mother and father, easily connecting a famous heritage. She looked the part. A wonderful disposition, healthy, happy, and rather large. Her strong body was made for racing with plenty of room inside for babies one day… they hoped.

Niki raced and made enough money to warrant a life of mothering. She produced two foals who went on to win quite a sum but her third pregnancy never 'took'. The two she produced were still too young to safely determine their value, so she was entered in a Select Sale auction for the Thoroughbred industry. In this type of sale, only qualified buyers and quality horses are accepted so Niki had a good chance at another comfortable home.

Not every breeder respects nature or timing. The buyer rebred, expecting to bring forth another champion but again, she did not 'take'. So, two years of babies, then two without, started to look poor on paperwork.

Dominic bought well-bred mares, yearly marketing their foals as potential runners. He bought good bloodlines and cared for them nicely. Then he came upon Niki. She didn't look horrible but was in no shape for motherhood, or any sale of merit. He bought her far below pedigree value, dismayed at such an honorable mare being in derelict condition. He was not surprised to find she wasn't pregnant.

Thorough vet care and good food began to revive the still youthful horse, but now what was he going to do with her. Dominic only kept a couple mares at a time, selling all foals to keep his dollars flowing. Breeding was a hobby for him and for decades it had been fun… and easy. Now he was faced with a horse in poor condition, with breeding season over for another year. His veterinarian told him his heart was bigger than his pocketbook and to cull the mare before she 'ate' all his profits. Suggestion? The vet gave him our number, and Niki became ours!

She had been called 'mare' or 'momma', common nicknames for a broodmare. When I told her donor she would be named after him, he choked up. Potential recovery of money spent on her purchase then on medical bills, was cast aside by giving her to a sanctuary but after all, hadn't he only intended to find her a better life?

And that he did. Thin and dejected, Niki bloomed into the mare Dominic saw through the haze. It took a while for her big body to fill in but she was resilient and eager to please. We will never know why her first breedings went so well yet not followed by others, but her cycles became regular and I believe she could have easily had more foals. As a rescue sanctuary we are not in the habit of creating more lives, rather we look to care for a life already begun.

Unlike so many others, Niki came to us sound. Although she moved awkwardly due to missing weight and muscle, her big frame began to smooth out. Watching a horse like this rally is so heartwarming. Dominic bought against better judgement since this was not a guaranteed recovery. There are any number of diseases or debilitations that can take a young life, but after decades in the racing industry, after seeing and being part of so many successes, he was captivated by the sadness in this mare's eyes, compelled to alter her course. All too often these derelicts go to slaughter or, if lucky, into the hands of a rehoming rescue to find a quality of life, nearly lost.

It took a good year or more, but Niki's grey coat glistened in the sun, her huge stride was soft and flowing, her eyes held the gentle confidence her pedigree made history on. Dominic gave her a jump start and handed us the reins before losing too much time and investment, but it helped us reset Niki in a far better direction. If owners would recognize limitations and change their options sooner, with the animal in mind, there would be so much less loss and pain in those possibly intended for a different purpose.

There are numerous show winners worldwide whose racing careers failed… or never happened. Fame or backyard pet, there is much one can do if an initial lifestyle does not embrace as one hoped.

As a 501(c)(3) rescue sanctuary, Equestrian Spirits Forever Home guides animals to redefine their lives. Help us, help them, with a donation of any amount. Thank you! www.EquestrianSpirits.ORG