

# My Experience with Razeen

by Ameeta Mehra

My father brought Razeen to jumpstart my career with horses at Usha Stud Farm. After returning from studying Equine Management at the Irish National Stud (Ireland) and Nutrition at Kentucky (USA), I joined my father, with a clear vision and business plan to breed superior international quality race horses, in 1991. My father had achieved everything that was possible in horse breeding. He had won six Indian Derby's and all the Classics twice over, and frankly, he was losing interest and zeal, preferring to play golf instead. I believe the vision I set out to take on, after coming back from Management Studies at I.I.M. (Ahmedabad), inspired him to look for a stallion that could hopefully take us a notch further, especially after the relatively moderate success of Treasure Leaf. After consultation with my mother, he finally took the decision to buy Razeen.

I remember, when Razeen walked into Usha, he looked bigger and more majestic than any horse we had so far stood. His eyes gleamed with a special look, as though he was sizing

everything up. As the days rolled on, we discovered that he had a terrific personality, and was the Master of His Kingdom. I present below some interesting glimpses of his colourful personality.

Razeen hated anyone entering his paddock and stable, and in the early days would pounce on the poor unsuspecting entrant, and almost frighten him to death. We figured this one out fairly soon, and were careful not to disturb him.

In the early days when he was younger, Razeen would be ridden everyday around the farm with Steinbeck. He would enjoy that very much, behaving perfectly in front of the mares, as long as he had a rider on his back. However, by any chance, if Steinbeck was in front of him, it would drive him crazy, for Razeen had to lead. He was quite content to have Steinbeck follow him!

As time went on, and he neared 19 years of age, it happened one day that Razeen refused to allow his head groom to ride him anymore.



Even if his rider somehow managed to get on top of him, he would not budge, and would turn his head around and get hold of the rider's leg or stirrup, which came even easier. He very firmly gave all of us his message: 'I do not wish to be ridden anymore.' So, I took the decision to stop it. When one has such a great and intelligent horse one had better listen to what he is trying to tell you.

*Also published in Racing World, Vol V No.3, December 2008*

Thereafter, I asked his groom to only walk him. However, the wonder of wonders was that Razeen refused to allow anyone to walk with him. His stud groom, who has been with him since the time he landed in India, tried every which way to get him to walk beside him, but he would not allow the groom to walk next to him. Eventually, we figured out that he was happy walking as long as the groom walked behind him with both reins in his hands, like he was driving a chariot!! However, it was Razeen who decided what speed suited him.

Razeen is one of those horses who has Zero tolerance for anyone trying to manhandle him or push him around. Once, his stud groom was getting impatient, and pulled the horse's head away from his feed manager where he was eating, so as to groom him. Lo and behold! Razeen picked the poor fellow up, by getting hold of his thumb in his mouth. I was told, on reaching the spot, that the groom kept dangling from his thumb up in the air for a good 10 minutes, obviously dislocating and breaking his thumb in the process. He never tried disturbing Razeen again!

When one walks into the paddock to see Razeen, the first thing that strikes one is his majestic presence. I have never seen a horse with more presence. He stands 16.2 hands, with a gleaming coat, and when he looks at you, you feel as if a laser beam is going through you. What a look! Sharp, intelligent eyes that speak... eyes that look at you penetratingly...!

Razeen is the kind of horse that observes every movement or sound around him. If you move, his eyes move with you. Once, his stud groom had gone on leave, and the groom of the other stallion had come to do his grooming. He must have upset Razeen in some way, because he would not allow the groom to come near him. Out of fright, the substitute groom thought that he would pick up a twitch to get Razeen to walk out of his stable. As soon as Razeen got out, he turned around and went straight for the groom! I realized that suddenly from a quiet contented horse, his behaviour had changed and he did not like being led out for the parade. On making detailed enquiries, I found out that Razeen's own groom used to walk behind him with a twitch so that he obeyed. Obviously the substitute groom's tactic had the opposite effect as it is impossible to frighten this horse.

He became increasingly aggressive. I immediately had the twitch and the groom removed. In a few weeks he once again became his earlier contented, happy self, allowing us to stroke, groom and walk him.

Just yesterday, I went to his paddock, and noticed that his old faithful groom, now 62 years of age, was feeding him some Lucerne. I thought to myself, 'Oh, well, that is a bit over ripe, as I saw some flowers on it,' but I saw Razeen taking a mouthful from him. As soon as I went up to Razeen and offered him some, he refused to eat it anymore, and politely started grazing on the grass below. I guess, one mouthful was enough for him to know that it was overripe. This is non-verbal communication at its best. He was telling the owner (me), 'This Lucerne is not up to the standard. Inform these people to cut it sooner!' I chuckled to myself, and did precisely that.

I know he will probably go down as the greatest stallion ever to have stood in India, with a great classic and black-type record. However, what stands out for me is to have had the privilege of knowing, understanding and looking after such a unique and mindful horse that has made me redefine my understanding of the equine species.