

## **Pride's Starmaster**

Many years ago I had the privilege to train an absolutely wonderful World's Champion Harness Pony named Pride's Starmaster. His whole life he had been with wonderful trainers, the likes of Tom Lowery, Carter Ragsdale, Gib Marccuci and Donna Moore. I had much success with him for several years but serious health problems with his 84-year-old driver necessitated his early retirement from the show ring. (He was 17 but could have shown many more years) His owners were wonderful people and asked if we would keep him in retirement at our farm. Being he was a very small and very sweet pony gelding and had been such a pleasure to train I just offered to keep him for the rest of his days. We turned him out with a small band of antique but very nice barren broodmares that fall. I had trained him to come when I whistled and the mares would follow him making catching them much easier. I noted day by day he seemed to be becoming the leader of this small herd of horses. It was very cute sights watching the little guy "order" his herd around.

One day, several months into his retirement, the farrier was there and I sent a boy up to bring him in so his feet could be trimmed. It was about an hour before I noticed none of my help was in the barn and neither was Starmaster. I walked up to the pasture where he reigned supreme over his little band of mares and noted: They were bandaging one Mexican boy's arm, one was limping badly and one was being chased around the pasture by this little pony. The fifth boy was nowhere in sight.

I had the "big" one and used language that they could certainly hear but now I am glad they could not understand at how they could let one little sweet pony run them around like that. Immediately I opened the gate, walked into the pasture, and whistled for the sweet little pony. I would show them how it was done. I was so proud, when he heard my whistle, he quit chasing Juan, stopped in his tracks turned and started trotting towards me. "When I train them, they stay trained", I thought to myself. He was so willing to please he broke into a canter and in a moment or two he was at a dead run coming straight at me like a bullet. He appeared to have no ears. I could, however, see just about all of his teeth, as his mouth was wide open.

I didn't use the gate when leaving the pasture; rather, I threw myself under the fence at the last moment. No one said anything as we all walked back to the barn. Starmaster put his tail up over his back and trotted around "his" pasture just as high as he ever had in the show ring. I could have sworn he was laughing.

When all the dust settled, I found out that this had all started a month or so before when a newer worker had not held his ground and ran scared from

him. The boys thought this was very was humorous at first but after they continued to tease him for several days, by running from him, it just escalated from there.