

SHOW RING FAVORITES

Rajah and Pandora owned by Horace T. Hunter, Esq. Toronto

BY DOUGLAS EPPES

RAJAH, so our good friend the dictionary tells us, means a prince. And a prince of jumpers, indeed, is *Rajah*, sablecoated fencer owned by Mr. Horace T. Hunter of Toronto, a horse who has blazoned far and wide the timber-topping quality of Canadian-bred stock.

In the past five years honors have come to him thick and fast. So that today this dusky fencer can well be reckoned to have established his title to the championship of our tanbark leaping brigade.

As on the turf, so in the show ring—past performance must remain the standard by which a horse's worth is gauged.

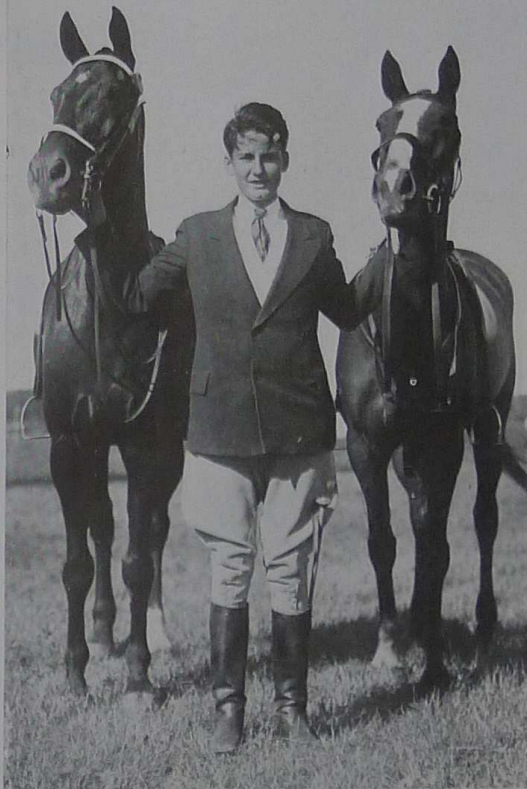
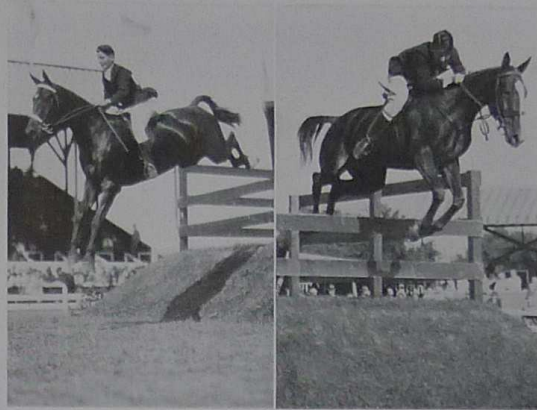
When one delves into the records of *Rajah's* ring-work at horse shows in Canada and in the United States one becomes amazed at the phenomenal success which, time and again, has crowned his efforts. In fact, to give a faithful recapitulation of the contests in which his hoofs have been lifted a shade higher than those of any of his rivals would be wearisome. Suffice it that, although he has been exhibited at our major horse gatherings, and at that great international show that annually is held in Rochester, he never yet has left an exhibition without taking with him some trophy, decoration or portion of prize-money. That spells consistency; or, rather, advertises it. But I imagine one gains a still better impression of his fencing ability through citing this fact: That *Rajah* is the only horse in Canada who defeated the crack—I had almost written circus—jumpers of the French and Belgian cavalry in a straight fencing contest.

Time passes so swiftly that one is apt to forget incidents no matter how stirring they may have seemed at the time. I do not think, however, that anyone who was present at the Royal Winter Fair on the evening of November 12, 1926, is likely to forget *Rajah's* performance in the Open Jumps. For my part, I carry with me a mental picture of the gallant black horse prancing into the arena, sailing easily and gracefully over his jumps, and of the tremendous enthusiasm with which the Coliseum throng greeted his spectacular effort.

That year close to one hundred horses competed in this fencing contest. Ten were members of the Franco-Belgian cavalry teams, star timber-toppers each of them. At the 1925 Winter Fair, these European jumpers had swept the decks in the fencing classes; this time, with an even stronger representation, it seemed inevitable that history would repeat itself. The Olympic course was prescribed for the competition, its somewhat intricate setting adding to the hazards of the task that confronted each horse and the rider that bestrode it. Just two contenders in that large field went clean; *Rajah* and the Belgian-owned, *As de Pique*. Young Donald Hunter, second son of Mr. Hunter, rode *Rajah*, as he was to ride him in many a subsequent triumph. He sat the black gelding as though he were a part of him. Against this Toronto lad in his teens, was pitted Commandant G. Mesmaekers, a horseman with an international reputation. Naturally the sympathy of the crowd was with the almost untried youth, and when he took his horse around for the second time and out-pointed his formidable rival his victory met with the wildest acclaim.

A year later, on the same battle ground, *Rajah* and his young pilot carried off the second award in the Jumping Sweepstakes, the winner on this occasion being *Pandora*, whose career I shall touch later. At Rochester Show, at Syracuse, at Batavia, at Cobourg, at Sutton and at Hamilton, *Rajah* has met with other spectacular successes, thereby proving that he is no home-town performer.

Physical appearance has nothing to do with a bona-fide fencer. All that one demands from this type of tanbark artist is an ability to clear ring obstacles. Looks mean nothing. Yet *Rajah* is easy to look at. His color sets him off, jet black, with a white star in the centre of his forehead, and a splash of white on one hind pastern. He travels with an easy gait, neck slightly arched, head carried proudly and ears pricking. I think he takes as much pleasure in his ring tests as his rider. I also think that he is equipped with more brains than one finds in the average horse of his type. I say that because *Rajah* refuses to expend any super- [See also page 66]



Top, left: *Rajah*, in action, clearing the Irish bank at Rochester, New York. Top, right: *Pandora*, clearing the Irish bank to win the thousand dollar stake at Rochester Show. Bottom picture: Mr. Donald Hunter with *Rajah* and *Pandora* at Sutton Show after winning first and second places in the sweepstake jumping event—a spectacular win

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