

# Gypsy MVP at Magnolia Ranch

Bellville, Texas / Katy, Texas

By Helen Peppe

Few people begin a business simply because they see a picture of a unique and breathtaking horse on packaging at the feed store, but this is just how Gypsy MVP (Most Vanner Professional) began in 2001. Doug Kneis was innocently picking up treats for his Arabian when he saw the photo of a beautiful mystery horse. He went home and called the company who made the treat box, and, to make a short story even shorter, Doug and his wife Elaine learned how to close a deal with the Romany Gypsies: an old-fashioned handshake. Doug is now the owner of 40 Gypsy Vanners and a founding board member, as well as a lifetime member, of the Gypsy Vanner Horse Society (GVHS). He was integral in incorporating GVHS in 2002. Doug is also a lifetime member of the Gypsy Cob and Drum Horse Society as well as the Gypsy Cob Society.

The 65-acre stable in Bellville, Texas, and a 16-acre haven for horses, Magnolia Ranch in Katy, Texas, are home to some of the most beautiful examples of the Gypsy Vanner breed. With savvy agents in Belgium, France, the United Kingdom, and Ireland, Doug and Elaine have imported many exceptional Gypsy Vanners including their stallions Sir Ivanhoe, Sir Maverick, Gypsy Warlock, Dazzle Dance, Jazz, and Taufin. Mares, proven broodmares, as well as colts, fillies, and geldings, are for sale. The variety of color, the abundance of hair, the profuse feathering, and the powerful movement add up to a large presence. The Vanners range from 14 to 15 hands. There is a size for all riders. The temperament is what remains constant among all the color and size variety. Gentle, honest, and curious, Gypsy Vanners are horses that enjoy interacting with people.

Sir Ivanhoe, this month's EJ cover stallion, enjoys a paddock at

Gypsy stallion  
Sir Ivanhoe.



Photo: Jennifer Willkering/Gypsy MVP



Photo: Gerald Wheeler/Gypsy MVP

**Stallion Gypsy Warlock.**

Magnolia Ranch, a sister stable to Gypsy MVP. A black and white roan piebald at 14.2 hands, Sir Ivanhoe is, Doug says, "probably the best riding horse that we've had with the exception of Dazzle Dance. He has the best dressage gaits that we have ever seen." Ivanhoe is gentle and very willing to do whatever is asked of him, moving naturally and powerfully, a strong candidate for any riding discipline. He has the desired baroque build, abundant tail and mane, and fantastic feathering. Imported from England, Ivanhoe is Irish Cob Society (ICS) registered, a first premium at judging of ICS winning cash points. Sir Ivanhoe, Taufin, a proven homozygous stallion, and Jazz, a chocolate palomino, are available for sale, but Dazzle Dance and Gypsy Warlock are permanent residents, claims Erica Barton-Holliday, manager of Gypsy MVP.

Gypsy MVP is the vision of several Gypsy Vanner connoisseurs: Doug and Elaine Kneis, Erica, and Anne and Simon Bevan in the United Kingdom. Currently importing five to seven horses from Europe and foaling just as many babies each year, Doug created a concierge team of Gypsy horse specialists. Erica is the operations manager for Magnolia Ranch, the Vice President of Sales and Marketing for Gypsy MVP, the breeding supervisor, and

the horse trainer/handler, but she is, in all honesty, the engine of Gypsy MVP and Magnolia Ranch. No part of the program or the stables can run without her input and knowledge. "Erica runs the entire business from the minute she wakes up in the morning to the minute she goes to bed. She talks to people around the world and either helps people with the horses they bought or helps people find horses to buy," says Doug. And although it may sound like Erica could be a slave to the horses and Gypsy MVP clients, she absolutely loves her job as well as Doug and Elaine. Erica says, "We are family, a close knit family. I'm there for them, the horses, and clients 24 hours a day, seven days a week."

Gypsy MVP spends considerable time and advertising dollars each month representing the horses they have for sale. With their high traffic websites and high profile appearance in equine and luxury lifestyle magazines, the stable attracts affluent clients. There are three full-time employees whose job is to return e-mails, phone calls, and all requests for information and appointments to meet the horses.

After establishing the tools to sell their own horses, it only made sense to offer the service on a consignment basis to other Gypsy horse breeders and owners. Doug explains, "We at Gypsy MVP try hard to represent the best examples of the Gypsy Vanner breed for sale to great homes. That is our motto, and we only stand behind horses that we believe in. If you have registered Gypsy Vanner or Gypsy Cob horses that you would like help selling, MVP can help if we approve of your horse and the price you are asking."

Being truthful in horse sales is MVP's motto and selling high-end quality horses in the United States is their mission. They refuse to help anyone sell a horse that they haven't seen and worked with at their own stable. Erica interacts daily with all of the farm's horses ensuring that they are not only of the best temperament and behavior but that they are safe and healthy. Erica strongly believes in matching the right horse to the right person, and she works with



**Gypsy colt, Lughnasa.**

Photo: Gerald Wheeler/Gypsy MVP

each horse on the ground and in the saddle, getting to know the horse from the ground up. "We cannot sell an animal that we have not seen, touched, and worked with every day. This lets us get an intimate understanding of your animal to better place him or her with the right family. MVP does not like to sell your horse without it being with us and in our care."

Gypsy MVP's commitment to both the horse and the buyer is long-term. They help the buyer through all the stages of a horse purchase, from Gypsy Vanner care and grooming to barn recommendations and training advice. They also offer short-term financing and accept credit cards, ensuring the buyer's convenience during a very important purchase. But it is never about the sale price. "When you buy from us, we don't go away," says Doug. "We make a lifetime commitment to our customers, supporting them in their horse owning enterprise, with education, services, a fair deal and any other way we can." Such dedication is rare, not just in the horse world, but in most businesses. When Erica

makes the morning rounds through the pastures and barns each day, she is not thinking investments, but family.

The staff at Gypsy MVP from Erica to the full-time photographers, Jennifer Willkening and Gerard Wheeler, want only what is best for the horse. Erica and Doug know each horse's strengths and weaknesses, and they relay the bad with the good in fair measure when speaking with potential buyers. All horses are not right for all people and the concierge team recognizes that fact clearly. If a buyer isn't right for a horse, they won't sell the horse. Matching horse and owner is a process that Erica and the rest of the concierge team take seriously and responsibly. "When Romany Gypsies sell a horse, they do it on a handshake, with great trust and respect. That kind of relationship is what we at Gypsy MVP seek to maintain with our customers. We believe that by operating with honesty and integrity, our horses and our customers will thrive."

For more information on Gypsy MVP, visit their website at [www.gypsyMVP.com](http://www.gypsyMVP.com). ■