

Magical Albert: How a Premie Foal Changed One Couple's Definition of Family Forever

Renata Lumsden

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Magical Albert is a rewarding account of harness racing and a couple's special horse.

Renata Lumsden's heartwarming animal story and memoir *Magical Albert* is about her beautiful relationship with her horses, as well as the inspiring highlights, and heartbreaking challenges, of harness racing.

Home to many Standardbreds and Thoroughbreds, Hillsborough Stables in Ontario was Magical Albert's early home. Prior to his birth, his mother, Lusi, was lethargic, and her pulse shot to an alarming high. The days that followed Magical Albert's birth were unpredictable; Lumsden and her husband, Dave, wondered whether he would even survive. Their commitment to their animals was further tested by the hefty financial costs, mounting debt, loss, disappointment, fear, and inconsistency of harness racing as a sport.

Lusi, Mach Magic, Magical Albert, and other horses are lovable within the text. The traits of each are named, helping to distinguish among the animals: Mach Magic, Lusi's second filly, is a beauty with amazing talent and strength, while Lusi is positioned as a powerful, talented matriarch with a love for granola bars. Magical Albert himself—big, energetic, and adventurous—has quirky traits, including tongue-sucking and tail-chewing.

The text is arranged according to Magical Albert's birth and development. He grows up surrounded by other amazing horses and people, and interspersed with his accomplishments are the stories of the other horses. Their recounted races are exhilarating—a reward for the hard work that goes into training and preparing horses to compete. They include a suspenseful 2015 race, in the middle of Mach Magic's first year racing peak, as well as a six year Woodbine racing gap after Lusi's retirement. But the book always returns to Magical Albert, whose growth is inspiring.

The Lumsdens' personal experiences give the story depth. Their fondness and commitment to their team of horses is apparent as they recall risking their resources to develop each horse's potential. They share in the pain of their animals, choosing to do what is best for the horses, even if that means incurring more financial expenses. Albert stands out among their creatures: though he's deemed not likely to be a strong competitor because of the circumstances surrounding his birth, the Lumsdens choose to believe in him anyway. He and the other horses are shown to be a source of fulfillment and joy for the couple, becoming important members of the Lumsden family.

External sources for learning more about horses are included, along with a chart that tracks the horses' lineage. *Magical Albert* is a rewarding and informative account of harness racing and a couple's special horse.

EDITH WAIRIMU (June 18, 2020)

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