

# 1998 Fred “Freddy” Wettach, Jr.

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Fred “Freddy” Wettach Jr. was born into a family of horsemen. His father, Fred Sr., owned and operated a well-known riding academy in New York City before World War I, and Freddy was expected to follow in his father’s footsteps. Freddy started young and developed into a well-rounded horseman, showing hunters and jumpers, riding a few races and playing a bit of polo. His real passion, however, was the high jump, which in that era was the stellar attraction of any horse show.

In the 1920s Fred Sr. bought some polo prospects to finish and sell. Among them was a bald-faced Irish-bred gelding that looked more like a jumper to Freddy. He quickly found that King’s Own could jump anything and he began campaigning him as a high jumper with conspicuous success. Before long Wettach was being urged to make an attempt at Heatherbloom’s record of 8’2”, which had stood since 1902, and he found the challenge irresistible.

Wettach gathered witnesses and a photographer, eased the bar up to a height of 8’3-1/2”, and jumped it with room to spare. Technically the record was not official, not having been made in a sanctioned competition, but the same thing was true of Heatherbloom’s mark; in any case 8’3-1/2” is still generally acknowledged to be the highest anyone has ever jumped on horseback.

By 1931 Wettach had held no fewer than five different high-jump records--indoor and outdoor, tied rails and loose rails--all with horses he had trained and ridden. But high jumping was not the only thing at which Freddy excelled. As the popularity of high jumping began to wane in the 1930s, he turned more and more to hunters, including his celebrated grey mare, Plymouth Rock, who showed, as all his horses had done, under the stable name of Trillora Farm, Shrewsbury, NJ.

After World War II some of his greatest show-ring successes were recorded with horses he rode for Liz Whitney’s Llangollen Farm of Upperville, VA, among them Dase and Safety Call, winners at all the major shows including Devon (PA) and New York’s National Horse Show.

Celebrated for his immaculate turn-out, whether on horse or on foot, Freddy competed well into his fifties. After his retirement he lived in Delray Beach, FL, where he died in 1976.

