

PARALYMPIC RIDER
.. ANN-CATHRIN
LÜBBE

ANN CATHRIN, BORN 1971, COMES FROM OTTESTAD, CLOSE TO HAMAR - NORWAY. SHE MOVED TO DENMARK IN 2000 BUT HAS STILL BEEN PART OF THE NATIONAL TEAM OF NORWAY SINCE 1997 AND ON THE DRESSAGE SENIOR TEAM SINCE 2009

By Lubna Dairanieh



Ann-Cathrin Lübke & Zanko at Beijing
2008 Paralympics

ANN'S BEST RESULTS:

CDI***Drammen GP 2004: 4th in the final.
CDI***Drammen GP 2005: 2nd in the final.
CDI***Drammen GP 2006: 2nd in the final.
CDI***Drammen GP 2007: 3rd in the final.
CDI*** Artic Games 2006: 2nd in the final.
NM dressage 2003: 6th.
NM dressage 2006: 6th.
NM dressage 2007: Bronze.
NM dressage FH 2008: Gold.
Paralympics 2000: Individual Silver, Team Bronze.
Nordic 2001 FH: Individual Gold.
EC Portugal 2002 FH: Individual Bronze.
WC Belgia 2003 FH: 2 Individual Silver, Team Bronze.
Paralympics Athens 2004 FH: 2 individual gold.
EM Ungarn 2005 FH: 2 Individual Gold, Team Bronze.
Nordic 2006 FH: Individual Bronze, Team Gold.
Mannheim international event 2004-2007 8 individual victories.
Sundeved March 2007 L event: 3rd in Bundegaard Byg Cup Int 1 kür 70,2%.
WC England 2007 FH: 2 Individual Gold, Team Bronze .
Paralympics Hong Kong, 2 Individual Silver medals and Team Bronze.
Nordic Championship 2009: 2 Individual Gold.

Please tell us about your background; when did you start riding and how did your love for horses start?

I started to ride at the age of 6 just to show my sister that I can ride as well as she does! At first, I rode race horses in the forests at home. Afterwards, I found an interest in show jumping and practised that a little before I got my disability. By the age of 19, jumping became demanding and I could only practice dressage. I love to see how I can make a big animal perform and to see how far it can go to trust me.

What can you tell us about your disability?

Just one morning at the age of 11 I woke



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up feeling pain in my left leg and a swollen ankle. After undergoing several tests, I was diagnosed with Juvenile Rheumatoid Arthritis. From age 11 till 19 I was in and out from hospital undergoing several operations. In between I continued with my riding until 1999 when I got a right knee replacement. As a result I am very stiff in both legs and in my shoulders.

Can you explain to us how you are a rider for the able-bodied and disabled bodies?

Due to my disability I tend to spend much time training at the fitness centre which of course keeps my body in good shape. Thankfully being in good shape helps me to achieve the things I want, therefore I am able to ride as an able-bodied rider. I seldom look at my disability as a problem or an issue that would cause me problems. To me it is more like a huge challenge. When I succeed in competitions with able-bodied riders, I get a very different feeling; a fulfilling one.

As a disabled rider, how do you familiarise yourself with horses?

Horse have always had a big place in my heart and in my life and so I sincerely feel that I have established very good communication with them. I do not see myself as a disabled rider; when I am on my fantastic horse, I feel free! It gives me so much pleasure, maybe more than pleasure. Maybe something I cannot really put in words.

You have a very long list of achievements, what drives you to success?

It is the happiness of being around horses that drives me to want to achieve. It is never the medals which drive me; it is the days between winning those medals and practicing for success and achievements. It is the pleasure of being in the stables everyday, the pleasure of brushing my horse and the importance of keeping my horse happy. I think this could be the main reason behind my success. After competing and winning, I tend to look forward for the next competition and never look at the current results. When I am asked, "Ann, do you think you will win?" I always say answer with, "I will ride first, and then will think of results!"

You ride as an individual, and as a team member, how do you manage that?

I think it is good to be in a team. I really enjoy being part of the Dressage Senior Team and the Norwegian National Team for disabled riders. I try to be selective with the most important competitions as to not drain my horse too much. I think I am very good at planning my schedule and time; time is imperative for me! I am very punctual and I manage to do many things per day. I also train other riders and so I travel a lot between Norway and Denmark. In order to do everything I want and everything I like, I have to be very systematic.



▲ Ann-Cathrin riding Zanko

**“TAKE A
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What are your future aspirations? What do you wish to achieve after having achieved several Olympic medals?

As long as I love my sport and keep my horse happy, I will continue to ride and train until I grow very old. My biggest dream is to participate at the Olympics for able-bodied riders, but then I will need a new horse and a sponsor! (Smiling!)

Besides Ann as a rider, what can you tell us about Ann being a typical everyday person?

Well, there is not much room in my life besides riding. I am a horse employee and I am also the employer. That's my job; horses. I start early and finish late. I love training at the fitness centre, I love reading a good book, love watching a good film, love to be with my friends, and of course I spend much time with my boyfriend.

What can you tell us about your family?

I have 3 brothers and 1 sister; they all live in Norway and I try to visit them often. I also visit my mum when I can. I do not have any children, but I have 2 lovely cats!

Who has had the greatest impact on you?

That has to be Zanko my fantastic horse. He never lets me down. He is a friend and a companion for life; he is one in a million and he has given me so much.

If you have a message to give out to the world, what would that message be?

Always remember why you are riding. Never forget or discard the happiness and passion you have for the horses. Take a breath and feel it in your body; feel the pleasure your horse gives you. Moreover, most importantly “keep your horse happy”. Think about what your horse does for you.**HT**