

ROLEX EQUESTRIAN TESTIMONEES

THE FINEST HORSEWOMEN OF THEIR GENERATION



Meredith Michaels-Beerbaum



Zara Phillips



Isabell Werth

ROLEX HAS A LONG ASSOCIATION WITH GREAT WOMEN COMPETITORS BUT THE LUXURY WATCHMAKER'S ORIGINAL GRAND DAME OF EQUESTRIANISM WAS A BRITISH SHOW JUMPER CALLED PAT SMYTHE. SMYTHE WAS ROLEX'S FIRST EQUESTRIAN TESTIMONEE, SIGNING A GROUND-BREAKING ALLIANCE WITH THE COMPANY IN 1957. SINCE THAT DAY, ROLEX'S INVOLVEMENT IN EQUESTRIANISM HAS GONE FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH.

Smythe travelled the world for 16 years between 1947 and 1963, her elegant riding style led her to huge success that made her the sport's first international superstar. Had she been alive today, there's no doubt she too would have been competing in the sport's ultimate challenge, the Rolex Grand Slam of Show Jumping.

She was the greatest female show jumper of her era and her achievements in a once male-dominated sport helped pave the way for the current generation of female champions – among whom are current Rolex Testimonees: Zara Phillips, who competes in eventing; Isabell Werth, in dressage; and Meredith Michaels-Beerbaum, in show jumping.

Meredith Michaels-Beerbaum was the first woman to be ranked World No. 1 in show jumping and is a three-time winner of the Rolex World Cup Final. She said: *"Women riders from that era paved the way for competitors like me. They often had to concentrate solely on riding then and didn't even get an opportunity to go to a university – something I feel was very important to me in my own life. I was able to expand my horizons by studying, even though it was challenging to juggle lessons with school and riding."*

Women may not be as physically strong as men but I feel they have a social relationship with their horses, perhaps a greater empathy for the animal. Although there are greater demands on competitors today, it is also easier to travel now and the world is a smaller place. It is remarkable how Pat achieved so much without the Internet and technology that we take simply take for granted.

Isabell Werth is a world record holder for the most titles won in her discipline – dressage. She has

represented Germany four times at the Olympics, and collected individual and team gold at the 2014 World Equestrian Games.

Equestrianism is one of the few sports where men and women compete on an equal level – a fact Werth says does not impact her competitive ethic. *"It is a sport which depends on accuracy and precision, and where the relationship between a rider and the horse is more important than pure strength. Women are also possibly more open to emotions and find it easier to bond with a horse – which is especially important in dressage."*

Like thousands of youngsters, Werth started riding when she was young but made quick progress, even before she went to university and qualified as a lawyer. *"Becoming a lawyer meant I didn't have to depend entirely on riding, plus it has extended my professional skills!"*

Werth says her first great achievement was on her horse Gigolo, winning individual and team gold at the 1991 European Championships. *"You don't forget those moments, even after all these years. There were sad times too. Like the death of my horse Nobilis Amaretto in 1999, two years after I won my first Rolex watch with him at the World Cup in Geneva."*

British eventer and Rolex Testimonee Zara Phillips was a team silver medal winner at the London 2012 Olympic Games and the individual champion at the World Equestrian Games in 2006. She also helped Great Britain secure a silver medal at the World Equestrian Games last year.

"I can remember reading about Pat Smythe when I was a child." She was highly regarded in Britain and the inspiration for a lot of girls who went on to become

top riders. It's incredible to think that she was the first Rolex Testimonee all those years ago.

"I keep eight eventing horses at my stables in England, and riders need great sponsors and support to follow their career in equestrian sport. Pat Smythe really did prove that equestrian sport had the global popularity to be massively successful, and was the starting point for Rolex's long-term relationship with the sport."

Renowned show jumping analyst Stephen Hadley knew Smythe and remembers her extraordinary talent. *"Pat did a lot for show jumping in an era when the sport was very different to today. Her personality shone through and because of that she was invited to events all over the world."*

"Even compared to modern riders, Pat was a talented lady. I watched her compete many times in the arena. Her style was very efficient and suited the horses she rode. There's no doubt she helped take show jumping forward for a new generation of rider."

Smythe, who was also a jury member for the Rolex Awards for Enterprise back in 1984, marked the beginning of Rolex's long association with equestrian sport that continues to this day. The current Rolex female equestrian Testimonees have all enjoyed success at the highest levels of the sport, and they each continue the legacy forged by Smythe in equestrianism across the globe.

Rolex is proud to support its women Testimonees, who have all reached the very pinnacle of equestrian sport. Michaels-Beerbaum, Werth and Phillips successfully balance their outstanding riding careers with education, motherhood and other aspects of their lives and are worthy ambassadors of the brand. 🐾