



*Hanne, Jannicke & Jenny*

## WORLD OF SHOW JUMPING

# THE WOMEN BEHIND IT

By **Nada H. Abdelmoniem**

IN 2009, THREE WOMEN STARTED A SMALL BLOG TO COLLECT THEIR NEWS AND MATERIAL ON SHOW JUMPING. THREE YEARS LATER AND THE BLOG EVOLVED INTO THE WEBSITE 'WORLD OF SHOW JUMPING' WHICH IS PROBABLY THE LEADING AND MOST RELIED ON WEBSITE FOR SHOW JUMPING NEWS IN THE WORLD. WHO ARE THOSE WOMEN, HOW DID THE IDEA OF A SHOW JUMPING SOURCE OF NEWS COME ABOUT, AND HOW DO THEY FEEL ABOUT SUCH AN ACHIEVEMENT IN SUCH A SHORT SPAN OF TIME? HERE IS AN **HT** INTERVIEW WITH JENNY ABRAHAMASSON, HANNE CHRISTESEN AND JANNICKE NAUSTDAL – THE WOMEN JOURNALISTS BEHIND 'WORLD OF SHOW JUMPING' (WOSJ).



## WHO ARE THEY?

### JENNY ABRAHAMSSON:

Swedish, based in Lastrup, Germany and in Karlskrona, Sweden, 38 years old. Works as an equestrian journalist and photographer and has done so for several years. Background as a groom and rider in stables in Germany, Great Britain and Sweden. Speaks Swedish, German and English. Still rides.

### HANNE CHRISTENSEN:

Norwegian, lives in Oslo, Norway. 31 years old, attended Law School at the University of Oslo and has

worked as a lawyer for several years. Speaks Norwegian and English. Was an active show jumper for a few years while growing up. Still rides but only as a hobby.

### JANNICKE NAUSTDAL:

Norwegian, lives in Askim, Norway. 34 years old, attended Law School at the University of Oslo, has worked as a lawyer for several years. Speaks Norwegian and English. Was an active show jumper and currently rides her five-year-old home bred.

### When did you start WOSJ and how did the idea come about?

That's a long story. The three of us met by coincidence during the European finals at Windsor in 2009. Jenny was working there as a journalist and photographer while Hanne and I were watching the event as spectators. Our meeting in Windsor was not only the start of our friendship, but also the start of WoSJ. It started up as a small blog in the autumn of 2010 while building up the website, and more as a place to collect our material than anything else. The first event which was covered was the World Equestrian Games in Kentucky, and then we went on from there.

The three of us shared a passion for the sport, and what we all agreed on was that there really lacked a website dedicated to the international show jumping scene – or at least none that we know of. To find information and follow the sport we had to go into all kinds of different websites in German, Dutch, French – and in the end we thought, 'Why don't we create the website we want?' We were quite sure that if we were missing such a website, others were for sure as well. So one evening in August Jenny and I sat down on my sofa and made a draft of what we wanted it to look like and what we wanted it to contain. We bought the domain – and that's how it started. So the initial intention was to create something we were missing; we almost made WoSJ for ourselves, so to speak.

### Is this your full-time job?

Jenny works full-time as an equestrian journalist and photographer, but not full-time with WoSJ – although she gradually is able to do little else as new assignments and jobs show up all the time. It is not yet full-time for Hanne and me, but that might look different as of 2014. The website has grown a lot the past year, and so have our assignments for others – so it looks like we will make the big step and do this more or less full-time from next year.

### Are you all very passionate about show jumping or this site is simply a "job" that became successful?

We feel pretty safe in saying that we all really love this sport. That was why we made the website in the first place, and it's what keeps us going – nothing else. It's an amazing sport, with some truly fantastic athletes – both on four and two legs. It's also very interesting to be involved in the sport at the moment as it evolves and develops a lot – for the short time that we have been involved the sport has already changed a lot and it will be interesting to see where it is heading in the future. To be able to maybe contribute in bringing the sport a little closer to those interested also feels great.

### Which other sports do you enjoy?

We enjoy a little dressage and eventing every now and again, especially Jenny who also works with those disciplines.

### You are three women managing the website; how do you divide the work?

Jenny is the one out of the three that does most of the shows, but we all try to go at least once a month.

Jenny also usually takes all the photos, it's only if we are without her – and that rarely happens – that Hanne steps in and does that job. At shows where we are all three, Hanne or I usually write the reports together. I usually take care of writing the WoSJ Exclusives, at least



*Hanne & Rolf-Goran Bengtsson*

for the time being. Then there is a lot of administration at the moment with Hanne taking care of that. Apart from all these details, it depends on what our days and weeks look like; we kind of just do things as they come along – we're quite easy going and if Jenny is busy I try to step in and vice-versa. It really just flows as long as we communicate well together.

**Do you attend all show jumping events you write about? If yes, how do you divide the work as there are shows every weekend?**

No, we don't – that would be impossible with all the events going on at the moment. There are so many shows now that to be everywhere is not doable. Some reports are press releases, some – such as our 'Sunday's Grand Prix Winners' – are written together on the basis of results only. And sometimes – for example, with all the Nations Cups – we are lucky to have LIVE stream and create our coverage from that.

**When you started WOSJ, did you know that it would bring such a huge audience from around the world?**

We had no clue! Maybe we dreamed it would – but I don't think we ever saw any of this coming. It's been a fantastic journey, to build something up from scratch and see it become

what it has become. To follow our statistics and see it increasing and growing – and to see all the different parts of the world that our readers come from. It puts a smile on our faces! We must say it's still a huge compliment every time anyone says they visit our website – it still feels a little unreal. But we still have some serious work to do – we are not where we want to be yet!

**Some commented that you are only focused on bringing show jumping news from Europe and not from the rest of the world where the sport is developing in many countries; any particular reason?**

That's not completely right; we have lots of North American show jumping news on our website as well as European – but when it comes to news from, for example, the Middle East or Asia we can for sure become a lot better. But that also has to do with our own capacity; we are three people running everything with this website and sometimes we rely on contributions from others to be able to cover show jumping in the parts of the world that we are not able to go ourselves. And such contributions are always welcome – and whenever we receive any we usually publish it! So, that's an invitation to those who would like us to cover more!

**Does WOSJ have any sponsors?**

We don't have any sponsors or investors backing us; no – the website is run purely on the income we get through our own company, mainly from the advertisers or other assignments that bring in cash. And we've put quite some money into it ourselves as well. That being said, we have some supporters that have backed us along the way – and that believed in WoSJ from the beginning. They have been very important to us.

**What is your three-year plan for WOSJ?**

We kind of reached the goals of our three year plan after the first year. Once the snow ball started rolling, everything went so fast – maybe too fast. We have not really had time to think, we have just gone along with it. So we have had to set some new goals for ourselves, and now it's all about structuring, rethinking and planning our work for 2014 so we develop the website and also our company further. We all believe that 2014 will be a very exciting year for us!

**What kind of challenges do you face as female photographers and writers in a male-dominated industry?**

We can't really say there have been any huge challenges in that regard. When it comes to our male colleagues they have been nothing but nice and we have had help from quite a few – such as Ken Braddick who has been amazingly kind to us. Having been riders ourselves, we were already used to the male-domination of the sport and it's nothing we really ever thought that much about. If any challenges it must be that some – whatever gender – might have underestimated us. Not only because we are three women, but also because we have a lot of fun together and like to have a laugh. But being underestimated is really more of an advantage than challenge when you think about it.

**If each of you could pick just one show jumping rider past or**

**present, which one do you admire most and why?**

**JENNY:** There are so many that I admire – if I have to mention some it would be John and Michael Whitaker, Rolf-Göran Bengtsson, Marcus Ehning, Gerco Schröder and when I was a child Hugo Simon was my big idol.

**HANNE:** A rider I truly admire is Marco Kutscher. I love his riding which is very elegant without being boring and his jump-offs are always incredible. It never looks fast, but it always is. He is also a very nice person and everybody likes him.

**JANNICKE:** It's almost impossible to pick one as there are – and have been – so many good riders out there. When I was little my bedroom was covered in posters of John and Michael Whittaker, so I have to mention them. But if I have to pick one, it'd be Katharina Offel. I think she is an amazing rider with an incredible feel for what she does; I believe she is a rider that gets the most and the best out of the horses she rides. She really understands and loves her horses, and makes them trust her and what she does. I admire that.

**Tell us about one amusing experience you women went through while working and one which you would rather put behind you?**

We could go on and on with the amusing part, but not all of those stories are suitable to publish! We have had so much fun travelling around – creating amazing memories, and meeting some incredible people. But one funny story was maybe when Rolf was signing his new autograph cards after he won the European Championships in Madrid. The picture on the card was of him and Ninja over a fence, and in the background you could see two people – all arms and legs watching. Zooming in Rolf suddenly sees that these two people are actually Hanne and Jannicke going completely crazy while watching! We laughed so much at this photo and how we ended up on these autograph cards! After that



*Nelson Pessoa talking to Jannicke*

we have been put in 'The Rolf's biggest fans' category.

The most horrible thing that has happened during our time with WoSJ was probably when Hickstead passed away. We were not in Verona, but in Munich – luckily, as we are glad we did not have to witness it. It was awful enough finding out and hearing about his passing. Hickstead was a living legend, a king – and it really should not have ended the way it did.

**Which show jumping event that you attended and covered is close to your heart and which one would you like to attend and cover?**

**JENNY:** The European Championships in Madrid were really special, but then I always like to go to the Gothenburg Horse Show - I have been there since I was a small girl and the spectators there are just amazing.

**HANNE:** For me it's also the European Championships in Madrid. Not only did one of our favourites take home the gold, but it was that kind of show where everything turns out in the best possible way. We had great guest-bloggers and expert comments, and we made some funny and inspiring

interviews. It is always positive with a warm climate as well. One of the shows that we have not yet attended, that I have on my to-do list is Spruce Meadows. I imagine that being something different from what we are used to in Europe.

**JANNICKE:** Aachen is always special; it's just a unique event in every way. The atmosphere there is incredible; even though it's so big there it still feels really intimate. I love being there, I love following the sport there and I love working there. That being said, the European Championships in Madrid in 2011 are closest to my heart – just because Rolf won. I will never ever forget that! Like Hanne, I would also love to go to Spruce Meadows.

**Any final comments?**

If we could just maybe add that we feel really lucky to be able to do what we do with WoSJ, and that we are really grateful to all those who have supported us along the way – from riders and grooms, to readers, to advertisers and to colleagues who have helped us out. If we also could mention that it's been an amazing experience to meet so many of this sport's exceptional people – riders, grooms, owners, show organisers – who all share a passion for the sport. 🐾