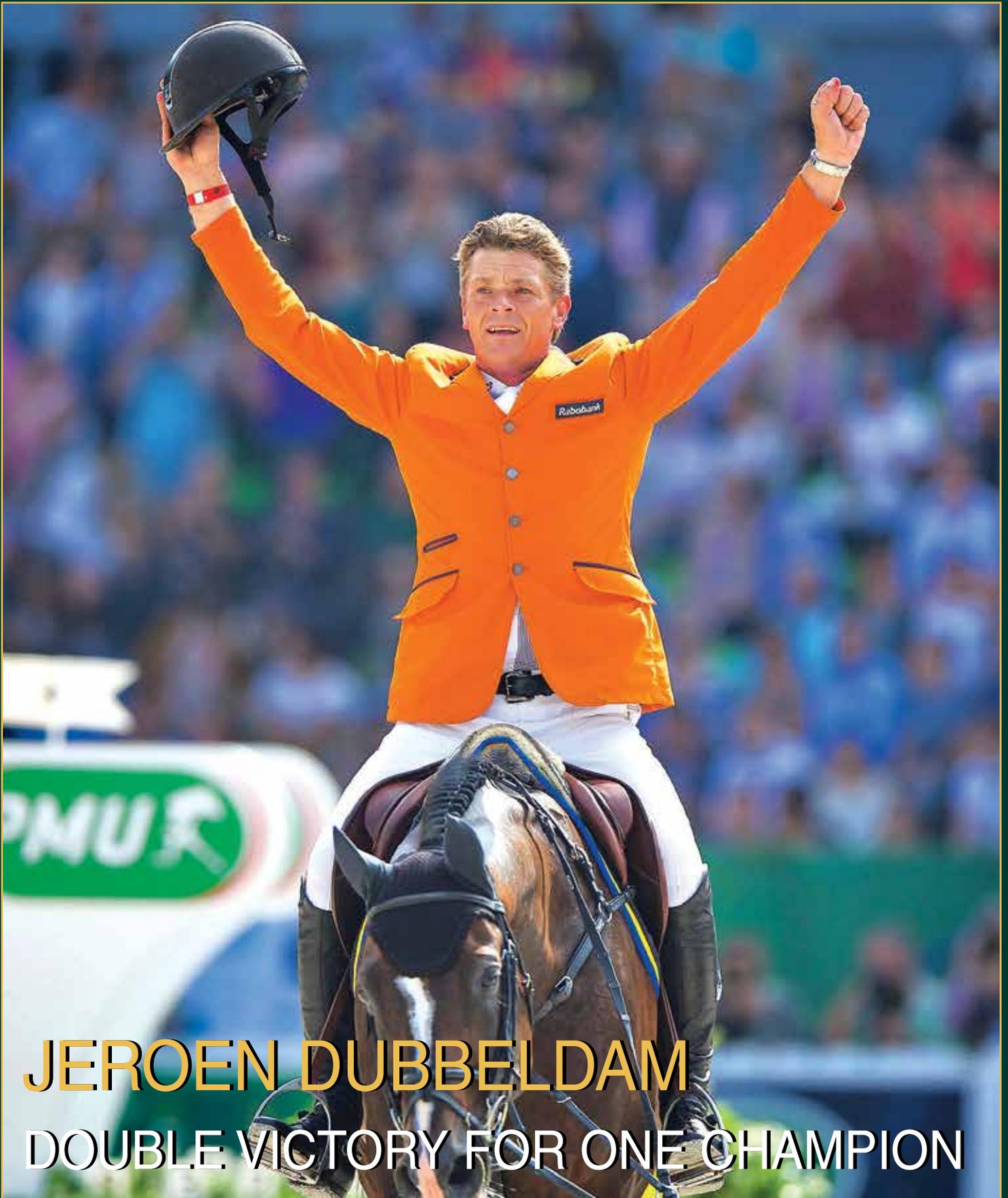




THE LEADING EQUESTRIAN MAGAZINE IN THE MIDDLE EAST



JEROEN DUBBELDAM

DOUBLE VICTORY FOR ONE CHAMPION

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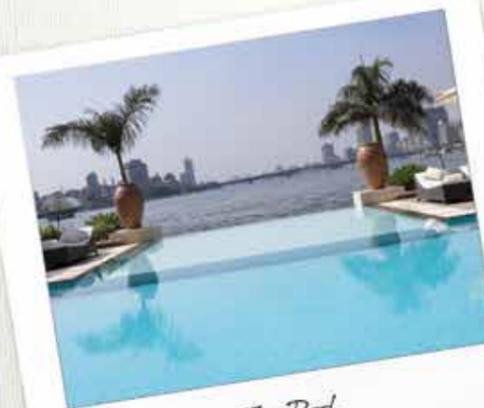
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Dear Readers,

Following on the success of our Normandy World Equestrian Games photo book published this spring, we are pleased to present the Summer Issue of Horse Times, full of news, views, insights and interviews continuing our quest to inform, interest, entertain, and connect with our HT followers and the equestrian world at large.

This issue highlights the European Championship in Aachen where Jeroen Dubbeldam, featured on our cover, took us all the way proving his extraordinary riding ability and mental strength.

We interviewed Dubbeldam to get a glimpse of how he feels about his winnings and his career.

In an HT Exclusive the legendary,

VIEW POINT FROM THE CHAIRMAN

George Morris, briefs HT about the analytical structure of showjumping and his colossal contribution to horse sport. Moving on to Leopoldo Palacios and his passion, expertise, and achievements in course designing that put his name on the wall of fame. Followed by the top 30 riders of the world with the Global Champions Tour - London where Rolf-Goran Bengtsson came closer to the unmatched talent of Scot Brash.

On to Sameh El Dahan winning the amazing Dublin puissance proving that talent, hard work, and heart pay all the way. In this issue we also celebrate three top equestriennes Meredith Michaels-Berbaum, Zara Phillips, and Isabell Werth out of the saddle, but still in the stable, dressed to impress as icons in the equestrian world. Another lady, Ilka Gansera-Leveque, a vet, jockey, and race horse trainer and yard owner follows her dreams and proves that no horse is a lost cause. Cara Grimshaw, an equestrian photographer who turned her love and passion for horses into a thriving career. Next we find man and horse performing together in another type of riding ring,

Alexis Gruss and his circus horses.

Time for polo! Within the heart of England, at world-famous Cowdray Park where the Jaeger-LeCoultre Polo Gold Cup final took place: the venue, impressions, horses, riders and attendees all come alive. And finally, meet some of Egypt's own polo players playing in international tournaments abroad.

Heartiest congratulations to the Egyptian Showjumping team: Sameh el Dahan, Mohamed Talaat, Karim El Zoghby and Abdel Said. And congratulations for the Furusiyya Nations Cup™ just concluded in Spain. This team worked together and achieved fifth place proving that they are just as competitive and capable as all the big names in the sport – we are proud of you!

Read on and enjoy.

Sincerely,

Khaled Assem

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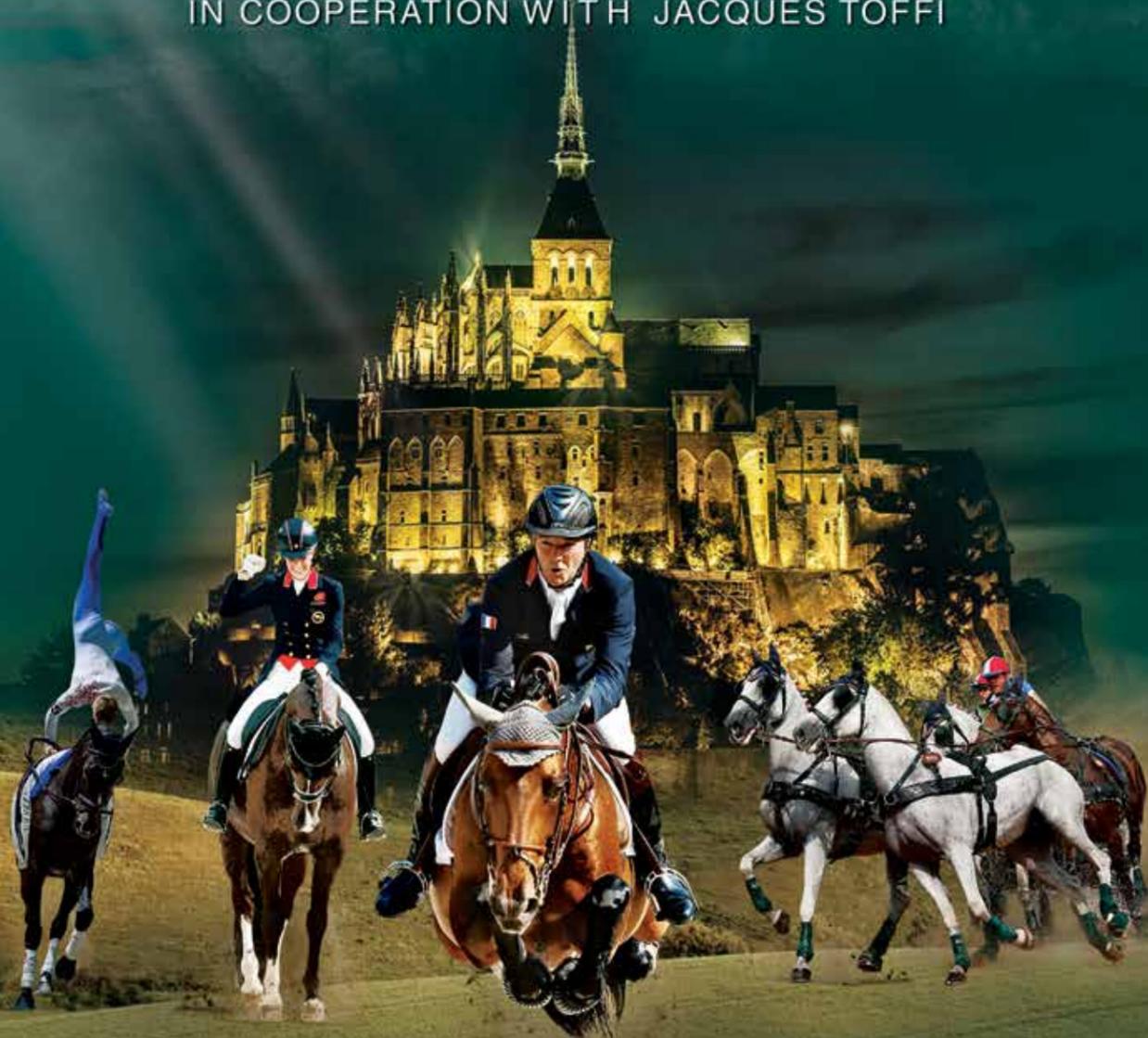
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HORSE TIMES

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IN COOPERATION WITH JACQUES TOFFI



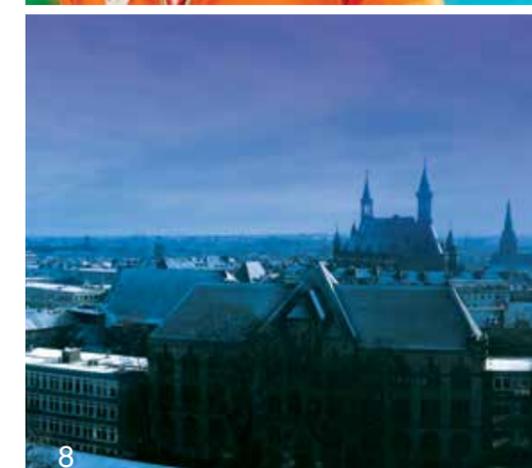
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JEROEN DUBBELDAM DOUBLE VICTORY FOR ONE CHAMPION

By Engy Adham



LAUGHTER AND CHEERS ECHOED IN THE SKY OF AACHEN THE MOMENT JEROEN DUBBELDAM CLEARED THE FENCES WINNING THE EUROPEAN INDIVIDUAL AND TEAM GOLD AT THE FEI EUROPEAN JUMPING CHAMPIONSHIPS 2015.

"I simply cannot believe it – after winning double gold at the World Championships last year and now double European Championships gold. It is too good to be true. I am simply overjoyed," said Dubbeldam. *"If you come here to Aachen, one of the most difficult places you can have for a championship, but also one of the nicest, then you know it is going to be a tough battle,"* he added.

Since 1994, Dubbeldam has taken the lead in building up a significant record of achievements starting with winning a European Individual Gold and a Team Bronze. The year 2000 marks his international breakthrough winning the Olympic Gold medal with De Sjiem in Sydney, Australia.

Last year, Dubbeldam won the individual and team gold medal at the World Championships.

The individual European title has not been won by the Netherlands since John Heins won it in 1977 in Vienna. Not only has Dubbeldam achieved regional victories, but also he won the individual gold medal for the World Equestrian Games 2014 in Normandy. Moreover, no athlete worldwide has ever achieved two titles: regional and international,

at the same time in 24 years.

"It is daunting walking into such an impressive arena! In the morning, when you go in to have a look with it empty, the whole place is empty and you can really see it for what it is. Every time you hear of a championship you know they are going to be big and every time you hear of Aachen, you know it is going to be big, so when you put the both of them together you have really got a big course and a big challenge," Dubbeldam added.

"The FEI Awards are incredibly important to equestrian sport, and there is a category dedicated to every member of our community that makes this sport a reality," Dubbeldam said. *"We are all dependent on each other to get to the next level in equestrian sport - it is truly a team effort,"* he continued.

Course designer Frederic Cottier also complimented Dubbeldam for the skill he showed in the FEI European Jumping Championships. *"I wanted this championship to be different from the last two at Aachen and Kentucky where it came down to a jump-off,"* he said. *"I wanted the competition to be more complex. I did not want a jump-off and I succeeded in that. The fact that all four horses jumped so well and that even the oldest one, who is 15, was still in great shape today is proof of the success of the courses during the week. And special congratulations to Jeroen, who was under such pressure today, he really is a tremendous champion!"*

The FEI European Championships left the riders and the crowd in suspense 'till the last gasp of the competition. *"Yes, I must say the pressure was pretty high! My own horse put me under this pressure because he jumped a clear round*

with Patrice, but I must say in that round, with my horse in it, I was really happy he did a clear round, because this horse brought me so much this week and he really deserved to finish this tournament with a clear round. I am very happy that his last round in this stadium was clear, I am very proud of him," Dubbeldam said.

Although a cheering crowd could encourage the rider to do a better jump, the horse might require a different atmosphere to perform at its best. *"I had to ask the crowd to be a bit quiet, but this is nothing I like to do because I love this. But sometimes we have this problem so we try to find a balance between enthusiasm and horsemanship, but I think in the end everything went well,"* Dubbeldam adds.

Dubbeldam grew up with a rooted passion to this sport coming from a horse-loving family. Today, Dubbeldam lives in Weerselo with his wife Monique and his two sons Rick and Chris and his daughter Nina. His wife and family have always been a great support. His love for this sport is crowned by sharing a business with his wife; together, they run their stable that is named after Dubbeldam's legendary gray gelding: The Sjiem. He dedicates the stables to the training and education of young horses. Among all the horses Dubbeldam has ridden, his favourite horses are De Sjiem, Simon, Nassau and Up and Down.

'Be a horseman' - a philosophy that travels with Dubbeldam from the first fence until the podium; from the training rings to the most prestigious championships. Despite the significant achievements Dubbeldam has accomplished, he still dreams of winning team gold medal at the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro. 

Jeroen Dubbeldam at the WEG2014

THE EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIPS

AACHEN 2015

By Aya Amr

AACHEN, GERMANY:

AACHEN IS FAMOUS FOR ITS RICH HISTORY AND ITS CULTURAL, ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE. THE CITY HAS A FLAIR AND ATMOSPHERE OF ITS OWN; THE ATTRACTIVE LAYOUT OF THE OLD CITY CENTRE, THE IMPORTANT HISTORIC MONUMENTS, THE WELLS AND BATHS OVER THE HOTTEST NATURAL SPRINGS IN EUROPE, THE BUSTLING ACTIVITY IN THE STREETS AND SQUARES, THE CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND QUALITY AND THE MANY RECREATIONAL AND LEISURE ACTIVITIES MAKE AACHEN AN EXCITING AND PLEASING WHOLE.





France's Kevin Staut



Spain's Sergio Alvarez Moya



Britain's Charlotte Dujardin and Valegro



Germany's Kristina Böring-Sprehe and Desperados FRH



France's Simon Delestre



Team Netherlands, Jur Vrieling, Gecco Schroder, Maikel Van der Vleuten, Jeroen Dubbeldam, Rob Ehrens.



Team Holland, Diebrik Van Silfhout, Patrick Van der Meer, Edward Gal, Hans Peter Minderhoud, Wim Ernes, chef d'equipe

Besides the presentation of the International Charlemagne Prize, the major annual events include the CHIO World Equestrian Festival. The CHIO in Bad Aachen is the annual meeting of world-class competitors in equestrian sports and each year the ultimate event. It is well-known for perfect organisation and tradition.

This event was first held in 1924 and since then they have been refining the mixture between the ultimate performance of horse and rider, and equestrian noblesse. There, sportsmanship is just as much a priority as the sophisticated presentation of a world-class festival of equestrian sport and this year's FEI European Championships was no exception.

SHOW JUMPING:

It was a breath-taking experience from start to finish; the course designer Frank Rothenberger presented an immense course that produced remarkable jumping and the best of great sport.

The leading world champions from The

Netherlands clinched team jumping gold. And it was the host nation who slotted into silver medal spot ahead of the surprising Swiss who moved up four places to take the bronze.

The black wavy planks at fence four was one of the bogeys of the track, and the massive triple combination that followed was also hugely influential, with the opening triple bar enticing horses down to a tall vertical and often leaving them very deep at the final oxer. The difficult four or five-stride distance between the big 1.80m-wide oxer at fence eight and the following planks claimed a large number of victims.

Dutch Chef d'Equipe, Rob Ehrens, was asked if he has a magic formula for success. "There is no magic formula, in our small country we just work really well together and it only takes half a minute to call riders and get them in position for championships. It's a great honour for me to work with four of those amazing riders, with their amazing horses. I'm a happy coach!" he said.

Dutch dominance in jumping continued at a persistent

pace when the leading world champion, Jeroen Dubbeldam, rode the brilliant SFN Zenith to victory in the individual final. Silver went to Belgium's Gregory Wathélet with Conrad de Hus while France's Simon Delestre and Ryan des Hayettes claimed the bronze in a two-round competition that kept spectators on the edges of their seats.

"You can only dream that it comes true, when you come here to Aachen, one of the most difficult places for a championship and one of the nicest, you know it's going to be a top battle. Everything has to be good, you have to be fit, your horse has to be fit, and then you can focus on the course. I had the luck on my side, and today it is a dream come true," said Dubbeldam.

DRESSAGE:

Team:

For the third time, the Netherlands claimed Dressage team gold and left Great Britain in silver and Germany in bronze. It was an intense competition, with the

result decided by a terrific performance from Edward Gal and Glock's Undercover NOP. However Great Britain's Charlotte Dujardin and Valegro produced the biggest score of the day, posting 83.229 to finish more than half a percentage point ahead of the Dutchman.

Dutch Chef d'Equipe Wim Ernes said that he expected his side to take team bronze at these championships, so when asked about what he thought of that after their win, he replied *"That was a few weeks ago, since then we just practiced and got better, and so today we won!"*

Grand Prix Special:

Great Britain's Charlotte Dujardin and her superstar gelding Valegro, clinched Grand Prix Special gold. There was plenty for the host nation to celebrate too when Kristina Bröring-Sprehe recovered from a much less impressive test in the team competition and claimed silver with Desperados FRH. The Netherlands' Hans Peter Minderhoud and Glock's Johnson TN took bronze.

FreeStyle:

It was double-gold for Charlotte Dujardin and Valegro when they added the Freestyle title to their Grand Prix Special win. But this medal was particularly hard-won, with Germany's Kristina Bröring-Sprehe only 0.25 percent off Dujardin's winning score when taking silver with Desperados FRH, and Spain's Beatriz Ferrer-Salat produced another sensation when claiming the bronze with Delgado.

Talking afterwards, the record-breaking rider said, "It was only the ones (one-tempi changes) that let the performance down. I think he's got a thing with them now, he's done it all week. Yesterday in the last one he made a mistake, outside he's been really good with them. It's only one movement at the end of the day and it has cost me, but I was really happy with the rest of it."

VAULTING:

The atmosphere in Aachen's Deutsche Bank Arena was at an all-time high, with Vaulting fans getting together on Facebook prior to the event to coordinate their colours. Spectators in the north stand wore black, while those in the east wore red and in the west stand they wore yellow to represent the host nation flag.

Pas De Deux:

The leading world and defending European champions Austria's Jasmin Lindner and Lukas Wacha were always favourites to take the title. Once again they combined power, balance and seamless transitions throughout their two-minute programme.

Lindner and Wacha completed on a final score of 8.853 for gold while Pia Engelberty and Torben Jacobs (GER) rounded their score up to 8.725 for silver and Evelyn Freund and Stefanie Millinger (AUT) took the bronze with 8.557.

Squad:

It was even more tense in the squad competition, with nerves and pressure affecting some of the strongest sides, while others really rose to the challenge.

The leading world champions from Germany, Team RSV Neuss-Grimlinghausen, ran into trouble with two dismount falls and another in a triple movement. However, such was the complexity of their programme, that high horse scores and artistic marks earned 8.863 and brought their final score line to 8.597. Switzerland's Team Lütisburg final overall score of 8.104 left them over 4.5 points behind the German champions, but only 0.42 ahead of the bronze medalists from France.

Male Individual:

There was real electricity in the air as Jannis Drewell and his grey horse, Diabolus, began the final test of the competition. In his costume, representing a monk in orange robes and with his musical score from Kung Fu Panda, he showed extraordinary suspension and amazing speed, even managing to include some kick-boxing as he racked up big scores.

Combined with his results from the Compulsory and Technical tests along with his first Freestyle, he was left with the winning total of 8.369, ahead of Thomas Brusewitz with 8.343 and

Viktor Brusewitz, whose score wound up 8.157.

German coach Ulla Ramge, when asked about having three German vaulters on the podium: "I hoped for it! It was always possible because these guys showed that they could win. They all competed in four rounds of competition here and they needed to keep their concentration over the four rounds, but they produced the right performances at the right time so it happened!"

Female Final:

Switzerland's Simone Jäiser held on to the lead she established in the technical test to scoop gold at the Vaulting female final. The 28-year-old showed great body control and strength in the Final freestyle, and couldn't be overtaken despite a brilliant performance from Germany's Corinna Knauf who had to settle for silver, while Austria's Lisa Wild took the bronze.

REINING:

Italy claimed Reining team gold ahead of Germany in silver and The Netherlands in bronze.

In a field of 40 competitors, and with 8 horse-rider combinations to go, the podium was determined by the performance of Italy's Giovanni Masi De Vargas aboard the 7-year-old Quarter Horse mare by Smart Spook and out of Sailors Dance, the young Italian rider posted a 221.5. Equalling the top score of the day was Germany's Grisha Ludwig and Shine My Gun thrilled the crowd and

they secured Germany's European team silver.

"I am simply thrilled," said Italian team coach, Filippo Masi De Vargas. "This squad is made up of young riders, the future of our discipline, and they were just great, very professional and full of enthusiasm."

Giovanni Masi de Vargas did it again in the individual competition and took gold, while the Germans took silver and bronze medals with Grisha Ludwig and his teammate Elias Ernst.

"Earning two gold medals here is unbelievable and so emotional, I cannot thank my team enough, our coach and the president of the Italian Equestrian Sports Federation (FISE), Cav. Vittorio Orlandi, for being here to cheer for us," said Masi de Vargas.

DRIVING:

Michael Brauchle (GER) is the new individual European Driving Champion after putting everything on the line in the final phase of the European Championships to win the marathon and overtake IJsbrand Chardon (NED) in the individual standings. The bronze individual medal went to Koos de Ronde (NED).

"I was able to use my best wheeler horse again, which I had to miss in the previous two competitions," Brauchle said. "I started very fast and the horses got better and better after each obstacle. I drove at full risk, and I was at my best performance!"

The team standings mirrored the 2013 results. The Dutch successfully defended their team title, while the German hosts fought hard and took home the silver medal again, while the Hungarians slotted into third for the bronze.

Source of information: FEI





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ON THE POLO FIELDS OF COWDRAY

JAEGER-LECOULTRE GOLD CUP FOR THE BRITISH OPEN CHAMPIONSHIP 2015

By Bridget McArdle McKinney

© Rob McKinney



“AS THEY PASSED THROUGH EASEBOURNE THEY SAW COWDRAY – THE BEAUTIFUL PALACE AHEAD, GLINTING GOLDEN IN THE SUNLIGHT, ITS MYRIAD WINDOWS TWINKLING LIKE DIAMONDS, AND THEY HEARD GAY MUSIC WAFTING FROM THE MEADOW BY THE ROTHER, COLOURED PAVILIONS, SWARMING WITH GAILY DRESSED FOLK IN CRIMSON, GREEN AND CROCUS YELLOW.”

While our approach to the Cowdray estate in the heart of England's South Downs to attend the Jaeger-LeCoultre Gold Cup Final was not quite as that described above in Anya Seton's best-selling historical romance *Green Darkness*, still while on the grounds – and in fact, in anticipation of arrival – we could not help but feel the weight and authority of this ancient and venerable venue, heralded in British history and romanticized in fiction with its many layers of events, romance, dramas, tragedy, and passion of historic proportions. That 'beautiful palace' is now an imposing ruin, but, yes, there were 'coloured pavilions, swarming with gaily dressed folk in crimson, green and crocus yellow' among other colours ready to enjoy a day of outstanding polo at the Gold Cup Final.

The Beauty of Cowdray Park

Here to report on this year's Gold Cup Final we were fascinated to see the extent and reach of the Cowdray aura throughout the area from its diverse ancient properties (identified by yellow-painted window frames), its farm products, and its unique and ubiquitous demi-gryphon crest, as well as the Cowdray Park Polo Club members' obvious pride in hosting this event.

Cowdray Ruins, the 'beautiful palace', first built as a fortified manor on the River Rother in the late 13th century and later in the 16th century re-built by Sir David Owen, Henry VII's uncle, as a palace in the Tudor style, is today a magnificent restored ruin. Its past is replete with mysteries, historic intrigues and battles, nefarious employees (including one Guy Fawkes) and even a curse!

Now owned by the 4th Viscount Cowdray, this beautiful 16,500 acre estate is the site of Cowdray Park Polo Club, which has been called the "Home of British Polo" having hosted polo matches on the grounds for over 100 years and is now the venue for some of England's most prestigious polo events, including the Gold Cup.

Jaeger-LeCoultre Gold Cup Action

Debrett's describes the Gold Cup Final as "one of the most glamorous and chic country events in the sporting calendar, with world class players in action, celebrities in abundance and a stunning location." This match ranks with the Argentine Open and U.S. Open at the very top of the World Polo Tour ranking, as a Grand Slam event. Banner sponsors Jaeger-LeCoultre, the luxury watch brand, came on board last fall to support this event, enriching an on-going relationship it has had with Cowdray as its Official Timekeeper.

The Gold Cup Final caps the run for the British Open Polo Championship, the premier English 22-goal handicap tournament. This event attracts all of the top high-goal polo players from around the world competing for the Cup through 40+ qualifying and final rounds.

As the pack of 14 teams played through grueling qualifier rounds distilling their reduced number into the quarter finals, one picture was becoming increasingly clear – Dubai cannot be beat, you might as well hang up your mallets and go home, with one esteemed polo expert stating playfully to *The Telegraph* that at this rate, "we might as well give them the Gold Cup already." They were amazing, having landed 46 goals in their first three matches. With a powerful and strategic team including Josh Cork, Martin Valent, Diego Cavanagh and polo's World No. 1 Adolfo Cambiasso, returning to defend its 2014 Gold Cup with a near decade of dominance in international high-goal polo, who could doubt that?

But they were not invincible as Zacara (Juan Martin Nero, Lyndon Lea, Rodrigo Andrade and Jack Hyde) halted Dubai's near-unstoppable momentum hard in its tracks to the shock of many, including - no doubt - the team itself and its patron Rashid Albwardy. The defeat must have been devastating. But it



opened the door for convincing semi-final wins for UAE Polo Team (Jose Araya, Jr., playing for patron Sheikha Maitha bint Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Lucas Monteverde, Pablo MacDonough and Santiago Stirling) against Apes Hill 14 - 8 and King Power Foxes (Top Srivaddhanaprabha, Hugo Lewis, Gonzalo Pieres and Facundo

Pieres) against Zacara 15 - 9. The moment of truth had arrived.

On Gold Cup Final day, the atmosphere was cheery, fun, and familiar with families, picnic parties (both elaborate and basic), tents, tailgates, dogs, and laughter, more congenial than fancy, more country than high street. And Zeus or whichever gods of weather were

paying attention that day stopped the rain which had been falling off and on for several days at the perfect moment for the fields to dry and the sky to open up in sunshine, cerulean skies and billowing white cumulus clouds. The commentators John Kent and Felix Wheeler warmed up the crowds with a rousing match of

penny-farthing polo and otherwise kept the spectators informed and amused with their excellent commentary throughout the more serious match that followed.

Before the match, while the grooms appeared relaxed and full of play, the atmosphere at the team tents seemed a combination of nervous energy and quiet resolution – the

players and coaches knew that out of the dozens of chukkas it took to arrive here, everything now rides on the next few chukkas. UAE had a perfect team set-up – a good balance of teamwork, experience, age and daring. But they were up against a team with an extra advantage: two players who have played together from early age, who have the ability to work together with a simpatico forged in family, who perhaps share polo ‘ESP’ on movement and strategy, the Pieres brothers Facundo, the world’s No. 2 player and Gonzalito. King Power Foxes also had the advantage of the sheer drive of an up-and-coming team with a reputation to prove and the momentum of The Queen’s Cup win a month before behind them.

Ending in a 2 - 2 tie, the first chukka set the stage for a nice, tight match the fans adore, but that was not the match this was destined to be. The Pieres boys took over the second and third chukkas, showing their tremendous technical skill, impressive strength and speed with Gonzalito powering the ball from throw-in to goal in the third bringing King Power Foxes to a dominant 7 – 4 lead at half time.

Following a goal trade, the quiet fourth chukka was upset by a hard meeting with the turf for King Power Foxes patron Top Srivaddhanaprabha who was replaced by 17-year old Kian Hall. The fifth chukka belonged to the 10-goalers Facundo Pieres and his cousin Pablo MacDonough who fought like a champion to improve UAE’s position scoring three goals including a successful 150-yard charge down the field, leaving UAE in a better position at 10 - 8 with only one chukka left to go.

The young men took over the final chukka, opening with UAE’s 16-year old Jose Araya, Jr. taking hold and speeding the ball down the field in a dramatic dash and landing the ball just wide. A collective gasp and cry from UAE supporters – oh, the heartbreak! Following a masterful stick-and-ball goal by Facundo Pieres, 20 year-old Englishman Hugo Lewis from the King Power Foxes was

next up with a spectacular end-to-ender, followed by a tap-in goal set up for him by Facundo Pieres. This will be a day Mr. Lewis will never forget; he will probably ensure that his children and grandchildren never forget it either. At the end, it was a happy day for King Power Foxes with a final score of 14 – 8, concluding this year’s English high-goal season.

Horse Power

But the game is nothing without the horses and their contribution to the thrill, excitement and beauty of this sport. Before the match, I spoke briefly with one of the commentators and when I asked him which team he thought would win, he discreetly refrained from providing a direct answer, suggesting instead that this match would be likely won by the team with the best horse flesh. He said, “Watch Galactica in the third chukka and Cube in the fifth,” both favourites of King Power Foxes Facundo Pieres. In polo, you cannot win without a winning polo pony, whose traits according to Hurlingham Polo Magazine’s Victoria Elsbury-Legg must include “great acceleration, very handy, she stands her ground against being bumped and has a good heart”, all qualities she attributed to “Twisted Automotives Best Playing Pony” of the match - Pablo MacDonough’s Dolfina Divina.

Behind the Scenes

As the sun began to set and the crowds began to disperse, we reflected on the day and all of the effort which must have been exerted to make this happen. For Liz Higgins, who has handled PR, Communications and sponsorship for Cowdray Park Polo Club since 2002 and was closely involved in the management of all Cowdray’s polo events including the Gold Cup, the four week period of the Gold Cup is obviously a very busy time for her and her staff.

Liz explained: “The atmosphere changes dramatically from the opening day of the tournament





Lord Cowdray with Daniel Riedo, CEO Jaeger-LeCoultre



with the influx of the Gold Cup patrons and the high goal players, their families and supporters. Our members love to follow a team through the tournament and many of them watch every single match. As the excitement builds through the tournament, so does the number of spectators so that by Quarter Finals weekend we have several thousand people attending. Semi Finals day is huge in terms of corporate entertaining and one of the best days for polo in Europe as the four highest ranked teams of the contest battle it out for a place in the Final."

"We welcomed around 14,000 people to this year's Final", she enthused, "and the sun shone, people picnicked all around the grounds, the retail village was a haven for all kinds of fabulous fashion and country goodies, and to top it all we saw a great match! Once the presentations were over, I finally enjoyed a glass of delicious Louis Roederer champagne and reflected on what a great job I have!" We'll add our salute to the end of this year's Gold Cup and the British high-goal season and look forward to a return to the fields of Cowdray next year. 🇬🇧





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HT EXCLUSIVE WITH THE LEGENDARY GEORGE MORRIS

By Engy Adham

GEORGE MORRIS – FOR SOME HIS NAME CONJURES THE IMAGE OF THE PERFECTIONIST COACH ISSUING STRICT INSTRUCTIONS, WHILE OTHERS ENVISION THE HORSEMAN IN SMARTLY POLISHED BOOTS WAITING HIS TURN TO JUMP IN THE BIG INTERNATIONAL LEAGUES. OTHERS MIGHT CALL TO MIND A BLACK-AND-WHITE PHOTOGRAPH OF A 14-YEAR-OLD ATHLETE WINNING THE ASPCA MACLAY AND THE AHSA MEDAL FINALS AT MADISON SQUARE GARDEN. AT THE END, THEY ALL AGREE THAT GEORGE MORRIS IS A TRUE LIVING LEGEND IN THE WORLD OF EQUESTRIAN SPORTS AS AN INSPIRING SPORTSMAN, OLYMPIAN, TRAINER, COACH AND INNOVATOR.

A person could spend hours porusing Morris' long list of accomplishments, starting from his early childhood when he conquered his fear of horses to become an Olympic team silvermedalist and the world's most accomplished hunter and jumper trainer.

The 1960's saw Morris' highest and best-remembered achievements when he won the Olympic team silver medal in Rome and the Grand Prix of Aachen on Night Owl - "He was a great horse. He had great heart and so much scope; not the most careful horse in the world, over the massive solid fences at Aachen he was a real Aachen horse. In those days, Aachen was a *puissance*-type class with successive jump-offs – not against the clock," Morris recalls.

Among all the horses Morris has trained, Calypso is one of Morris' most favourite horse. "Calypso was a Dutch horse by Lucky boy. He looked like a pony but he was a lot like his father; he did not have the best front end and it was not until we got to the Florida circuit that I realized he was a great horse. He was very intelligent and agile. He had a lot of stride. He is a horse that has taught himself in the ring, and all great horses learn at the show ring. You never had to sharpen him or do any particular gymnastic. Calypso was wonderful and probably would be worth 10 million Euros now," Morris says.

His famous comeback in the 1980's and, in particular, winning the \$500,000 Du Maurier Class at Spruce Meadows in 1988 mark a personal favourite achievement for

Morris: "I was 50 and it was one of the biggest thrills of my life."

Maybe because of his many early accomplishments, George Morris did not feel constrained by the classical equestrian training he received. He created his own independent identity in the equestrian world. Morris left his mark by developing techniques inspired by the classics of equestrian instructions. He redefined equestrian training to not only be concerned with sets of tasks or techniques to be followed or gobbets of information; he was interested in sharing his philosophy and the art of riding.

George Morris introduced his training philosophy using a unique riding style, which is a combination of the forward seat and the classical deep seat. He



acknowledges the complexity of it, yet praises its benefits for better jumping. "To put those two seats together for jumpers is quite a tricky task: you cannot just rely on the deep seat because that is too rigid and you cannot just rely on the forward seat because that is too passive. You have to put the two together – that is my philosophy of training: to produce a very well-schooled horse, so you are in the position to do what Caprilli first taught us. That is, to use a very forward seat and let the horse do the jumping," Morris explained.

He continues, "It is paradoxical, but I like a very well-schooled horse under total control but at the same time I like him to be under such control that I can teach him to help me jump the fences. To expand on that: to jump well, the horse must be allowed

to have complete freedom over the fence. Using the forward seat ensures he is unhindered as he arrives at the point of takeoff and over the fence."

Morris has been aware that there is no such thing as the ultimate conventional formula; a human understanding needs more than a set of tasks to memorize, so he put his philosophy into practice. "My system is built on exercises, right up to Olympic level: exercises for the rider's position, exercises for the use of aids, exercises on the flat and exercises over jumps. I use jumping exercises, three days a week is the maximum with the very rare exception of a competition. For eventers, if they work on their cross-country one day a week, they can work on their show jumping two days, or vice versa. They will work on fitness or on their dressage for the other

three or four days. In my opinion, horses should not jump more than three days a week maximum."

While people have always been able to identify an American rider from the rest of the European riders, does Morris think that this still applies today or have riders particularly at the more advanced levels adopted more of the forward seat and use it more than before?

Morris told HT that there is not a clear-cut answer to this question. In an age where everything is universal starting from universal teachings to international riding styles, tradition and heritage of horseback riding matters and it contributes in building the culture of the horse riding sports. "I think that top athletes realize the real speed you have to go today to break a record." He continues, "It is easier for

the horse and the rider to have a short stirrup and to sit somewhat forward so that the horse gallops faster and easier," Morris replies.

Morris thinks that a lot of people in this sport have developed a feeling for his teachings. "What I was taught is that all the different parts of the rider's body have to be in tune with the movement of the horse. Dressage and jumping are two different games; we use dressage to better school the horse to respond during jumping." Although he acknowledges the adaptations to the forward seat principle invented by the Italians, Caprilli and Sanatini, he added his own character to it. He understood that a good rider is not only about mastering riding techniques, but about training the horse as well. Not only did this technique introduce a new riding style to riders but it also required them to school their horses in this technique as well.

"Many eventers find the show jumping phase difficult. There are a number of reasons for this. Firstly, today the dressage is very exaggerated for eventing – it is almost Grand Prix dressage, which requires a very different position to that for show jumping and is very contrary to the forward seat. Secondly, when they go cross country, most of them go over every fence in the safety seat, sitting back on the horse's back and often leaning on his mouth – this hinders him. This is very often against the movement and, consequently, the horse gets defensive by the third day. He is not confident that the rider won't sit back on his back and overuse their legs and perhaps even hit his mouth. So he goes to the third day defensive, which gets a hollow jumper, it gets a quick jumper, and it gets a stiff jumper. Those jumpers hit fences. Eventing really asks the horses and riders to do three very different things today, where years ago they were very similar things. That is the difficulty."

Not only do Morris' contributions raise the bar of equestrian training higher than standard, but more importantly, they establish a new school of thought. George Morris

developed the canter exercise for forward flow: "This is a great first or warm-up exercise to get the horse flowing and to work on the canter – I use it a lot. It builds confidence because the rider has to trust the horse to avoid checking him. Trotting fences is very good for horse and rider but is just preparatory. The reality is canter work; you jump a course in canter and gallop, so that is what has to be ridden." Not only is canter exercise beneficial for the horses, but for the riders as well; it can help develop a rider's eye for a stride. The beauty of both these exercises is that they include single fences and related fences as well. "It is the kiss of death today for the rider when you just practice related fences. Single fences – as found out hunting – are very good for the rider's eye. People don't do enough of that today in my opinion," he explained, adding

"You have to perfect the ability to let the horse go forward. That is, to follow the horse to the fences then place him either to a rather deep distance so you get the right bascule, or to a balanced distance. It must never be a long, flat distance."

Morris developed the "Y-Shape gymnastic for improving the canter work" which is a gymnastic exercise that introduces coursework and keeps the horse rideable at the canter.

"This part of the exercise is the most difficult – the horse has to listen, especially to the half-halt, and that is where the canter work comes in. He has to stay in the corners – not cut them, he has to steer at the gallop, and he has to listen to the outside leg. This makes the horse more responsive to the aids and develops the rider's ability to keep their focus through quite a few jumping efforts and turns."

While training and riding philosophies shape the riding styles of horsemen/women, HT asked George Morris whether the breeding of the sport horse today has affected riding styles. "Yes, definitely," Morris confirms, "for example, the Arabian horses are known for their intelligence and every

horseman needs that. The Argentines, Australians and Chileans rely on the 'thoroughbred' horses but Europeans rely on the warmbloods. Now the Europeans took the 'thoroughbred' so the European horse now has become closer to the Arab horse."

Although the world recognizes the Americans as the people who established the structure of organized show jumping, the American market with its diversity did not invest in breeding lines like the Europeans have done. Morris replies, "It has never been our history to breed jumping horses, we breed racing horses. Up until the 70s, we used thoroughbred racing lines in show jumping. So, we will never catch up with them because it is the European's tradition to breed all kinds of horses. Tradition gives the Europeans an edge because it is part of their history."

Morris is a human databank of horse and rider training wisdom developed over six decades of personal high-level hands-on experience and years of practice in the field, creating an ever-growing cadre of his students who have learned from the source through his clinics and workshops, published books and videos. Out of all the different students George Morris have encountered along his path, Conrad Honfeld is a rider who has personified Morris' vision in show jumping. "Well, I would have to say that Conrad Honfeld was a very hard working student and really intelligent." He gives all newcomers the same grounding advice: "Become a very rounded horse person and listen to what skilled horsemen have to say. Get a very good basis in horse management, a very good basis in flatwork and a very good basis in jumping work."

George Morris is the ultimate example of living history in the equestrian world. Not only was he able to learn, create his own independent identity and establish a school of thought of his own, but he was able to build a living legacy in the world of equestrian training which will continue to influence jumpers and eventers for generations to come. 



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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. 🐾

Course Designing Plus with Leopoldo Palacios

By Farida El Sherbiny

A LEGEND IN COURSE DESIGNING WHO NOT ONLY FOCUSES ON CREATING THE MOST INNOVATIVE COURSES, BUT DEDICATES HIS TECHNIQUES TO CREATING AN ENJOYABLE AND FAIR GAME FOR ALL COMPETITORS.

How did you come across horses and showjumping?

I come from a Venezuelan family that loves horses. My brother, who is 7 years older than me, was a fantastic rider. In the 1960's, he won in many places including the US. My father also had horses for cattle on our farms. So, I have been around horses ever since my earliest memories could take me.

How did your passion for course designing start?

Before I became a course designer I was a rider. I sometimes rode for the Venezuelan team and was named Venezuela's Rider of the Year 1970. I had stopped riding for a certain period of time, but returned back shortly after. Then, I began course designing for it has always interested me. I started course designing while I was working in a construction company in Venezuela. Doing both of them in parallel helped me a lot in course designing as I was already familiar with spaces and developed construction.

Afterwards, I stopped riding and focused on course designing; even my mentors thought I was a better course designer than rider!

I started off as an amateur, but then travelling around the world and being taught by the best mentors took my course designing skills to a professional level. My first mentor was Pamela Carruthers, and then I worked with Arno Gego who is like a father to me. I also worked a bit with Bert De Nemethy who taught me a lot. Afterwards, I started doing a lot more and traveled with Arno Gego around the world. In the 1983 Pan American Games in Venezuela, Arno Gego was the course designer and I was his main assistant at that show. In the process of working there for four years, we became like family; he gave me a lot of support. And then I started designing in the United States, Canada, Europe and all over the world. Later, I retired from construction and became a professional full-time course designer for nearly 18 years now. Before that, I had been a part-time course designer, only 25 weeks a year in course designing and 25 weeks in construction. Now, I spend around 40 weeks a year course designing.

Over the past 40 years, trends in course designing have changed, as well as horses developing from being bigger and more robust to being smaller and more agile. How do you see course designing changing in the future as a result of changes in the breeding of show jumpers? Or do you think we have tried it all?

To me, course designing is changing a lot; like everything in life. There is development, but I am not really sure that course designing is changing in a good way. At the beginning, we used heavier, less careful fences and speed. Today, I think that courses are over-careful and we are jumping smaller fences, which are extremely technical. The fences today also are not very original; they are all the same: poles, gates and planks - that is it. I believe that today we are going a

bit too far. This development is not good for the horses because of the increasing use of laboratories. I do not understand this – workshops? specialized technical training? At the end of the day, our sport is a sport with animals that need to be near nature, not in small closed rings that are being developed in the laboratory. I think the sport needs more variety. We need to come back to the roots and nature of the sport because we have gone very far away from its nature.

If there is such thing as a finger print or identifying mark in your designs, what would it be? Is it courses which are technical in terms of size, turns, distances and combinations? In other words, what are the elements that you use in your own unique way when designing a course?

Designing a course is like making soup: wine, water, and meat in balanced quantities. I try to have a balance between different elements. I know what is hard and what is easy. It is not that I believe, I know. I need to make a balance between short distances, long distances, technical elements, spooky fences, non-spooky fences, careful fences, heavy fences, etc. It is not fair to excessively use one element in a course as you would be giving riders who are good at that specific element a greater chance of doing well. At the end, we are all humans and we are all different. Each one of us is good at some things and has problems at other things. That is why we need a bit of everything.

This variety makes the courses more exciting for the crowd, too, and I think we need more exciting competitions. When the ring is too big, the challenge for the rider and the horse is not exclusive to jumping the fences, but also to galloping and concentrating from one fence to another. They have to notice the change of character between fences. Every sport has to test the endurance of the horse and the rider. Small rings, which are being used more nowadays, do not test the endurance of the horse and the rider because

the courses are very short.

Does the footing and the size of the arena affect your design of the course?

Yes, as I said earlier, the size of the arena affects the quality of the sport; bigger arena, better sport. It is more difficult, but it is better. However, the one important issue is galloping long distances in a good rhythm.

Another interesting element is fence design. Being an authority on course designing, how do the shapes such as the dragon fence in Beijing and colours of the fences affect the horse? Which brings about another question, do horses see colours? And why do horses find white fences more difficult?

I think the variety of the shapes is the most important aspect of fence design. In Beijing, I tried to incorporate a lot of different shapes and put a lot of different elements in the middle of the fences. Unfortunately, today we do not see much variety in the design of fences. I believe horses are very aware of the contrast and brightness of colours, which have an effect on them. Sometimes it influences them to jump better, and sometimes it can make it more difficult for them. I find that when you use a lot of solid colours, which are not very bright, it is more difficult to jump than fences with stripes. However, different types of stripes also affect the horse differently. When you see a short person wearing vertical lines in their clothes, it makes them seem bigger and taller while horizontal lines make them seem smaller. So, vertical stripes give horses the illusion that the fence is higher. If the lines are horizontal, they seem to be more difficult to define the height for the rider and the horse.

Are there any other elements that affect your design of the course?

When designing a course, there are a lot of elements you can use and take into consideration such as the outside and surroundings of the ring, the corners, the



contrast of the fence, etc.

Imagine the following: you are in a stadium full of people where everyone is moving and everything comes to life. This environment can affect the horses as they are influenced by light and shadow. In shade, for example, horses do not see a place with a limit; if you are going straight the horses prefer to stay away from that place. There are a lot of other factors, such as the slope of the ring and the size of the horse's stride. The way the horse jumps changes depending on whether the ring is sloping uphill or downhill, so you need to take care of the slopes. To me, designing a course and sending it using the internet is very difficult. You need to be there; the course designer needs to know the ring perfectly. When you are designing a fence, you need to see it being built. For example, if you decided to put three poles and a gate, how high/low do you put the gate? How far apart do you place the poles? These are all optical problems which can make it easier or more difficult. That is why you have to see the fence being built to see what happens with your own eyes.

So when you are invited to design a course in a foreign country, how do you integrate the level of riders and horses into the level of technicality of your course?

I just start with an easy course on the first day. It is very important for a course designer to see the class and get to know the riders. When I go to a country where I do not know anybody, I evaluate the situation in my mind. On the first day, I do a normal and easy course. And then I would have the list of riders, so I evaluate them and I see which riders I am after. I normally know people everywhere I go to, I have been working in this field for many years. I know a lot of trainers, their qualities and how they train. You need to be aware of these factors and you need to start to evaluate the different factors and make the courses progressively more difficult.

It is different when you go to the top of the sport like the Olympics.

In this case, you know all of the top riders. If you are a course designer, you need to know all the riders. Having enough experience would help you while designing a course because you know the general level. If I go to a normal show in Venezuela, I need to evaluate different factors. I cannot take a course I did for top riders and assign it to beginners; it must be simpler.

So in your years of course designing, which show or event have you felt most proud of? And what is your biggest accomplishment in general?

This is a very difficult question to answer. I am happy at shows for both beginners and big horses. The truth is, I like every show. The reality is that I love course designing and I have been to a lot of big shows in my life. I have been building for Spruce Meadows for 22 years. I also built in two Olympic games, Pan American Games, World Cup finals and in many different shows.

I love all the places I worked in, yet my input in every place is different. I contributed a lot to the Olympic Games; I was part of designing the fences among many other things. I have also been contributing a lot in Calgary for the past 22 years. The problem with course designing and designing fences is that the end result only lasts for one day or just an hour. And then, it is all destroyed and all that is left is pictures and people's memories; this is why I like to have an input in the venue too.

I am currently working for the World Equestrian Games 2018. I am part of the organizing committee of the game. It is nice because when I arrive at the venue, my work would be there and it will stay forever as I am designing the concepts of the construction. I love it when people copy a fence of my design in different shows, just like the Dragon of Beijing. I love that people copy my fences because my design ends up in many places. Eventually, this is what humans like; we pass on designs and we want to have something that will be left for my grandchild and my

great-grandchild, so they can say my great-grandfather did this.

Tell us a bit about yourself, simply as a human being. Are you married, do you have kids, what are your likes?

I have been divorced twice. I will tell you the truth; our family life is very complicated. I have two children and a grandchild. I love my daughter and my grandchild; I love seeing them and being with my family, but I never get time to spend with them. This is why I find it very difficult to construct a family. I think this applies to all the people that are really professional, like actors or professional athletes; it is just difficult. I really admire my friends who have a stable family and do what I do. I do not know how they do it; I want to be like them.

It is very difficult when you have passion like I do; the input course designing has on my life is huge. I always think and dream about it. This is not exclusive to course designing, but the whole sport; I love this sport. I live with a tangled passion that affects my family life. Even though I like to be with my family, my passion is stronger. This is the big sacrifice I make for my passion.

I love art and I try to incorporate it into show jumping. For example, the dragon sculpture of Beijing was my trial to incorporate art into my design. Then, I try to commercialize it as a piece of art. The artistic character I add to my courses is very rewarding. When I am older, I cannot just sit in my house and look at courses I designed. I need to see that art behind it.

I want to do this till I die; this is another truth. People keep asking me when I am going to retire. When this time comes, I might not do so much course designing because I will be very old. I will be involved trying to do something for the sport, it could even be a contribution on the organizational level. It could be anything, but never nothing. To me, retiring does not exist. I just do not see my life sitting in a chair and looking at the TV. 🐾



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LONGINES GLOBAL CHAMPIONS TOUR

LONDON LEG

By Aya Amr

AS A NOVICE IN THE SHOWJUMPING FIELD, IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN A DREAM OF MINE TO WATCH LIVE A LONGINES GLOBAL CHAMPIONS TOUR (LGCT) EVENT. WITH A PASSION FOR HORSEBACK RIDING, I ALWAYS KEEP A CLOSE EYE ON LGCT NEWS. I MARK SEEING THEIR ASTONISHINGLY DESIGNED TECHNICAL FENCES WHERE INCREDIBLE TOP RIDERS AND HORSES COMPETE.



Qatar Faleh Suwead Al Ajami's "Come Soon" during the vet inspection



Britain's Scott Brash on Hello Sanctos

On a normal day in Leeds, UK where I was visiting my Mum, my dream came true. I was preparing our regular feature 'HT Headlines' in which we put news on the LGCT events. Then all of a sudden, it hit me: "I could cover the LGCT first-hand right here in London." I was overcome with excitement so I called my boss, Khaled Assem, and told him that I wanted to cover the LGCT. Of course, he encouraged me and we started preparing for Horse Times to attend and formally cover the LGCT. After booking my journey from Leeds to London, I gathered up borrowed kit, including my Mum's video camera and together with Khaled, I prepared interview questions; and then we were left with the final step: contacting the LGCT

whom we work closely with to get our media accreditation, which came through with the usual efficiency and helpfulness of the LGCT organizers.

I started reading about the venue, Syon Park, the spectacular London home of the Duke of Northumberland. The house was built in the sixteenth century on the site of the Medieval Syon Abbey and came to the family of the present owners in 1594. Syon has many layers of history and has seen some profound changes over the centuries. It is known world-wide as one of Robert Adam's best examples of neo-classical residential splendor houses, displaying an array of art and antiques collected over centuries by the Percy family.

Together with my Mum, we planned how I will get to the park after arriving to London. The exhaustion of the fraught journey failed to discourage me or affect my enthusiasm. Unfortunately, I was only able to cover the Grand Prix Day, but it was nevertheless my lucky day. The moment I walked into the breath-taking Syon Park, I was star-struck. I saw showjumping icon Beezie Madden, whom we had worked with before, walking towards me. Then, I saw the stellar Luciana Diniz and Patrice Delaceux who is on the cover of our HT's most recent book about the World Equestrian Games in Normandy. I saw the famous course designer, Uliano Vezzani; his first round of the Grand Prix was tough and challenging even for the world's top combinations with fences set at the brink at 1.60m. The course was challenging enough for the riders yet seemed somewhat more comfortable for the horses jumping it – a course designer's ultimate goal! Forty-five of the best riders in the world went through. It was designed to test the very best horse and rider combinations in the world that day as they rode for their share of the 400,000 Euro prize. The steep Greenwich fence, which was set as the first part of a double, caused many of the issues followed by quite a technically difficult line causing many riders to come out with faults.

Eighteen riders went through to round two; the second round caused relatively fewer problems, with sixteen out of the eighteen going clear, as riders jumped the nice flowing course and the time was not a factor.

The jump-off had some of the fences go up to a testing 1.65m, which meant the race to the finish line had to be more carefully calculated and ridden. Including tricky lines and angles throughout, those who had the pace also needed the scope and agility to tackle the twisting challenges of the course.

This was Rolf-Göran's first win of the season with the ever-consistent Casall Ask, racing against the clock. The calibre of riders was so high and the final round so intense.

First to ride triple clear was Rolf-Göran Bengtsson who set the time to beat at 34.91seconds. Britain's John Whitaker

looked incredibly competitive with his stallion, Argento who fired up responding to the crowd who were in full support of one of their star riders. At first, he looked almost identical on time; however fell just eight hundredths of a second short to finish in second place and left France's Simon Delestre with his beautiful black stallion Qlassic Bois Margot in third.

The final rider, Britain's Scott Brash was within the time and the crowd held their breath as he took a very short turn with his incredible gelding Hello Sanctos. However, he had the final fence down finishing in sixth place. Despite his obvious disappointment, he gained 31 valuable points in the championship race, pushing him ahead of former leader Luciana Diniz (POR) by 28 points.

Jan Tops - President and Founder of the Longines Global Champions Tour. "This is always an exciting leg; you could see with 16 in the jump-off, it was very fast and difficult to win. Rolf is in incredible form today, at the moment he is in 4th place. I think he could be a challenge to Luciana and Scott, he is coming from behind. I also want to thank our partners Longines and Qatar for making this great event possible. We are very happy with the first time here at Syon Park. For the horses and the riders the location is very good logistics wise - they have a lot of space, great footing, good stables and a lot of space."

Scott Brash - Longines Global Champions Tour ranking leader: "It is good; I am pleased to be at the top in this stage. I will do all the other venues apart from Rome so I have got a couple of extra chances. We have got to keep going, Rolf is going really well so we will keep trying."

Rolf-Göran Bengtsson: "My horse has proved that he is in good form. He jumped six times this season and every time he was in the second round, so I cannot be more than very happy with him. It's a pleasure for me to win here in London, I will try my best for the rest of the championship but as Jan said, I have still one more score to count. Scott is far away with 3 wins this season so far, so it's going to be hard to beat him." 🏆

All photos by Stefano Grasso/LGCT



Sweden's Rolf-Göran Bengtsson on Casall ASK

The Ranking Results after Vienna:

Rank	Rider	Points
1	Scott Brash	279.00
2	Luciana Diniz	277.00
3	Rolf-Göran Bengtsson	269.00
4	Simon Delestre	255.00
5	Christian Ahlmann	234.00
6	Sheikh Ali Bin Khalid Al Thani	195.00
7	John Whitaker	180.00
8	Penelope Leprevost	169.00
9	Pius Schwizer	162.00
10	Lauren Hough	149.00

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60 SECONDS WITH SAMEH EL-DAHAN

By Engy Adham

COUNTRY: EGYPT

DATE OF BIRTH: 28/01/1985

STAR SIGN: AQUARIUS

PROFESSION: INTERNATIONAL SHOW JUMPER

SAMEH EL-DAHAN SEEMS TO BELONG TO THAT BYGONE GENERATION OF HORSEMEN WHO SINCERELY VALUED DUTY, COMMITMENT, HARD WORK, MORALITY AND A CODE OF ETHICS. HE COMES FROM A DEEPLY-ROOTED EGYPTIAN FAMILY AND THESE ROOTS SHOW IN HIS COMMITMENT TOWARDS HIS SPORT AND HIS COUNTRY. HIS PERFECTIONISM STEMS FROM HIS EDUCATION AS A DOCTOR AND HIS COOL, FOCUSED AND DELIBERATE PERFORMANCE REFLECTS HIS INNER PEACE AND STRENGTH. YET ABOVE ALL, IT IS HIS SMILE WHICH SHINES THROUGH WITH SIMPLE AND GENUINE GOOD WILL AND WARM WISHES.



Egypt's Sameh El-Dahan and Sumas zorro at the WEG2014

Describe your typical practice?

Mostly fitness and suppleness training; we start by walking the track to loosen and warm up the horses' backs, and then we bring them into the sand arena for some concentrated extension and shortening over ground poles.

Where is your favourite place for practice?

The yard's gallop; it is a long sand pathway around the top fields surrounded by natural hedges. It is very peaceful and quiet. The horses really enjoy it.

Describe some of the funny experiences you have had practicing?

I flew out of the saddle once after an explosive jump from a youngster we have. It was the end of the session whilst I decided to give her one more jump and, God, was I wrong as I ended up on the ground and broke my wrist. This happened just before the

lorry was leaving to a big show in Italy where I ended up having to ride with a cast on my arm.

Tell us one or two things about your training that contributed to your success.

Perseverance and paying attention to details; there are so many perfectionists in this sport and to be able to compete with them at that level requires focus and dedication. I leave a lot of the details to Joanne as she is very focused, driven and she helps me a lot so I can focus on the riding. I have also been very fortunate to receive training from the great John Ledingham who has helped me develop and fine tune my style.

What was the best advice you were given?

Always check your girth!

Over the years, I have been given so many great pieces of advice from real horsemen whom I was lucky enough to train

with and be around my show. Basically, you walk the course like you are going to ride it, and then you walk it more than once.

What advice would you give to young athletes?

Follow your dreams and never give up. It is amazing how sport brings people together and how important it is to our country.

It is crucial for athletes to have strong presence on different media outlets. This will help them promote the sport and our country worldwide which I think is really essential in the current situation especially now that Egypt is on the rise.

What is your best achievement?

One of my best achievements is being able to build a team together with Joanne Sloan Allen and Sycamore Stables horse farm. Also, being successfully at the top of the sport with home-bred and home-produced horses is definitely on the list of my

personal favorites. Then comes representing Egypt, individually and with teams, and being a reason the Egyptian flag was raised in so many countries all over the world. Finally, jumping a puissance wall of 2.20 m also has to be high up on my list of achievements.

What are the goals that you aspire to achieve?

Representing Egypt in the Olympic Games, being fair to my team and horses, giving credit where it is due, reaching the highest level of the sport and climbing up the leading riders' rankings as high as I can.

Who has been your greatest support?

I am a very lucky person in that I was supported and guided by many people throughout my career. I am very lucky to have my whole family, the Egyptian equestrian community and my adopted Irish community. Currently, the most supportive is my business partner Joanne Sloan Allen. She is a fantastic person with

a very strong personality whom I learn a lot from. From an equestrian point of view, I am privileged to have great sponsors such as the whole Sloan family, WKD, Blue Chip Feeds and Samshield helmets.

What are your greatest motivations?

Striving for success; to be more specific, I want to win an equestrian Olympic medal for Egypt.

Riding talented horses is a great motivation for me in that it pushes me to get the best out of them.

Who is your sporting hero (any sport)?

Michael Phelps, the swimmer.

What is your second favourite sport?

Football

What is your favourite genre of movies?

Action Comedy

What is your favourite gadget and are you obsessed with it?

My phone and no, I am not obsessed with it.

What is your favourite book and who is your favourite author?

The Hunger Games by Suzanne Collins

What is your favourite food?

Joanne's rice.

What is the most memorable place you ever visited?

Spruce Meadows. It is Disney World for horses. Everything is perfect and well thought out from stabling to the footing of the grass fields. The organizing committee is second to none. It is a horse show with a lot of background and history. This is what a rider would feel every time he/she passes under the clock tower and the gates close behind him/her. 🐾



France's Patrice Delaveau and Orient express at the WEG2014

TRAINING TIPS

WALKING THE COURSE

Compiled by Khaled Assem

SUCCESSFUL SHOWJUMPING REQUIRES BASIC FUNDAMENTALS TO ACHIEVE HARMONY, SOME OF WHICH ARE DIRECTION, SPEED, IMPLUSION, BALANCE AND TIMING. THE RIDER REGULATES AND SYNCHRONIZES THOSE CONCEPTS DURING JUMPING A COURSE, YET STILL HE HAS TO HAVE A PLAN.

In a competition, fences are arranged in various ways: a double with one or two strides, a triple combination with an additional fence and a related distance between two fences counting three up to 11 strides. Generally, all the distances are based on a 3.7 m horse

stride, this applies for national and international competitions.

When walking the course

The rider walks the course to access direction approaching fences in straight lines or out of angles or corners which might affect impulsion. He regulates his

speed and measures distances in between fences whether in straight lines or in curves to find out the number of strides and accordingly access whether the distance is short or long so he would encourage his horse to shorten or lengthen his stride, (a transition that involves balance,

speed and impulsion) to reach the correct take off point (that manifests timing) and jump safely and effectively across.

The following table will allow the

rider to realize all the distances that he will face and experience. 🏠

Source of this article: FEI level 2 coaching book

About the author:
Eng. Khaled Assem is a certified Level 2 FEI trainer. He has been training for over 15 years, competing internationally for 10 years and locally for 25 years.

Number of strides	TRAINING				COMPETITION	
	Trot to cross pole to a distance (straight) meters	Trot to cross pole to a distance (bending) meters	Canter pole to a distance (straight) meters	Canter pole to a distance (bending) meters	Fence to fence distance (straight) meters	Fence to fence distance (bending) meters
1	5.5-6.16 M	5.5-6.16 M	6.66 M	5.66-6.66 M	7.30 M	6.30-7.30 M
2	9.82 M	8.82 M	10.32 M	9.32 M	10.98 M	9.98 M
3	13.48 M	12.48 M	13.98 M	12.98 M	14.64 M	13.64 M
4	17.14 M	16.14 M	17.64 M	16.64 M	18.30 M	17.30 M
5	20.80 M	19.8 M	21.30 M	20.30 M	21.96 M	20.96 M
6	24.46 M	23.46 M	24.96 M	23.96 M	25.62 M	24.62 M
7	28.12 M	27.12 M	28.62 M	27.62 M	29.28 M	28.28 M
8	31.78 M	30.78 M	32.28 M	31.28 M	32.94 M	31.94 M
9	35.44 M	34.44 M	35.94 M	34.94 M	36.60 M	35.60 M
10	39.10 M	38.10 M	39.6 M	38.6 M	40.26 M	39.26 M
11	42.76 M	41.76 M	43.26 M	42.26 M	43.92 M	42.92 M

ILKA GANSERA-LEVEQUE A WOMAN WITH A RACING PASSION

By Debbie Nicholls

© Michael R. Smithson



Mrs. Ilka with her Husband 'Stéphane Léveque' and daughter 'Elea'

ON ONE UNFORGETTABLE DAY AT NEWMARKET RACES AN UNFANCIED CHESTNUT HORSE GALLOPED HIS HEART OUT FOR HIS YOUNG TRAINER, AND HELPED DEFINE ILKA GANSERA-LEVEQUE'S CAREER.

Her horse, Joe Sugden, rejected by two trainers for his fragility, repaid every ounce of her faith to beat the biggest yards in the country on his racecourse debut in 2013 at a wide outsider's price of 80-1.

His win against the odds was a highlight of the remarkable journey that has taken the daughter of a German fighter pilot to owning one of the most attractive yards in Newmarket's global flat racing headquarters—all within three years of taking out her trainer's licence.

Far from her homeland, she lives and works in the birthplace of British flat racing, with a 32-box yard and access to the training splendour that is Newmarket with its two world-class racecourses and more than 50 miles of grass and all-weather gallops.

Along the way she has ridden as an apprentice jockey, worked as an assistant trainer, and spent a year with legendary horse whisperer Monty Roberts.

As a mature student she qualified as a vet, giving her a rare mix of talents needed to juggle the demands of running a yard, expanding the business and caring for her five-year-old daughter with husband and fellow trainer, French-born Stéphane.

And that includes a 4.30 am start on summer mornings, appropriately the title of her blog, fourthirty-am!

German-born Ilka had a stellar start to her career. In August 2012 she started from

scratch with just two horses in her care in Newmarket.

A beautifully bred bay filly Tosca bought by Ilka as a yearling traveled to Germany as her first runner and dead-headed in a valuable race on her two-year-old debut. Four days later her first UK runner, Tiger Cub, also won on her debut. It was a 100% record and a dream come true!

Three years on she has purchased her own yard, named St. Wendred's after a heathen saint locally associated with the healing of horses. One particular well was an ancient water source which later became Christianised into St. Wendred's Well, widely renowned for the restorative power of the water used for treating horses. It's a fitting link with Ilka's veterinary skills and natural horsemanship.

"I hope it's a good omen, and I count myself very lucky to be where I am," says ilka.

"I had an Air Force upbringing and my family were not involved in racing. But ever since I was a child I wanted to be a jockey. I left school at 15 and was apprenticed to German trainer Bruno Schütz and was only Bruno's second girl apprentice."

Her year with Monty Roberts altered her whole approach to horses. Every newcomer to the yard has a join-up session and she concentrates on getting their mind-set positive.

"I make sure that every horse in my care gets personal treatment and is trained as an individual. I have had a lot of project horses who have lost their way. It takes time to restore their health and confidence but it's very rewarding."

"I have always followed my heart and worked hard. I am very competitive but you need the horses to make your name. People don't know how good you are without the horse to advertise it!"

Always ready to network, Ilka is a member of Women in Racing, keen to invite others to her yard and lunch at the town's world-famous Tattersalls bloodstock sales.

"I travelled to Abu Dhabi with a group from Women in Racing and met the owner of a promising Arabian racehorse just at the time that Stéphane was setting up as an Arabian trainer."

Enter Storm Troupour, a stunning racing stallion newly arrived from the States and aimed at a valuable series of turf races having an all-turf pedigree.

A new Ladies-only syndicate also provided some fun moments, and a rare chance to get some parade ring finery on for a professional photo-call at her barn!

But amidst her busy life, it remains Joe Sugden, a horse whose stout frame led doubters to even question his breeding, who still encapsulates her greatest triumph and her greatest disappointment. A portrait of 'Joe Joe' hangs in her office, reminding her of the horse she took on as an unraced four-year-old.

"He came to us with a lot of problems but we got him right and recognised he was something special," said Ilka. "It was a great day when he won. Very sadly he died after just three starts with a post-operative complication."

"We lost him right before Christmas and my birthday, so it couldn't have been at a worse time. Things had been so good, we had a good year and there was so much to be thankful for, and then that had to happen. That's racing; the highs are high and the lows are low."

Undaunted, she is fiercely ambitious, and wants to see every one of St. Wendred's 32 boxes filled with quality horses. *"It's onwards and upwards for us and anyone who wants to join us on our journey."*

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EGYPTIAN POLO PLAYERS IN THE NEWS

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE EGYPTIAN POLO SCENE

By Bridget McArdle McKinney

DESPITE THE FACT THAT THE PAST FOUR YEARS HAVE BEEN DIFFICULT FOR THE COUNTRY, THE EGYPTIAN POLO FEDERATION AND THE EGYPTIAN PLAYERS HAVE REDOUBLED THEIR EFFORTS TO INCREASE THE AWARENESS OF THE GAME BOTH LOCALLY AND INTERNATIONALLY. THE NUMBER OF YOUNG PLAYERS HAS INCREASED, THE NUMBER OF THE TRAINED POLO HORSES HAS DOUBLED AND THE FEDERATION HAS ENCOURAGED THE PLAYERS TO PARTICIPATE IN INTERNATIONAL TOURNAMENTS TO GAIN EXPERIENCE IN COMPETITIVE POLO. HERE ARE A FEW HIGHLIGHTS OF THIS OFF-SEASON'S INTERNATIONAL PLAY.

18th Annual Mashomack International Polo Challenge, Pine Plains, New York

First up, in June the respected and long-serving president of the Egyptian Polo Federation, Federation of International Polo delegate and unflinching advocate of the sport, Farouk Younes accepted the invitation to take part in the 18th Annual Mashomack International Polo Challenge in Pine Plains, New York just 90 minutes from New York City. Playing for Team Egypt was Farouk Younes (Captain), Hisham Al Gharby, Omar Younes, Aly El Kashef, Mostafa Idris. Unfortunately, injuries side-lined Al Gharby and Farouk Younes and the final team line-up was Omar Younes, Aly El Kashef, Mostafa Idris and Davis (Daoud) Colley.

Located on a 1,900-acre preserve, the Mashomack Polo Club is a full service club for polo players of all levels. Mashomack Polo offers league polo from 4 goal to 12 goal, and various tournaments such as the prestigious USPA Eduardo

Moore Invitational, the USPA Tracey Mactaggart Challenge Cup, the USPA Governors Cup, the USPA Officer's Cup and the USPA Constitution Cup.

The 2015 Mashomack International Polo Challenge was played on Saturday June 27. Three local teams – Estancia Villa Maria, Beretta and Quest – competed for the trophy against the visiting Egypt Team. In the preliminary matches, Estancia Villa Maria (Craig Callen, Guy Merison, Don Langlois, and Agucho Zavaletta) defeated Beretta (John Klopp, Oak Thorne, Nick Beanstock and Julio Ezcurra) 3 - 2. Team Egypt defeated Quest (Bruce Colley, Joe Meyer, Davis Colley, and Henry Zavaletta) 2 - 1. In a cliff-hanging, crowd-pleasing, well-played final match Estancia Villa Maria just tweaked Egypt 2 - 1, thanks to a goal by Craig Callen with only 35 seconds left on the clock. Win or lose, this annual friendly match is a chance once again to proudly display our local talent and flag in



a welcoming crowd of enthusiasts.

Burningfold 6-Goal Cup, Surrey, England

Next up is Egyptian player Mohamed Hamada who took part in the much-anticipated Burningfold 6-Goal Cup, in which nine teams competed from 16 – 26 July. His team included himself, Boyd Allen from UK, Guy Fox-Andrews alternating with Harry Revell from UK, and Brad Mallet from South Africa.

Burningfold is a country estate on the Surrey - Sussex border offering equestrian facilities, holiday accommodation and venue hire for special events. The 300 acre private estate was once the hunting grounds for Henry VIII. 500 hundred years later Burningfold still retains its equestrian links with over 100 stables and extensive paddocks.

Established in 2007 Burningfold Polo Club is fully affiliated to the Hurlingham Polo Association. Facilities include a 500 metre all

weather exercise track, large sand schooling arena, well maintained and irrigated stick and ball, practice and match grounds, available for our regular instructional groups, chukkas and matches.

A regular player at Kings Polo Club in Alexandria this was Hamada's first international polo tournament and he was thrilled to reach the finals competing against established UK teams. There were three groups and Hamada's team came in first in their group after defeating Highden 7 - 6 in rain and then two days later defeating Seabreeze 7 - 5. They then met Team Maize Dulce in the semifinals, where they took the loss, playing for third against Dubliner Irish Whiskey team and finishing a very tough match 4 - 4, where their opponent laid hands on the match on penalties 3 - 2.

20th Hublot Polo Gold Cup, Gstaad, Switzerland

The next Egyptian polo player on the roster abroad is Mohammed El Sewedy, captain of the Team E.I.

Sturdza Investment Funds playing in the 20th Hublot Polo Gold Cup in Gstaad, where, after winning last year's Gold Cup, they exceptionally co-won the tournament with Team SIR this year due to the weather.

Following much deliberation from the tournament officials the decision was made to change the format of the final of the Hublot Polo Gold Cup Gstaad. Taking into consideration the safety of the players and ponies, the waterlogged pitch was deemed too dangerous to play a competitive match.

This unusual decision followed a drenched semi-final which in the end had to be determined by penalty shots. About the semi, Team E.I. Sturdza Investment Funds captain, Egypt's own Mohammed El Sewedy said, "It is great to win but of course we are a bit disappointed that we could not have played a regular match for the semi-final. The other team was also strong and in the end it all comes down to a bit of

luck. It was a wise decision to play a penalty shootout as the ground has already suffered from the rain." In the final, however, the crowds were not left unsatisfied, the announcement was made the final would be replaced by a 4-chukka exhibition match. The four team-patrons and the four best players of the tournament were split into two teams to play in a non-competitive manner.

The teams remained head-to-head throughout each chukka until the final whistle blew with a finishing score of 7 - 7. The best play of the match was undoubtedly the impressive teamwork between Hublot Polo Gold Cup favourite, Eduardo Menendez (ARG) - who is competing in the tournament for the 16th time - and home favourite Michael Brüggler (SUI); an aerial shot from Menendez opened up the field for Brüggler to accelerate down the pitch, and strike a powerful shot cleanly through the posts. Gasps echoed among the crowds at the unbelievable display of talent from both players. 🏆

MEETING ALEXIS GRUSS:

MASTER-RIDER

By Laurence Boccard



Alexis and his Arabian Stallion Itrann at the Pegasus & Icarus show

THERE ARE SOME ENCOUNTERS THAT CAN BECOME INSPIRATIONAL, BOTH ABOUT HORSES AND ABOUT LIFE ITSELF. THIS IS ONE OF THEM. ALEXIS GRUSS! THE WORLD FAMOUS MASTER-RIDER. HIS VERY NAME EVOKES THE SOUND OF HOOFF BEATS AND THE TINKLING OF THE BRIDLE'S BITS.

Aged 27, he became the director of a circus. In 1974, he created the Old Fashion Circus (cirque à l'ancienne, in French) together with the French comedian Sylvia Montfort in order to celebrate the bicentenary of the introduction of the circus ring in France, by Philip Astley. The latter lived at the rue des Tuileries, in the Marais area of Paris, within the walls of the indoor school of the Duke of Razade.

In 1981, the Alexis Gruss Circus received the high distinction of National Circus. An equestrian acrobat, a master-rider and a ringmaster, Alexis Gruss is also a multi-talented artist: he is an excellent musician and had already mastered many of the circus arts from the age of eight. A passionate man, he also enjoys the art of photography and some fishing time.

As a master-rider, Alexis Gruss has been granted many honours: he was made a Knight of Arts and Letters, a Knight of the Legion of Honour and Knight of the Order of Agricultural Merit. He also received the National Circus Grand Prize, The Oscar Carré Prize of the Circus of Amsterdam, the Golden Epona Prize and the Golden Clown of the International Circus Festival of Monaco.

Alexis Gruss and the Arabian horse - a life-changing encounter. Two grey Arabian horses with Russian bloodlines once took the stage, under the Big Top, for a free display. The first one is no longer with us. However, the second one, the 11-year-old Itrann, still captivates the public's attention. The lively stallion bounces through the ring with his elastic trot, approaches his master and rears up in front of him.

For Alexis, if the Arabian horse, like the Barb horse, is indeed instrumental in the improvement of many breeds, it is highly possible that the Akhal Tekké horse is actually the founder of all breeds. The first records about taller horses (about 1.50 meters to the withers, approximately 14.5 hands) date from the 5th century B.C. and locate these in Central Asia. Bones that belonged to horses similar to the current Akhal Tekké have been found in Scythian tombs.

The Scythians were nomads and warriors, and according to Herodotus, they owned and raised the best horses of their era.

"The meeting of these two breeds founded our current society. The horse powered all the different civilisations (the Arabian horse took a crucial part indeed in the epic Moorish wars of the 7th and 8th centuries!!) and is at the origin of many innovations such as the wheel, the carriage, and of many constructions," stresses the Master.

The circus ring is one of these "constructions". During the 18th and 19th centuries, the horse and these constructions were closely linked. In London in 1768, Philip Astley, a former military rider, created an arena specifically designed for the public displays of his equestrian exercises: the ring. This was so successful that he christened the Astley Amphitheater in 1782 dedicated to the equestrian arts, with a stage placed next to the ring. In the same year, the word "circus" was used for the first time.

Philip Astley was a guest of the French Royal Court, and often presented his shows in Paris. In 1783, he opened up an Equestrian Theater on the Faubourg du Temple, together with his son John. While the father was celebrated in England for his many equestrian essays and memoirs, Paris celebrated his son's skills.

"The circus is first a location. This 13 meter wide ring, in order to match the length of a lunging whip, was created for the horse," says Alexis. "It is perfect to condition the horse's body and to instill a sense of showmanship in the animal. In this place, thoughts meet intelligence. Its ground is made of topsoil and saw dust, thus it is a fertile living space in perpetual motion. The ring is like infinity, where nothing ever ends."

About the horses' training Alexis Gruss reveals, "As all that is natural is instinctive, education is unnatural, in my opinion. Therefore, I believe in educating horses with love and trust, and not to break him in, with submission. To transcend what is natural

in Nature," there lies the Art!

"Ask often, obtain a little and praise much." Alexis Gruss has made this maxim of Mr Baucher his own, in the three different disciplines practiced by his family: the Haute Ecole, the Equestrian Acrobatics and the free-horses displays. This is a quest for a permanent balance, like that of the tightrope walker, where the stallions rise with pride in front of their Master.

The Master teaches and passes on his knowledge and his technique with respect, patience and love. The circle comes back around, and the inter-generation loop is set.

Three generations of the Gruss family meet up on stage: they canter, they vault, they help each other and they laugh in the face of unsteadiness, repeating the same gestures, the same movements over and over again. At that very moment, there are a spark and a twinkle in the eye of Alexis Gruss! Family: there may lie the secret of this undying will to push the limits to improve oneself.

Some say that, in knowledge, there is first a happening that implies certain togetherness *"the great encounters come from a happening, a birth, in essence."* This idea describes precisely the magical link between horse and man, between the Master Rider and his steeds.

Yves Saint Laurent used to say *"If there is no elegance of the heart, there is no elegance at all."* There is no doubt that these words take their full meaning in this family's repertoire and know-how. The family's Pegase & Icare show will take place in Paris, France from the 17th of October 2015 to the 6th of March 2016. Then, the show will tour the following towns (at the Zénith Exhibition Centers): Saint Etienne, Limoges, Nantes, Lille, Rouen, Caen, Orleans, Nancy, Dijon, and Montpellier. 🇫🇷

For more information, go to

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THE ART OF CLASSICAL DRESSAGE RIDING

SUPPLENESS

Compiled by Emmad Eldin Zaghloul

Switzerland's Melanie Hofmann and GB Cazzago-ch at the WEG2014

SO FAR WE HAVE ONLY TALKED ABOUT THE HORSE'S BACK AND HIND LEGS. THERE IS A TENDENCY IN MODERN CLASSICAL DRESSAGE CIRCLES TO IGNORE THE RELEVANCE OF THE HEAD AND NECK PLACEMENT AS WELL AS THE REIN AIDS, JUST AS THERE IS AN EQUALLY PRONOUNCED TENDENCY AMONG THE "SPORTS RIDERS" TO FOCUS THEIR ATTENTION EXCLUSIVELY ON THE HEAD AND NECK POSITION AND THE REIN AIDS, WHILE IGNORING THE HORSE'S BACK AND HINDQUARTERS AND THE RIDER'S SEAT AND LEG AIDS. NEITHER CAMP WILL BE ABLE TO TRULY TRAIN A HORSE. IT MAY COME AS A SURPRISE TO MANY NEO-CLASSICAL DRESSAGE RIDERS THAT THE OLD MASTERS OFTEN REMARKED THAT THE RIDER CANNOT VERY WELL GYMNASTICISE THE HINDQUARTERS UNTIL HE HAS GIVEN THE HEAD AND NECK A CERTAIN POSTURE THAT ALLOWS THE ENERGY OF THE HIND LEGS TO TRAVEL THROUGH THE SPINE ALL THE WAY INTO THE BIT, AND THAT ENABLES THE REIN AIDS TO TRAVEL INTO EACH FRONT LEG AND EACH HIND LEG.

"Motion is the element of the horse and all motion starts in the hindquarters. If therefore the flexibility of the hindquarters must be the ultimate purpose of all dressage training, this in no way means that lateral bending of poll neck, and spine are unnecessary. Rather, the flexibility of these parts must first be obtained so that it can then be used as a means for the main purpose, namely to work the hindquarters."

In order to be able to use the horse's neck effectively as a tool for gymnasticising the back and haunches, all the resistances that are situated in the neck and poll have to be removed. You can observe that many horses' necks are most flexible at their base and stiffest at the poll. In order to make them into good riding horses, we have to stabilize the neck at its base and supple its top, so that the flexibility of the neck increases from the base towards the poll. The greatest source of resistances can usually be found in the conformation of the poll, jaw, and throat latch. In fact, horses whose poll region is very resistant to flexion and bend and who seem to be difficult to ride on the bit are almost always horses whose lower jaw begins to touch the neck while the nose is still a good deal in front of the vertical. When the rider attempts to increase the longitudinal flexion, the saliva glands consequently tend to get caught between the jaw and the neck, which is painful and can lead to all kinds of negative reactions from head tossing to spinning around and even rearing. The horse's gymnastic training has to change the musculature of his neck and stretch the tissue surrounding the saliva glands so that the glands can move just enough to the outside of the jaw in order not to get pinched any more. This reshaping of the neck musculature is done in part by flexions (bending the entire neck) and (bending just the poll/throat latch area). These flexions can be done mounted or

unmounted at the halt, or in motion under saddle.

"While working the poll on a straight line, but even more during flexions, the greatest enemy we encounter is the saliva gland. As long as we have not obtained the immediate contact between the jowls and neck muscles, as long as the saliva gland does not yield to the pressure of the jowl, so that the jowl presses against the saliva gland from below, the horse will resist in increased collection. He will try to fend off the effect of the bit by bracing, resisting with the lower jaw, or an unsteady head position; or he coils up behind the reins, flexes the joints of the hind legs, but remains stiff in the poll. A poorly positioned saliva gland on only one side causes the horse to resist in narrower turns in this direction; and on a straight line it is often the reason why he short-strides with one leg as if he were lame. Sometimes it is the front leg of the stiff side, or the diagonal hind leg, depending on what is more comfortable for the horse. (Horses who are high in the croup transmit this behaviour more to the hind leg). The horse does not dare to reach forward on the stiff side, because he feels pain in his poll when he approaches the bit boldly. As soon as the constriction is eradicated by appropriate flexions, the lameness is gone. The lameness was not caused by the uneven movement of the leg muscles, but by the constriction of the poll; this is supported by the fact that a regular movement is shown when these horses are ridden on a loose rein."

In bending exercises, you can isolate the exact spot where the horse is blocked. If the horse is supple, you can secure the base of the neck with one rein, while the other rein asks the horse to bend, first just at the top, so that the rim of the jowl touches the neck and pushes the saliva gland out. Then you can give a little with the outside

rein, and you will see that gradually a larger portion of the neck begins to participate in the bend. The bend at the very top of the neck is often the most difficult one. Some horses will brace against the request. This resistance can sometimes be eliminated by giving more with the outside rein until the top half of the neck is included in the bend. Then, you slowly shorten the outside rein to reduce the bend again from the bottom towards the top. Sometimes you have to wait a few seconds until the horse yields and chews. When you continue with riding forward afterwards, the poll is suppler and as a result the permeability has increased.

Sometimes subtle - or not so subtle - resistances can creep in, especially on the outside during corners and turns. Resistances are more difficult to feel on the outside than on the inside. That's why it is a good idea to test the horse from time to time by feeling with the rein, positioning the horse carefully to the outside after a corner. If the horse does not yield immediately to the rein pressure, the rider can stop the horse and flex the neck and poll towards the outside until the blockage disappears. Then, he resumes the previous gait. In the middle of a turn, or in lateral movements, the rider can try to bend and position the horse more towards the inside. If the horse braces against the rein pressure, the rider stops and flexes to the inside.

It is of the utmost importance that the rider's legs keep the horse thinking forward. The calf brings the horse to the rein, so to speak. The seat and legs also keep the hips and shoulders aligned properly, so that the horse cannot become crooked. This way, the horse is still going forward, even during flexions at the halt. 🐾

Sources of the article:
Dressage Classic Training
Euro dressage



Cara Grimshaw

EQUESTRIAN PHOTOGRAPHER

CARA GRIMSHAW

By Cara Grimshaw

MOST EQUESTRIAN PHOTOGRAPHERS START OUT WITH A PASSION FOR HORSES OR PHOTOGRAPHY. CARA GRIMSHAW TOOK 30 YEARS TO CONNECT THE TWO.

When the horse loving British expat and Vancouver-based aspiring photographer attended the London 2012 Summer Olympics as an editorial technician, her career path became clear.

"It was an amazing eye opening experience," said Grimshaw, who at 33 has already racked up a number of large international events including the World Equestrian Games, Showjumping and Dressage World Cup and most recently the 2015 European championships in Aachen.

Grimshaw spent most of her life on or around horses growing up in England, moving to Canada in 2015 leaving it all behind. To fill the emptiness that horses once filled,

she discovered photography. In 2008 Grimshaw was encouraged to attend the renowned Langara College Photography Certificate program by her boyfriend, also a photographer after she purchased her first DSLR.

"I had the creative eye but lacked the technical knowledge of how to use a camera properly," Grimshaw said. "It took a few amazing instructors and mentors continually pushing me to realize that I could indeed take this further than just a hobby, it scared me a little."

She experimented with all types of photography the years attending college but it was action and photojournalism photography that she naturally gravitated towards.

Her favourite rider growing up was Great Britain's Dressage star Carl Hester. Never having seen him ride in person and posters of him covered her walls. She never dreamed that one day she would be photographing Hester ride.

In 2012, she was given the opportunity of a lifetime to attend the London Olympics to assist her college instructor who was photographing the games. "I learnt a lot first hand about how the real photography world operates, outside of the classroom, the highest levels and it thrilled me. The adrenaline never stopped even after 18hrs on my feet and 2 hours sleep," Grimshaw recalls.

"It was luck that I had a quiet day

the same time as the cross country; I think I may have begged my boss to let me go," Grimshaw said. "I had my little Nikon D300 with no expectations and intending only have fun taking pictures of my favourite riders. I had such fun! I do not know why I had not connected my love of photography and horses sooner, I was kicking myself."

An office administrator of 10 years for a government corporation in Vancouver, it was to provide her financial stability for the next 3 years as she worked towards doing photography full time.

Grimshaw was signed up with the agency, Corbis Images, in 2014 which enabled her to have access to the high level events she needed to gain experience. The World Equestrian Games in 2014 saw Grimshaw finally able to photograph and meet her hero Carl Hester. "I could not get myself over him being an actual human and standing there right in front of me!" Grimshaw recalls her star-struck moment. "I had told him about once having posters of him on my wall and now I was the one taking the pictures! He looked me in the eye and told me not to give up the determination as it is amazing how hard work pays off, isn't it?!" Since then Grimshaw has photographed Hester a dozen times, finally getting over the star-struck excitement, which allows Grimshaw to get unique shots that go beyond the usual ringside images. "Being overwhelmed limits my creativity, I get caught up in the

chaos of the emotions and lose focus on the framing, timing and lighting."

Open for business. Early 2015 Grimshaw officially set up a business and quit her office job.

"If it was not for my understanding and supportive bosses, mentors, friends and loved ones, I would not have had the chance to make the leap into entrepreneurship." Grimshaw states. "Getting to this point, there were endless hurdles to overcome. Health issues from stress, financial limitations, work schedules but I always seemed to land on my feet."

It was a big step for the 33-year-old. Despite the new freedom of being her own boss, Grimshaw knew just taking photographs is not enough to be successful – after all, many photographers fail within the first year of going it alone. So, she educated herself, along with her college instruction, in business marketing, social media and branding. "I wanted be sure I was ready for the high seas known as the photography industry, I didn't want to drown from not having basic life saving skills," Grimshaw explained. "I always had an interest in business communications and marketing so it was an easy learn for me."

It has been a busy five months since going full time as a working photographer. Grimshaw has covered events in Europe and Canada, built a solid client base and is already making plans for the next few years.

Her next big goal is to attend Rio as a photographer, a huge challenge but one she isn't taking on lightly. "I feel ready", Grimshaw said. "It's tough financially, it's an expensive trip and persuading clients and sponsors of the value of good photography seems to be a constant challenge."

The recent Aachen European Championships were a stepping stone to bigger things for Grimshaw, creatively and business wise. Grimshaw, specializing in the behind-the-scenes imagery, was delighted to shoot at the prestigious CHIO Aachen venue for the first time. "I had freedom to shoot anything I wanted, spending hours sitting in the warm up ring and getting to know the riders' ins and outs, horses' characters and the amazingly hard working grooms' relationships with the horses. Catching those details that often go unseen," Grimshaw explains. "My photography style really came through over the two weeks, I am thrilled with my images and I'm excited to work with my new clients I met at Aachen!"

Be sure to follow Cara Grimshaw's photography adventures online as she continues to travel the globe. Cara is available for dedicated rider and team coverage and portrait sittings. 

All photos by Cara Grimshaw

Web www.caragrimshaw.com
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Britain's Carl Hester and Nip Tuck



A practice session at the FEI European Championships, Aachen 2015



Britain's Charlotte Dujardin and Valgero

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BUYING YOUR HORSE ABROAD

SOME LEGAL TIPS

HT IS PLEASED TO PRESENT THE FIRST IN A SERIES OF ARTICLES ON LEGAL TOPICS RELATED TO HORSES AND HORSE OWNERSHIP. IN THIS ARTICLE THE FIRM OF EUROPEAN EQUINE LAWYERS SHEDS LIGHT ON THE CRUCIAL RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE SALE OF HORSES.



The European Equine Lawyers team: Ms. Britt Loosjen, Mr. Piotr Wawrzyniak, Mr. Luc Scholstraete, Mr. Vincent Zitman and Ms. Nikki Hamers

In our legal practice, which is focused solely on equine law, we are routinely offered cases involving the disputed purchase or sale of a horse or pony. In this type of dispute, often it turns out that consumer buyers are not aware of what they are getting into and lack insight in the adequate care and training of a horse. They also lack understanding of their own obligations towards the purchased horse and, in a legal case

, the result can often go against them.

CASE STUDY

A gentleman bought an 8-year-old gelding. The horse is examined both clinically and radio logically pre-purchase. The clinical examination is clear, but on one single x-ray the examining veterinarian finds an abnormality. The horse is purchased in

spite of this remark, but the sales price is brought down by 1000. The total sum for the gelding then stands at 4000. Just a few weeks later, the buyer finds that the horse cannot be ridden normally.

The seller visits and explains the horse should be ridden in the way it was accustomed and if it is ridden in this way things will be fine. The buyer feels that the horse cannot freely move on

its own feet, has a troublesome back and has skipped strides in both trot and canter. The buyer suspects the horse has been through a trauma in the past, but there is no proof of this. In short, the horse does not function properly according to the buyer.

In addition, it is later learned that the horse also suffers from mud fever, which the seller has failed to mention. After contact about this matter, the seller states the horse has suffered from mud fever before in the past. Again, this does not please the buyer! The above is reason enough for the buyer to want to return the horse. The seller is sorry there was no connection between the horse and the buyer, but will not take the horse back. The buyer would like to know this rights and course of action at this point.

ANSWER - EUROPEAN EQUINE LAWYERS

In the legal sense, I understand from the facts presented here that the buyer is of the opinion the horse does not live up to his expectations based on the sales agreement posed by him. A number of facts caught my attention and raised not only questions, but also professional astonishment. This astonishment is not limited to my vision as an experienced equine lawyer, but also as an avid enthusiast of horses and equestrian sport.

What is the case? An eight-year-old gelding is purchased for a sum of €5000, and the horse is subjected to clinical and radiological examinations at the costs of approximately €700. The results of the clinical examination are fine, but in one x-ray an abnormality is found. The horse changes ownership after the price has been reduced by 1000 to a sum of 4000 in light of this finding.

After about four weeks, the horse would be unable to be ridden normally. According to the buyer, the horse apparently has a difficult back and misses strides even in trot! The horse would also suffer from mud fever, which had failed to be mentioned.

It is not stated whether the buyer ever tried the gelding before the purchase. This appears not to be the case. After all, if the horse had been tried by the aspiring buyer before the purchase, the buyer would have been able to form some kind of judgment regarding the way the horse was ridden and how it felt. This concludes a resume' of the facts.

OUR VISION

You get what you pay for. From the way this case presents itself, it is clear

the buyer is not very well versed in owning, caring for and riding horses. The first question is what the buyer may expect from a horse with a price of 4000. Whatever the veterinary condition of such an animal may be, this kind of sum will not buy a highly trained top sport horse. Horses sold for such sums often have limitations either veterinary or in their natural abilities to perform as riding horses.

-Pre-purchase exams are not guarantees. The fact stands out that a considerable sum is invested in a pre-purchase examination, only to accept the risks of a veterinary remark on one of the x-rays anyway. Should the buyer want to explore the question whether the riding problems are the consequence of this veterinary remark, he may be advised in this matter by an array of 'experts' who would be most willing to invest the necessary time and effort in this matter, but will also present their opinions. Pre-purchase examination is very important, but is no guarantee the horse will continue to do well with the buyer after purchase.

-Buyer's unrealistic expectations. Bills for veterinary examinations can quickly amount to sums far exceeding the purchase price of the horse. The presentation of the problem regarding the mud fever also shows the buyer in question has little knowledge of what he is doing. Some horses may indeed be more susceptible to the condition than others, but mud fever is often a reaction to inadequate care, dirty stables, unclean and muddy footing in, for instance, horse walkers or the like.

-The veterinarian charged with the pre-purchase examination evidently did not diagnose any mud fever in his clinical examination. In other words, I would advise the buyer to ask himself what it is he expects from a horse, and whether he fully realizes such an animal is not a machine, but requires care and attention, and also has the right to appropriate training and schooling so that the gelding in question is not hindered by his rider. Perhaps it is time to include clauses in the regulations which allow the animal itself to claim a fitting rider, a rider which can offer the horse everything that may be expected of them!

-In difficulties there are often opportunities. Personally, I see huge opportunities for professional sellers in transactions with consumer buyers and amateurs with little experience abroad. In the sale of a horse, the veterinary pre-purchase examination is only a snapshot, but in case of a positive result, the seller should give specific advice as to the that particular horse's training level, needs, and special quirks.

-When problems do occur, the professional seller would do well to invest time and effort into aiding the buyer. Make the journey to the buyer and judge the situation with the horse for yourself, in order to determine whether the cause was pre-existing or whether it was the new rider himself who caused the communication problems with the horse by his own ignorance.

CONCLUSION

It could be expected that cases such as this one only occur in the sales of horses in the lower price ranges. The opposite is often true, however. Especially in the higher price ranges (upwards of 200,000), talented and often very experienced dressage and show jumping horses are sold abroad. When the sale is not conducted by a professional or a very experienced amateur, mismatches seem to occur very quickly. When the new rider is not quickly able to continue the horse's training at the same level as the selling rider rode at, the new rider will encounter all kinds of problems. Only very rarely does the new rider wonder if he may be the cause and not the selling party. The horse in question gets no fair chance at all, and becomes no more than the subject of a legal dispute without receiving any further training. The health of the horse will tumble into a downward spiral. This lack of self-reflection on the part of the new rider will then lead to an even bigger disappointment when the selling party in equestrian countries such as The Netherlands, Germany or Belgium is awarded its rights by the courts of those countries.

While professional sellers may purposefully decide in favour of selling to a less experienced rider, and such rider can also purposefully decide to buy a horse, the horse is often the victim in such cases. Professional sellers would do well in my opinion to realize that they are not only selling an animal, but also the idea in the buyer's mind that they will meet certain goals with this animal. The horse itself is only part of the total package, which should also include guidance and training with regard to the horse. Professional sellers incorporating this guidance into their sale will have more chance of building lasting and fruitful business relationships. 🐾

equine-law related questions or matters.

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