

# Arena - January/February 2010

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## 2009 South African Junior Dressage Championships (Cape Town)

This was a very successful show for our very talented group of young Gauteng dressage riders who made the long trip down to Cape Town this year.

The weather was thankfully kind to the show organisers who ran an efficient and friendly show.

In the warm up E and EM classes our riders had many prizes. In the individual championships Anthea Michaletos, of GHS, had a convincing win on her brilliant imported mare, 'Ulivia STV', with a final score of 67%. Second place went to Jenna McWilliams, also from GHS, riding 'Le Bijou'. In third place was 'Hakahana Angus Og' with Kirsten Wing and in fourth place was 'Octavius' and Ingrid Malan.

The following day it was the musical Kurs. Once again Anthea and 'Ulivia STV' wowed us taking first place in the medium Kur. In the EM Kur 'Mambo N' and Shelby Kleynhans, of GHS, obtained a very good second, with first place going to the very talented Kirsten Wing.

The team dressage competition was on the final team; our team comprised: Anthea Michaletos, Jenna McWilliams, Jennifer Gill and Shelby Kleinhans. Dominique Halls's horse, 'Quick Guy', unfortunately came down with a mild virus the previous day and was therefore the team reserve.

We had a relatively young and inexperienced team but each one of them rode very well under the huge pressure from Natal and Western Province. Unfortunately we got pipped at the post by a very well deserving Western Province team, congratulations to them!

The final scores were:

1<sup>st</sup> WPHS 2583  
2<sup>nd</sup> GHS 2582  
3<sup>rd</sup> KZN 2568  
4<sup>th</sup> ECHS 2537  
5<sup>th</sup> NCFS 2482

I was very proud of all our young riders and look forward to a successful team for the future.

A special thanks to: GHS for providing the smart kit for our team, the riders and parents for making the long trip down to Cape Town and the show organisers who ran a very successful event. (With thanks to Karen Keller)

## Congratulations

We are very excited to announce that the following people have just passed their first written dressage judges exam. Congratulations to:

Neli Henry  
Chenay Simms  
Lois Sangari  
Janet Dewar-Pitts  
Nasia Lupini

## The inside scoop!

We were lucky enough to pin Judy Vertue down long enough to get a little insight into her very interesting life to date...

**When did your interest in horses first start?** I started riding at the age of 5 in England on a very naughty pony called Nobby in lead rein classes. I started riding again in my teens, whilst still in England.

**Tell us about some of the horses you have owned/ridden over the years.** When I came to South Africa in 1976 I bought a very talented, but extremely uncomfortable, TB eventer which jumped everything at high speed but came bottom in the dressage phase. I then bought a new horse, a lovely thoroughbred mare called Sensation, who gave me the joy of

knowing what it really meant to sit on a horse with swinging paces! We came top in eventing dressage and I took her through to Elementary. This got me hooked on dressage! When she was 16 I decided to breed with her successfully producing a Thaddaeus colt, Tarragon, and a Winter Star Colt, Winnaker. I fell totally in love with the Thaddaeus temperament but sadly Tarragon became a wobbler at age 3 and had to be put down. Winnaker hated dressage and turned into the most fantastic show jumper (reaching B Grade beautifully ridden by Prue O'Donovan for nine years). I was fortunate to buy Sue Murray's horse Tatler, another Thaddaeus, who I still have and is my pride and joy.

**How did you get into judging and when?** Sue Bass introduced me to judging in 1994.

**What do you look for when judging?** Above all I look for harmony, a happy horse who is working willingly with his rider (who is hopefully looking happy too), displaying suppleness, elasticity and correct training. It always has to be a partnership.

**What changes - good and bad - are you seeing in dressage and the dressage fraternity these days?**

We have to raise the bar. We have very good horses in South Africa, both locally bred and imported, and some good trainers but not enough. Having been Gauteng Dressage Chairman for three years and on the National Committee I know what a huge amount of work it entailed. The challenge at the moment is that, if we are indeed going to raise the bar, get ourselves to Grand Prix level and to compete internationally, there is a lot to be done, which necessitates finding people who have the time, dedication, tenacity (never give up!) and the knowledge to make this happen in South Africa, in a communicative and cohesive way.

**How did you first get into Musical Kurs?** I watched a video of Jane Bartle Wilson and Pinnochio at Goodwood in the 80s doing a very entertaining Musical Kur and I thought 'I can do this!' I completed all my piano exams with the Royal College of Music and also did ballroom dancing, so I have a musical background. I first 'experimented' with Karen Keller and the legendary Westwood Ho, at the Derby where the judge gave her 10 out of 10 for the music! I was then inundated with people wanting me to do their kurs! I've done about 200 over the years!

**Who have been your greatest mentors in Dressage?** Liz Day and Stephen Clark. As an International Candidate Judge and an International Para Dressage Judge, Liz has given me some incredibly valuable advice based on her experiences both here and overseas. Stephen Clark, who I brought out for the GHS Champs in 2005, is an inspiration to us all. I have just obtained his recently published book, Dressage Dreams, everyone should have this!

**What is your greatest achievement over the years you have been involved in dressage?** I guess there are a number of them;

1. Firstly obtaining the biggest sponsorship dressage has ever had in Gauteng (quarter of a million rand three years running from Sandown Motors, for the Musical Kur Festival - so exciting!)
2. Composing Philippa Johnson's Silver Medal Freestyle at the Athens Paralympics and her Gold Medal Freestyle at the Hong Kong Paralympics.
3. Since January 2008, as a Director of the SA Lipizzaners, having had the privilege, together with a fantastic team of co-Directors, of 'saving the Lipizzaners'. It was very tough, we look back and wonder how on earth we did it that first year - failure was never an option and never will be.

**Any regrets?** Yes, that I don't have the time to devote to becoming a Para Dressage Judge

## *New Dressage tests available*

All new SANEF Dressage tests are available for download from the SANEF website. These new tests will be used with effect from 1 January 2010.

## *Mini Novice Champs*

Over 100 horses competed at this year's event and the qualifying rounds began on the Friday.

Liz Dewsbury and Maureen Dalglish judged the Preliminary Qualifiers over two days whilst Clare Bailes and Eino Vourinen took on the *marathon* of judging the Novice Qualifiers – all 48 horses who took part on the Saturday!!

Only Judges from 'B' panel upwards were asked to judge at this event, giving riders and judges at the lower levels the opportunity to gain experience.

The 'cherry on the top' was of course, to have Harry Payne from the U.K, judge the Novice Championship and Freestyle competitions. Harry is an absolute gentleman with a wicked sense of humour and it was an absolute pleasure hosting him.

Some positive feedback from Harry was that there were some top quality horses performing; all horses that he judged were working well to their level of schooling and there were certainly no horses not worth judging.

Besides extreme heat – 31 to 32 degrees Celsius, the atmosphere was relaxed and festive. Kate and the ground staff did a sterling job in decorating all the judges boxes and surrounds with Christmas decorations which looked great!

Scores were out quicker than you could say 'score'; both the recorders and Kate were amazing at getting the qualifications out at lightning speed.

Results:

Preliminary Championship (judged by Caroline Potts and Ute Schutz)

1<sup>st</sup> Neopolitano Nanczi and Kerry Plumpstead

2<sup>nd</sup> Taba Daccord and Ingrid Boraine

3<sup>rd</sup> Swazi Lizka St. Regis and Louise Kotze

Novice Championship (judged by Harry Payne (UK) and Bev Franklin)

1<sup>st</sup> Alzu Laudable and Janice Watson

2<sup>nd</sup> Wedgewood Espri and Shirley Mons

3<sup>rd</sup> Diehough Zorba and Lorna Cochrane

Preliminary Consolation Class (judged by Sheba Zager and Debbie Van Wyk)

1<sup>st</sup> Latest News and Louise Kotze

2<sup>nd</sup> Hakahana Nabucco and Yolande Schoeman

3<sup>rd</sup> Luna and Joan Bekker

Novice Consolation Class (judged by Eva Sydow and Erica De Groot)

1<sup>st</sup> Brandenburg Sergeant Pepper and Lucy Welsh

2<sup>nd</sup> Verdini Webber and Tessa Hodgson

3<sup>rd</sup> The One and Only and Carlyette Joelson

The Freestyle's were super to watch and it was such a pity that these classes were so poorly supported, with only 8 entries, but the spectators gave those riders a much needed boost.

Newcomer Freestyle was won by Evangelic and Lauren Stevens whilst the Novice Freestyle was won by Rumah Saya and Alexa Bisschops (judged by Harry Payne (UK) and Caroline Potts).

Thank you to all the officials and ground staff for a wonderful weekend; congratulations (again) to all riders. (With thanks to Sheba Zager)

## *International Dressage Trainers Club*

We would like to congratulate Helen Laros who has recently been invited to join The International Dressage Trainers Club (IDTC).

The IDTC represents the interest of dressage trainers to the FEI – this role and influence of this club is rapidly expanding as the FEI becomes increasingly responsive to stakeholder groups. In addition this club provides a forum for discussion, debate and information sharing amongst international dressage trainers.

## *Harry Payne Seminar*

Monday 7 December saw Harry Payne, a level C eventing judge, level 2 dressage judge in the UK and also a professional rider and trainer, present a seminar after judging at the Mini Novice Champs.

3 horse/rider combinations were chosen, from Prelim, Novice and Elementary levels respectively. After warming up (with the assistance of Harry) they each rode a test which was analysed and marked (tests Prelim 3, Nov 3 and Elem 4 were ridden).

Harry pointed out right from the start that some of the most important characteristics of a good judge are integrity and honesty. Assessing the horse's scale of training at a particular level is vital: rhythm, suppleness, contact, straightness etc. need to be looked at.

The first guinea pig in was the eventer Peter Evans on 'Wow's Cup'. Harry explained what makes a good walk: decent rhythm, clear 4 beat – look for the 'V'. If that is not there, then there is some degree of fragmentation. With Peter's horse a fairly pure, correct walk was shown but more looseness and better ground cover would have been desired. In the trot Peter's horse was a bit tense and stiff, therefore appearing a bit irregular and tight in the back. More spring and elasticity is required but quite understandably a tense, 'hot' horse will always have the tendency to go faster and 'on the head'. In the canter the horse was not as willing and soft in the back, canter was 'close to the floor' and the rider needed to give 'room' with reins for horse to get the frame more up.

The second pair was Barton (owned by Paula Lasersohn) and ridden very well by Taryn Park. This combination showed a lot less tension thereby showing, in all 3 paces, a more secure ride which in turn resulted in a clearer rhythm.

The third horse in was 'Mossandi Rock to Music' (owned by Erica de Groot and ridden by Andrea Harrison). Well, she was the 'hottest' horse of all of them! Rather spooky and tense! Some movements she nevertheless performed very well and was rewarded with good marks, others just fell to pieces a bit... e.g. unwanted flying changes. The so-called 'up and down test' with some great but also some very bad marks. It was refreshing to see that Harry never hesitated to give a really high mark for something that was well performed but punish with a low mark where there were too many mistakes or a bad execution.

Harry furthermore stressed that suppleness in the horse has to be lateral as well as longitudinal. In addition, mental and physical relaxation are vital for a good performance, i.e. properly performed movements. There must be no negative tension and the rider needs to have still, elastic hands, at the same time be able to give and retake reins while selfcarriage of the horse is maintained. Impulsion, so often confused with 'speed' means development of power and push with the steps becoming heightened. Straightness means: hind limbs must follow fore limbs. Collection is only possible if there is true straightness. Collection is carrying capacity – cadence and energy must be maintained.

And when it comes to judging riders? Comments must be such that riders will want to continue rather than give up! Comments must always relate to the mark and a mark must always be justified in the comment. And: if a mistake happens not in the main body of the movement, then don't punish too much! The percentage of the collective marks needs to reflect the marks given for the individual movements in the test. And if a 6 or lower mark are given, then a comment is a MUST!

All in all it was an inspiring seminar and everybody went home having learnt something new again!

A big thank you to the 3 riders and horses – it is not easy to ride in front of an audience in the Lipi Hall unless you do it every day....

And many thanks to Harry who's input and advice for judges and riders alike was most welcomed! (With thanks to Sibylle Gussmann)

## *Onwards and upwards*

Gary Player is infamous for saying 'The harder I work the luckier I get' – the same could be said for the following horse/rider teams who have worked hard to be upgraded, well done to:

Favory Els and Favory Erdem (both Lipizzaners) from AM to ADV  
Ulivia STV (ridden by Anthea Michaletos) from JEM to JM  
Brandenburg Land of Music (ridden by Anne Casey) from AEM to AM  
Slimlite Sam (ridden by Dianne Smith) from AEM to AM

## *No need to bury your head in the sand...*

Riverleigh is pleased to say that the ostriches that used to reside next door to the yard are no longer there .... So those horses (or riders!) who didn't like their presence are welcomed back with open arms!