

Para-Dressage Newsletter

April 2010



Dear Riders, Coaches, Parents and Judges

Things seem to be much quieter at the moment; what with the frenzy of preparing for the International competition at KEP in March now completed. This has given the selectors the opportunity to consider all performance scores as well as the qualification history of the paradressage riders and potential management in order to select the strongest team for World Equestrian Games.

The goal set for SA paradressage is for the team to move into the top 10 teams in the world, thereby bettering the performance in Hong Kong. We have every confidence that the SA Paradressage Team below will be able to achieve this.

TEAM ANNOUNCEMENT TO THE WORLD EQUESTRIAN GAMES IN KENTUCKY!!!

The following riders have been selected to represent SA at the WEG in October:

Marion Milne	Grade 1B
Wendy Moller	Grade 2
Anthony Dawson	Grade 2
Cathy Lloyd	Grade 4
Philippa Johnson	Grade 4

Management:

Team Manager	Sharon Boyce
Team Coach (Dressage)	Bev Franklin
Team Coach (RDA)	Tracey Cumming
Assistant coach (RDA / Groom)	Teri Smith
Groom	Anton Chimbuanda
Groom	Enoch Bhekziha Cele

Congratulations to all these riders and management!!! We wish our team all the best in their preparation towards WEG.

SHOW RESULTS:

It would be wonderful to include the scores of riders in all the different provinces so please send in your results.

Linbro Park:

Sandi Norris N2: 66.68% : 2nd
N3: 66.00% : 1st

GROW PARA EQUESTRIAN OPEN DAY AT SHUMBASHABA EQUINE ASSISTED THERAPY CENTRE.

Unfortunately the Shumbashaba show on the 1st May has had to be postponed to the 31st July. There will be wonderful prizes to be won courtesy of the Centurion Lions so be sure to enter and tell your friends.

Picture of the month: (Please send me your show pictures)

Due to the file size I can only include one picture of a rider at a show, therefore I will select a new one every month. This month we have Grade 1 B rider Marion Milne on her new horse Baron



Interesting article on “Woman & Horses” for all the lady riders....

This is a chapter from the book 'Of women and Horses' edited by Ga Wa Ni Pony Boy, and published by Bow Tie Press.

As far as I am aware (and I have little historical knowledge), the love story between women and horses is predominantly a 20th century phenomenon. But it is hard to believe that individual women did not have deeply significant relationships with their horses well before that time. This century has seen the horse's role evolve from beast of burden and transport to that of family member. He now faces social instead of utilitarian tasks, and instead of having predominantly male riders and handlers his “significant others” are predominantly female. Perhaps it took wealth, and the changing social order of the post second world war period for enough women to have enough contact with enough horses for us to reach some kind of critical mass, and for the concept of “horsey women” to be born. Perhaps it took film for this relationship to be glamorised, and placed in the public domain as a “phenomenon”. Perhaps it took Freud to give us a psychoanalytic interpretation (from a male perspective of course) which we could feel justified in rallying against.

Like a large percentage of the women I meet around horses, I was in love with them from as early as I can remember. Living my fantasies of riding and being around horses took a very long time, but throughout those years the fantasy remained all consuming. But at the age when so many little girls are goggling either at real ponies, or at the ponies in their picture books, most little boys could not care less. They are besotted with engines, and the need to put things together and take them apart.

So whilst many women are extremely “soppy” about their horses when they are off them, the agenda changes once they are on them. With riders of both sexes, the combination of high expectations and low skills marks the beginnings of stress for the horse. Low expectations and low skills can never be an ideal; but unless high expectations are

matched with high skills and an extremely ethical philosophy of training, the horse suffers - and he probably suffers more than he does from ignorance. For as the Old Classical Masters of dressage used to say, "Where skill ends, violence begins."

Since women reach the limits of their skills just as often as men, it is perhaps fortunate that we do not have as much weight to throw around as they do. In general, we have a lesser need to be right, to dominate, and to win at all costs. We are less likely to regard riding as a battle. But we still have our ambitions and our insecurities, and these can be triggered by riding. A frightening number of horses are still forced to carry the burden of our ego needs.

This all depends on what we believe our riding says about us. If a bad canter transition is purely viewed as a behaviour, then to mess it up is no big deal. But if I progress down that slippery slope from "I rode a bad transition", to "I can't ride transitions", to "I'm having a bad day", to "I'm a bad rider", and ultimately to "I am a bad person", then every transition has the potential to prove that I am good or bad. Ultimately, every step the horse takes becomes leaded with meaning.

The saddest aspect of this is that so few riders – and even (though I hesitate to say it) so few women - have the humility to learn from the horse, and thus to communicate with him in his own language. Whether you are on the ground or on his back; whether you are an ambitious, a competitive, or a backyard rider, I believe that you owe this to your horse. This – or your best efforts along the path of your learning - is living your love. And there are so many choices now about how you do that. You can communicate with your horse through riding. But if you prefer not to bite off that challenge (and a significant challenge it is) you can become skilful at working him in a round pen, or on the end of a twelve foot rope. Or you can learn the skills of touch, discovering how to read his body and ease his aches and pains.

Meeting any of these challenges may require you to evolve, and to change both who you are, and how you perceive yourself and your horse. As one of my old teachers used to say, "The rider needs both sensitivity and authority, but it is so rare to find both of those in one person. If you are strong in one, you are lacking in the other...". This might seem like the archetypal male/female divide, and perhaps we are all in search of a wholeness which incorporates the strengths of both sexes. So it is that riding and handling horses can become a path of personal discovery. The less natural talent you have, the more you stand to learn – and to gain as a person – from your interactions with your horses.

Whilst it may be tempting to think of yourself as your horse's "Mom" - especially given his dependence on you, - this is something of a sell-out, and you are not acknowledging the entirety of your relationship with him. Riders who are more up-front willingly acknowledge that their horse has as much the role of their dancing partner as of their child. One young friend of mine, for instance, went the whole way when she was complimented on being such a good mummy to her horse. "I am not his mummy", she responded firmly "I am his girl friend."

The relationship between many of us women and our horses is so close, so exciting, demanding and intimate, that it can be the most profound of our lives. So perhaps it is not surprising that several women I know once had husbands who had implemented the final solution to their marital problems. "It's me or the horse", they announced, only to be told in no uncertain terms that the woman concerned would rather share life with her horse! My own ex-partner once declared indignantly that "I'm not like your horse, you know, you can't just shut me in a stable and forget about me!". Little did he realise that I rarely forgot about my horse, and never shut him in for very long.". That man just didn't understand how the world works...

Until next time happy riding!!

Wendy

PS. Feel free to contact me if you have any tips, funny horsy stories or anything you would like to add.