

SANEF Newsletter

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On the international front

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Shiree Darley

In June, Shiree Darley took on what she calls her biggest personal riding challenge to date – competing at PSG Level in the UK on Pamina. She has been graded by British Dressage as a Level 3 Rider, Level 1 being riders who have competed at Big Tour level. Level 3 riders are those that have won more than 14 points in Advanced or PSG or foreign riders. Only Level 1-3 riders may compete at PSG Level, and as a foreign rider she needed to achieve a minimum score of 60% in Advanced Classes before participating in a British Dressage PSG competition.

Shiree tells the story: "Seeing as I had not actually officially competed on Pamina yet (in November last year our first trial was a low key Medium Class entered as HC) – this was extremely intimidating and I was certainly feeling the pressure. We had decided to compete at Hartpury on the 7th June in the Advanced Class and then if all went well to follow with the next class directly after being the PSG Test.

Having arrived at Peter Storr's yard six days prior to the competition, my training had progressed well although we had not ridden right through either of the Tests, Peter worked on aspects of the movement combinations. This didn't really quell my nerves though and the night before the competition was sleepless!

Peter was competing on my Vinducath (Seal) in the Medium and Advanced Medium as this show was also a qualifier for the Regional Championships so, we arrived at Hartpury with two beautiful black horses – a mare and stallion – and Peter's ride, the highly sensitive gelding, Belmondino - a little tricky combination to manage, but exhilarating.

Hartpury is a large, rather intimidating venue – incredibly professional with exquisite outdoor arenas, an Indoor warm-up, a very spooky indoor arena and then the large, international main indoor arena. There is a small warm-up arena at the entrance to the main arena which you get called into, one at a time, prior to entering.

My first class in there was daunting to say the least - combined with the excitement of actually competing at this venue, I totally stopped breathing! I had no idea how Pamina was going to react as I had some very different experiences with her during the previous weeks training – one in which she was so hyped she was like a rocket launcher in the extended work leaving me with fears that I would never be able to stop her and we would end up in the grandstands! She is an incredibly big mover but can also be quite spooky – which was how she actually ended up being in this Advanced Test, so I really had a challenge to keep her balanced and correct (she gets there so fast you have so little time to set her up!). Waiting tentatively for my results, I was delighted to receive 63.75% placing fourth, and after a serious pep-talk from Peter, went into the PSG Test riding a lot more positively. We had a few small mistakes and I needed to prepare better and ride a lot more accurately, but we improved at this higher level to achieve 63.95% and fifth place with Peter and Belmondino achieving second with 67.89%.

Peter and Seal achieved firsts with 72.11% in the Medium class and 73.57% in the Advanced Medium to qualify for the regionals so I was thrilled. One of the judge's comments about Seal was: "just lovely!!", what a great score-sheet, filled with sevens and eights.

Our next focus was the Wellington Premier League which comprises the FEI Tests beginning at PSG Level. We had entered the PSG class on two consecutive days with Peter riding his Grand Prix prospect Belmondino and me with Pamina. For this we had to travel to the other side of Windsor, London which was about two-and-a-half hours from Peasebrook Farm – once again allowing plenty of contemplative time for my nerves to really get busy! Wellington was a completely different set up to Hartpury with many Professional Level 1 and 2 riders travelling from right across the United Kingdom to compete. The arena set-up was a first for me and my heart stopped when I saw it as the spectator seating was hard up against the timber sides with the judges positioned at eye level right on the markers. The PSG Class was divided into two sections due to the number of competitors and took the full length of both days. Warming up with riders of this calibre was a whole new league for me but we managed to hold it together and had two really good classes. My marks were slightly lower (just under 62%) with the spookiness of the arena and the judging being stricter with a

championship (*albeit* Jenni Loristan-Clarke included – and I could see the colour of her eyes as she was so close). The final winning score was 69.75% achieved by Peter Storr and Belmondino, but I was definitely well positioned with the rest of the class and Peter was a lot happier with our general way of going and the way I handled my nerves including getting out of trouble with a very spooky, strong and ground-covering Pamina.

This was such a big hurdle for me and I arrived home feeling highly motivated and elated with a new level of confidence that we are getting there one step at a time. I will be competing again at the Premier League at Hartpury with Pamina in mid-July so am focusing on gearing myself up again as there is so much preparation to do but so far, it is really worth every second of effort to be up there in that saddle.

Challenges dog para dressage's Philippa Johnson



"Unfortunately I have just had about the worst 18 months that a rider could wish for," says Olympic para rider, Philippa Johnson.

"At the beginning of last year my brilliant horse, Benedict, was diagnosed with a tear in his suspensory ligament in his near hind. After having tried various treatments, in October last year we operated. This went well but then I came home in December and upon getting back found that the leg was worse than when we started, so that has put him out for this year, which is a huge disappointment as I was hoping to take him to World Equestrian Games (WEG).

"The next part of the story is that at the beginning of last year I was sponsored a phenomenal young horse, so with Benedict out of action our attention turned onto him. Bad luck hit again when he landed up having a serious problem with a tendon and he was returned to the dealer who sold him to us.

"You can just imagine what type of feeling I had in the pit of my stomach! Five months before WEG and I had no horse to ride! Luckily enough, we have just found a new horse which is a replacement for the young horse we sent back, so we now have a few months to try come together as best we can. His name is Verdi and he is an eight-year-old KWPN gelding by Osmium.

"We are going to try to take him to a few local shows but haven't had quite enough time together yet. Training as per usual with a new horse is exciting, difficult, frustrating, but most importantly of all, it is just the best thing in the world to be back in the saddle again!"