



SIMPLY THE BEST

A Record Medal Result for the US Equestrian Team at the Pan American Games

BY KAREN ROBINSON

In the history of the Pan American Games equestrian competition, no single country has ever dominated the podium like the Americans did in Guadalajara, Mexico this October



Gold Medal Jumping Team
Kent Farrington, Beezie Madden, Christine McCreary
and McLain Ward



Gold Medal Dressage Team
Cesar Parra, Heather Blitz,
Marisa Festerling and Steffen Peters



Gold Medal Eventing Team
Hannah Burnett, Buck Davidson, Shannon Lilley,
Michael Pollard and Lynn Symansky

Photos by Jim Beran

From the first dressage test to the final jumping round it was, to borrow an expression used by the hosts of the PAG, an American Fiesta. Winning Team Gold in all three disciplines and all but two individual medals, the United States Equestrian Team came home with ten medals, more than any other country has achieved in the Pan Am Games' 60 year history. The medal haul toppled the previous record of nine equestrian medals, also won in Mexico, and also by the United States, at the 1975 PAG in Mexico City. The U.S. is also the only country to ever have won all three individual medals in PAG Equestrian competition: in Eventing in 1963 (where the American team was the only one to finish) and again in 2007, when Karen O'Connor, Phillip Dutton and Gina Miles added Gold, Silver and Bronze Individual medals to their Team Gold. In Guadalajara, the U.S. added one more distinction to its already-impressive PAG record by becoming the first nation ever to win Team Gold and all three individual medals in Dressage; the American Jumpers came within a single rail of repeating that feat ten days later.

GOLDEN MAGIC - DRESSAGE

The American sweep in Dressage came as a surprise to no one. With scores at the Selection Trials having reached well into the 70's, the four member team consisting of Steffen Peters on Weltino's Magic, Heather Blitz on Paragon, Marisa Festerling on Big Tyme and Cesar Parra on Grandioso was considered the one to beat for the other 11 teams in Mexico; in the end, the Americans proved unbeatable. Not only did the team set a new record for consecutive equestrian Team Gold medals by winning their fourth PAG Dressage Gold in a row, but Steffen Peters broke the PAG record for the Prix St. Georges with an unbelievable score of 80.132%.

Ever humble, Peters thanked his teammates and his horse above all. "I have to thank my teammates first of all, as well as Magic," he said following the medal ceremony. "In previous years I have gone into a team competition with a little heavier load on my shoulders as the very last rider, but the team did an awesome job - every single horse, every single rider." In fact, the U.S. would have won Team Gold even if Peters had not been there.



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Steffen Peters on Weltino's Magic

Blitz, Festerling and Parra – who rode Michael and Sarah Davis' 10-year-old Westphalian gelding Grandioso in his first appearance on the U.S. Team since becoming an American citizen – had already guaranteed Team Gold before Peters even cantered down center line.

It was generally expected that the U.S. was unlikely to bow to any rivals at the Games, but their results exceeded perhaps even their own expectations. Canada has usually been the U.S. Dressage Team's biggest rival at the Pan American Games, but this time there was no contest. The Americans won Gold with an average score of 74.421% (a PAG team record score), four percent ahead of the Silver medalist Canadians, who in turn managed to stay less than a point ahead of the Bronze medalist team from Colombia.

There was no change to the top three standings in the Individual Dressage competition. Peters remained the leader throughout the Intermediaire I and Intermediaire Freestyle, though he admitted afterward that Blitz and her eight-year-old Danish Warmblood gelding Paragon had given him reason to doubt his ability to top her score of 86.650% in the Freestyle. Weltino's Magic, a nine-year-old Westphalian gelding owned by Jen Hlavacek, delivered a flawless performance that earned Peters yet another PAG record for his Freestyle, which earned him a score of 87.2%.

"I definitely thought Heather and Paragon could win Gold," said Hlavacek, who had traveled to Mexico to watch Peters compete with her horse. "I'm absolutely thrilled. It's a



Heather Blitz on Paragon

great ending to a great year, where we have achieved every single goal." Blitz came closest to Peters' combined individual score of 82.64%, winning Individual Silver with 81.917% in her first U.S. Dressage Team appearance. Fellow team first-timer Festerling won Bronze



Marisa Festerling and Big Tyme



Cesar Parra and Grandioso

with a combined score of 77.545% on her 10-year-old Belgian Warmblood gelding, Big Tyme. The U.S. Dressage Team was supported by Dressage Technical Advisor Anne Gribbons and Chef d'Equipe Eva Salomon.

FIVE GOLDEN RIDES - EVENTING

Using the current Olympic format that allows up to five horse and rider combinations on a team – with the top three to count – the PAG Eventing saw 13 nations send teams or individuals, with a total field of 49 horses and riders. The U.S. sent a mixed team of veterans and first timers to



Hannah Burnett on Harbour Pilot

Guadalajara: Hannah Burnett on Harbour Pilot, Buck Davidson on Absolute Liberty, Shannon Lilley on Ballingowan Pizazz, Michael Pollard on Schoensgreen Hanni and Lynn Symansky on Donner. They may



Buck Davidson and Absolute Liberty

*Michael Pollard
and Schoensgreen Hanni*

have had varying amounts of international experience, but they also had something in common. By the end of the team jumping, all five pairs were still on their dressage scores. The American Eventers won Team Gold for the third consecutive PAG by a fair margin, with a score of 138.60 penalties. Despite a Gold medal Individual performance from Canada's Jessica Phoenix on Pavarotti, the Canadians never really posed a threat to the Americans, finishing on the Silver Medal podium with 172.50, ahead of Brazil in Bronze position with 209.80 penalties.

The top four Americans had established their positions in second through fifth place right from the dressage phase. By the end of cross country over American John Williams' challenging two star course, Symansky and Donner had moved up



Shannon Lilley and Ballingowan Pizazz



Lynn Symansky and Donner

from tenth to occupy sixth place behind her teammates. The Americans were immovable as a team, though only three would advance to the individual final, in accordance with a PAG rule that allows only three athletes from a single country to advance to an individual final. Burnett, in Silver medal position with Jacqueline Mars' Harbour Pilot, an eight-year-old Irish Sport Horse gelding, proved her mettle by delivering a second fault free performance in the individual jumping round.

"I'm just really honored to be on this horse and to be part of this team, riding for the United States," said Burnett after winning an Individual Silver medal. "My horse's owner couldn't be here, but it was very important for me to do well for her on her homebred horse."

Also flawless for a second jumping round was Buck Davidson on Sharon Will's eight-year-old Oldenburg mare Absolute Liberty. Pollard, who had been in third place with his wife Natalie Bouckaert-Pollard's eight-year-old East German Warmblood mare Schoensgreen Hanni, dropped from third to fourth place after having two fences down in the individual round. Davidson switched places with Pollard to win Individual Bronze. "I'm very excited for Sharon Will, who bred and raised Absolute Liberty," said Davidson. "I'm very thankful she landed in my barn." The U.S. Eventing Team's medal achievements were assisted by Chef d'Equipe Captain Mark Phillips.

PERFECTLY GOLDEN - JUMPING

If there was one U.S. Team that felt some extra weight on their shoulders coming into the Pan American Games, it was the Jumping Team. They were the only discipline not yet to have earned a team qualification for the 2012 London Olympics. As McLain Ward admitted after his team had won Gold and the much-needed Olympic team spot, "to not qualify would have been a disaster for us. I have to be honest; the stress of the Olympic qualification put more pressure on me than the actual Olympic Games." But qualify they did, and in perfect form. Beezie Madden on Coral Reef Via Volo and Christine McCrea on Romantovich Take One quickly occupied the top two individual spots in the first



McLain Ward and Antares F



Kent Farrington and Uceko

day's speed class. Ward was seventh with Antares F, and Kent Farrington sat 15th with Uceko, a ten-year-old Dutch gelding owned by RCG Farm.

Going into the Nations' Cup in first place, the Americans pulled away from the field with an incredible set of performances: eight perfect, fault free rounds over a colourful course designed by Mexico's Javier Fernandez. The Mexican team, which had been nipping at the Americans' heels the previous day, slipped to the Bronze medal, while Brazil won Silver.

No one was happier about his team's achievement than Chef d'Equipe George Morris, who had words of high praise both for his riders and for the competition organizers. "We had great riders, including Mario [Deslauriers, traveling reserve with Jane Clark's Urico], and five class horses," he said. "This was an A Plus competition. The courses were fantastic, and Leopoldo's coordination was also fantastic."

The great performances kept coming from Madden and McCrea, who held onto their top positions right to the end of the individual final. The courses for the individual competition were heavily influenced by a very tight time limit, but no one could have predicted that the Gold and Silver medal positions would be so profoundly affected. McCrea, with her mother Candy Tribble's fast and reliable 11-year-old KWPN gelding Romantovich Take One, completed the entire week with not a single rail to add to her score of 0.88 penalties.

Last in the ring as the leader, Madden demonstrated her trademark effortless style and left all the jumps up with Coral Reef Ranch's 13-year-old Belgian Warmblood mare, but she had taken seven hundredths of a second too long. That single time fault cost Madden an Individual Gold medal, but she expressed happiness that it was her teammate who was there to take her place. "It's still Gold and Silver for the U.S., and

with Team Gold, this has been a fantastic week here. I have no complaints."

McCrea was an emotional and appreciative Gold medalist. "I want to thank my parents Larry and Candy, and my husband Jonathan. It was very exciting to have everybody here to share this with me." It was very nearly another clean podium sweep for the Americans, until Ward had an unlucky rail in the second individual round with Antares F, an 11-year-old Wurttemberger gelding owned by Grant Road Partners LLC. He dropped to fourth, while Brazil's Bernardo Alves and Bridgit moved up to take Bronze. It was one of only two individual medals that the U.S. Team did not win at the most successful Pan American Games in U.S. equestrian history. ■



Beezie Madden on Coral Reef Via Volo



Christine McCrea and Romantovich Take One

The USET Foundation Extends a Special Thanks to all the 2011 Pan American Games Horse Owners

JUMPING:

Windsor Show Stables & Candy Tribble – Romantovich Take One
Grant Road Partners – Antares F
Coral Reef Ranch – Coral Reef's Via Volo
RCG Farm – Uceko
Jane Forbes Clark – Urico

EVENTING:

Sharon Will – Absolute Liberty
The Lilley Group – Ballingowan Pizazz
Lynn Symansky – Donner
Jacqueline B. Mars – Harbour Pilot
Nathalie Pollard – Schoensgreen Hanni

DRESSAGE:

Marisa Festerling – Big Tyme
Michael and Sarah Davis – Grandioso
Heather Blitz – Paragon
Jen and Bruce Hlavacek – Weltino's Magic

Three Medals for U.S. Endurance Team at the Pan American Endurance Championships

It was a proud day for U.S. Endurance as they garnered a historic number of medals at the 2011 Pan American Endurance Championships in Santo Domingo, Chile. Taking the Team Silver medal in a combined time of 19:05:19 was John Crandall, III with Heraldic, Valerie Kanavy and Spectacular Gold and Deborah Reich and Pandor. The team finished just one minute and 47 seconds behind the Gold Medal team from Uruguay.

The veteran pair of Crandall and Heraldic completed the 120km course in 6:03:38 to win the Individual Silver medal. Finishing in 6:05:47, Kanavy and Spectacular Gold took the Individual Bronze. Reich and Pandor finished in 6:55:54 to place tenth. Riding as an individual, Cheryl Van Deusen and Moro Amado finished fifteenth.

"It's was great able to be a part of the group demonstrating that there is still a strong base of quality horses and horsemanship in America," noted Crandall. "Emmett Ross's light handed

management style allowed us to prepare our horses with more confidence than we've been allowed in a long time. We were able to find our own ways to work together as team, and to adapt that teamwork in real time as the day unfolded."

Heraldic and Crandall have been paired together for a number of years, and were well prepared to tackle the day's challenges after competing internationally on numerous occasions. "Heraldic is well known for being socially aloof, and obsessively competitive," explained Crandall. "He is a such an exceptionally well rounded athlete that I can be confident on almost any course."

The U.S. team, led by Chef d'Equipe Emmett Ross, set a blazing pace in the first three loops and were the team to catch most of the day. This is the most medals the U.S. has collected at an international Endurance competition.

"The course had an excellent balance of natural technicalities and was well prepared for safe going at world class paces," commented Crandall. "I knew this course would give us opportunity to demonstrate our strengths. By the second vet station it was apparent that Bernardo Algorta's horse was very strong of spirit and leg. This created the most exciting and dynamic balancing of strategies I have ever experienced. We had only a very narrow window of judgment to decide the most appropriate balance of team and individual strategies."

"We are very happy with the two Silver medals and one Bronze," added Ross. "Our riders had a fabulous go at it, we are proud of what we did and more importantly how we did it."

Crandall concluded, "I hope this excites people to realize that America has a strong nucleus of equine and human talent. The soil is fertile and seeded; we just need the sun's energy and room to grow." ■ – **Rebecca Walton**



John Crandall, III and Heraldic earned the Individual Silver medal at the the Pan American Endurance Championships

U.S. Jumping Team Places Fifth at CSIO Buenos Aires

CHARLIE JACOBS WINS ERICSSON GRAND PRIX ON LEAP OF JOY

Following a strong first round of competition, the U.S. Jumping Team, competing in the FEI Nations Cup at CSIO-W Buenos Aires on November 25, had to settle for a fifth place. The international event was held at Haras El Caprichio in Argentina.



Charlie Jacobs and Leap of Joy

The U.S. squad featured four of the nation's fastest rising young equestrian stars. Cara Raether of Bedford, NY, rode Trelawny Farms' Lyonell and was joined by Charlie Jacobs of Buffalo, NY, and Deeridge Farms' Leap of Joy, Redmond, Washington's Cara Anthony piloting the Potcreek Partners entry of Woodpecker de Villars and Ali Wolff of New Albany, OH, and Blacklick Bend Farm's Lanoo.



Cara Anthony and Woodpecker de Villars

Three of the U.S. horse and rider combinations, Jacobs and Leap of Joy, Anthony with Woodpecker de Villars and Raether on Lyonell, all had four faults in round one. The first round drop score was that of Lanoo and Wolff who had two knockdowns. The team total of 12 faults had the US squad sitting seven faults off the lead in third place.

The jumping proved tougher for the United States over German Course Designer Olaf Petersen's challenging track during the second round as they faded into an eventual fifth place finish, picking up 17 faults the second time around.



Cara Raether and Lyonell

In round two, Anthony was the best for the United States, picking up just a single knockdown, while Jacobs had a rail and a costly time fault. Wolff duplicated her first round score of eight faults and Raether had the drop score with 20 faults.

Canada claimed the Nations Cup victory, while Argentina and Brazil tied for second place with 26 faults. Fourth place went to Chile with 28 and the United States finished fifth with 29 faults.

"We had a great trip with the exception of the Nations Cup on Friday, we just couldn't catch a break," explained Jacobs. "It was tough going for us, but we couldn't seem to get any luck on our side. Chef d'Equipe John Madden knew that we all wanted it really badly and we just needed to focus our energy on being calm and poised. It was good advice; he was a great coach."



Ali Wolff and Lanoo

On November 27, Jacobs topped off the week by claiming the victory in the Ericsson Grand Prix with Leap of Joy. The pair completed a clear first round, and was the first to return for the four-horse jump-off. Once again they left all the fences standing, setting the unbeatable pace at 43.77 seconds. Canada's Angela Lawrence came the closest to catching Jacobs, finishing second after crossing the finish line without fault riding Utan. Their time of 44.84 seconds was over a second off of the winning pace set by Jacobs. Wolff also advanced to the short course, but a costly rail with Lanoo, eventually earned fourth.

"Leap of Joy was spectacular today," said Jacobs. "Olaf Petersen did the courses, and this is a World Cup Qualifier, so it was a meaty course. There were over 40 horses and only four jumped clean. I had to go first in the jump-off and I knew the riders behind me were really fast, so I had to lay a good lick down and do my best, and I was fortunate that my horses responded really well."

Earlier in the week, Jacobs piloted his second mount Flaming Star to victory as well, winning the 1.45m Open Jumper class on November 24, and then the Nissan International Speed Derby on November 26.

Jacobs concluded, "It's a great honor to represent the United States, and a real privilege to be a part of this group. There were a lot of great people here and I really hope I have the opportunity to do it again soon."

■ – **Kenneth Kraus and Rebecca Walton**

Special Bond Between Kelly Pugh and Copycat Chloe Helps Win the USET Foundation's Markham Trophy

This fall, the United States Equestrian Team Foundation presented the talented eventing Young Rider Kelly Pugh with the Markham Trophy at the 2011 Dansko Fair International, held October 13-16, 2011. Pugh, with her nine-year-old Trakehner/Thoroughbred cross mare Copycat Chloe, won the coveted honor as the highest placed American competitor under the age of 21 during the CCI*** event. The Markham Trophy was donated to the USET by Mr. & Mrs. Charles Plumb and is named for Markham – a black thoroughbred gelding.

"Winning this award was really special for me," smiled Pugh. "It is my last year as a Young Rider and I really wanted to have something to remember it by. Also, to be following in the footsteps of the previous winners such as Kristen Schmolze and Missy Ranshousen is a great honor."

Despite the rainy conditions, Pugh and Copycat Chloe completed the difficult event with good scores and placed 28th overall. Although Copycat Chloe can be a quirky mount, her talent shined through and the duo prevailed during their first CCI*** event. "It was such a wonderful feeling knowing that I had just completed my first CCI*** on a horse that I started all on my own," explained Pugh. "She came to me as unbroken six-year-old, and how she competed is really a reflection of our partnership. It was such a special moment."

Pugh continued, "When I first purchased her she bucked me off every day for two weeks and had an attitude like no other horse I had ever sat on. She was a quick learner though and really

had a talent for jumping. She was bold and really loved to work. The ingredients for a perfect event horse! Over the years we have formed a strong partnership, although I am still learning some of her quirks."

Last year, Pugh garnered the Individual Gold medal and Team Silver medal at the 2010 North American Junior and Young Rider Championships, and began competing at the Advanced level this year. She attributes her success to her incredible partner, and is looking forward to the years to come. "Looking back on the accomplishments made on this horse I really feel so overwhelmed with happiness," she said. "Chloe is truly a once in a lifetime horse and I can't wait to see what next year will bring for us. I have big plans and high expectations and I really think she is ready to shine. I feel so incredibly lucky to be sitting on this horse. I know eventing is full of ups and downs, and I have experienced my fair share of both. Right now I am going to make sure to enjoy these ups, because you never know with horses what tomorrow will bring."

During 2012, Pugh, who has been named to the Developing Riders List, hopes to compete in a second CCI***. She also hopes to travel to Europe and compete internationally with Copycat Chloe. Pugh competes under the tutelage of Allison Springer, as well as her parents Dayna Lynd Pugh and Steve Pugh. ■

– Rebecca Walton



Kelly Pugh and Copycat Chloe

Samantha Schaefer Wins Platinum Performance/ U.S. Equestrian Federation Show Jumping Talent Search Finals East at Gladstone

The U.S. Equestrian Team Foundation headquarters is the perfect backdrop for the Platinum Performance/U.S. Equestrian Federation Show Jumping Talent Search Finals East, inspiring young competitors who know they are riding in the hoofprints of history. "This is my favorite (equitation) final," said Samantha Schaefer, an 18-year-old from Westminster, MD, who took the trophy after four phases of robust competition over two days during October. "It's so much fun. There's only one thing to focus on, and it's a beautiful place. I love it," she enthused.

The excitement escalated this year because of the two judges' name recognition factor. U.S. Show Jumping Chef d'Equipe George Morris spent a lot of time at the Foundation's Gladstone facility in his younger days, working with legendary coach Bertalan de Nemethy. Jimmy Lee, who also officiated, remembers well the days when the USET was synonymous with American success in international jumping, and today he serves as chairman of the Show Hunter Hall of Fame.

The challenge attracted a field of 84 riders, age 21 and under, more than double the 41 who took part in the West Coast version of the championship in September. Asked how the winner was determined, Morris noted that with the sophistication level of the sport these days, "It boiled down to details, as it should."

The competition started with a flat phase won by Michael Hughes, fresh off a victory in the Northeast ASPCA Maclay Regionals. He's a veteran of the class, hav-



Samantha Schaefer and Pioneer

ing made his debut in 2007 when he was only 11 years old.

The next segment, gymnastics, was designed by Morris. He mandated that riders had to trot the first fence, a solid-looking brick wall, not once, but twice, going in both directions, so it could be determined if their execution of that test was skill or luck.

Lillie Keenan, winner of the U.S. Hunter Jumper Association International Hunter Derby in August, moved to the top from seventh place on the flat after gymnastics, with a 94 on Kosta. The 2010 Pessoa/USEF Medal and ASPCA Maclay champion, Hayley Barnhill, second on the flat with a 92 aboard Asparagus and a 91 in gymnastics, remained in that position, but Hughes dropped out of the top group all the way down to 17th when his mount, Catwoman, chipped in at the water obstacle that proved to be a problem for many of the riders.

Schaefer, who beat the professionals in September's \$500,000 Diamond Mills Hunter Prix, had an 82 on the flat to stand third on the veteran Pioneer with a 93 in gymnastics, while Schaefer Raposa, 17, of Clinton, NY, on Gentle R earned the same score. With one point less in the flat phase, however, Raposa, the daughter of grand prix rider David Raposa, found herself in fourth place.

The next day's show jumping course was laid out exactly the same as the Hickstead, England, Nations Cup, a competition at which Morris worked with the U.S. team. While it was much lower than

the British original, this route caused plenty of trouble, with the water jump going away from the stables as the fifth fence, and a vertical of white planks as the last element. The course was too much for some of the riders, who hopefully had a learning experience and will return next year the better for it.

Since the Talent Search concept is designed to discover riders who someday could represent the U.S. in international competition, it has to be a stern test. Past winners include McLain Ward (1990) and Lauren Hough (1994), both of whom went on to represent the U.S. with distinction.



Chase Boggio, Sally Ike and Hayley Barnhill

"You're building (the course) for the top 20 or 30 percent. You don't build for a middle common denominator," Morris explained.

"Those people aren't all going to have a good day, but that's a learning day for them."

Hayley Barnhill, an 18-year-old from Collierville, TN, earned a 93, the only rider to score more than 90 points. Schaefer was four points behind, while Raposa stayed close with an 88. Michael Murphy, marked at 90 on Uriame, moving up from ninth to make the final four.

The 18-year-old Murphy, who had never gotten a ribbon in an equitation



Michael Murphy and Uriame



Schaefer Raposa and Gentle R

finals, is an aspiring professional from Apopka, FL. He went on a successful Young Riders' tour of Europe last year, coming home with Gold and Silver Team medals, and was well-prepared for the Final Four, since he watched tapes of the inspiration for the concept at last year's Alltech FEI World Equestrian Games.



USEF Talent Search Awards Table

He trains with Ivan Rakowsky, but for the equitation finals he also worked with Andre Dignelli. That New York trainer, winner of the 1985 Talent Search, had three of the top four riders, since he also coaches Samantha and Schaefer Raposa. Dignelli called it, "the best day of my training career in 24 years."

In the Final Four, each competitor rides his or her own horse and that of their rivals over the same course, a shortened version of the morning layout, without the water jump.

Riders had to deal with a 57-second time allowed, which increased the pressure. Then Barnhill put two strides in the one-stride in-and-out on her own mount, Asparagus, leaving her understandably discouraged with a score of 53 for the first round.

"I just rode really timid," said Barnhill, who had never been in the class before. However, her coach, Missy Clark noted, "I don't think you can come to this event and try to really win it without having been here before."



Hayley Barnhill, Schaefer Raposa, Samantha Schaefer and Michael Murphy

Raposa never got out of the 80s, but performed very consistently to wind up third. Schaefer was dynamic, finishing with a 96 aboard Asparagus to lead the victory gallop on an overall total of 370. Murphy wound up with 346 points to 333 for Raposa and 315 for Barnhill, despite her score of 95 on Uriame. He was awarded the Grappa Trophy as the best horse in the finals. "I don't think I've ever seen the level of riding better at the top," said Lee.

"Last year, I definitely gave it away in the Final Four," said Schaefer, who finished fourth in 2010. "I rode too soft and had time faults and I kind of gave up. My goal this year was to fight until the last horse," continued the winner of the Washington International equitation finals in 2009, who was second to Barnhill in the Medal finals last year. "This is really important, because this is leading into the

jumper side of things and that's kind of where I want to go. And also, Andre won, so it's very important to him." Schaefer's victory in the Talent Search Finals will add her name to the history books alongside the likes of Greg Best, Chris Kappler, Peter Leone, Beezie Madden, Katie Prudent, Richard Spooner, McLain Ward, and Lauren Hough. ■ – *Nancy Jaffer*



Judges Jimmy Lee and George H. Morris



Samantha Schaefer, Sarah Willeman, Philip Richter, Sandy Nielsen, Andre Dignelli and Patricia Griffith

All Photos by Nancy Jaffer

USET Foundation Night at the Alltech National Horse Show

On November 5, 2011, the Alltech National Horse Show hosted a special benefit night for the United States Equestrian Team Foundation at the Alltech Arena in Lexington, KY. Before the exciting grand prix action got underway, the show took time to recognize the important mission of the USET Foundation.

USET Foundation Trustee, Robin Parsky, gave the evening's first speech, where she recognized the importance of the USET Foundation's mission. "Unlike in other countries our athletes and United States teams do not receive any government funding, we must rely on the generosity of individuals who love this sport and share our passion to see our teams achieve excellence on the world stage," said Parsky. "We are most grateful to the Alltech National Horse Show for supporting us in this important effort."

George H. Morris, USET Foundation



Robin Parsky and George H. Morris

Trustee and U.S. Show Jumping Chef d'Equipe, was next to greet the crowd. He commented, "Thank you for being here tonight and helping our United States Equestrian Teams, as well as the wonderful owners and supporters of the USET Foundation who make this an important part of their charitable giving each year. We need all of you to be part of the team; we cannot do it without you."

The night continued as the grand prix action got underway and U.S. Show Jumper Richard Spooner and Cristallo eventually earned the win. During the exciting event, USET Foundation supporters enjoyed a wonderful dinner at the Taylor Harris Club, which was followed by an elegant after-party at Gracie Street. The USET Foundation is very grateful to all of the patrons who gathered at the Alltech Arena to enjoy the evening's festivities. ■

— Rebecca Walton



Robert Dover Prepares Para-Equestrian Dressage Riders for 2012 Paralympics with Gladstone Training Session

Eight Para-Equestrian dressage athletes had an exclusive opportunity to work with the distinguished dressage competitor and trainer Robert Dover on November 5-6, 2011 at the USET Headquarters in Gladstone, NJ. Working alongside U.S. Para-Equestrian National Team coach, Missy Ranshousen, Dover conducted a Para-Equestrian Dressage Training Session where riders were able to hone their skills and grow from the knowledge imparted by the four-time bronze medalist. This training session was also a stepping stone to securing Team and Individual qualifications for the 2012 Paralympics held in London.

Dover commented, "I have taught individuals from time-to-time who are Para-Equestrians, but I have never taken a whole group and said, 'We are going to get better scores to go to the Olympics next year and we are going to get a medal.' I have never taught with the same sort of earnest feeling I had that weekend."

The first day of the session primarily focused on training and overcoming challenges, while the second day of the training session involved a rehearsal test. The riders arrived dressed in show attire and performed the dressage test as if it were the day of Individual and Team qualifications. Dover and Ranshousen evaluated each test, and if they were not pleased with an overall score or a certain portion of the test, they would work through each area until it was performed more precisely.

"These riders really want to win, just like we want to win

in the able-bodied Olympics," Dover said. "This is a group that needs more support. Many of them need better horses, and many of them don't even have horses. They have a great deal of support from the team that is helping them, but in order to be competitive on the Olympic level they need to be mounted just as fabulously as the other three Olympic disciplines. ■ — Kendall Bierer



Robert Dover with riders from the 2012 Paralympics Dressage Clinic

Photo by Pam Lane

A "Weekend in Gladstone" with the Essex Fox Hounds



James & Misdee Miller and their coach Tantivy



Betty Merck and Pat Murphy

On Saturday, October 29, an unexpected snowy "fall" evening in Gladstone, the Essex Fox Hounds held their annual Hunt Ball at the USET Foundation stable, Hamilton Farm as part of "Weekend in Gladstone". Guests dined at elegantly set long tables in the main stable aisle, followed by dancing, hound calling and whip cracking in the stable's rotunda. Earlier in the day, the members of the Essex Fox Hounds galloped through the beautiful Somerset Hills countryside, led by Joint Masters Jazz Johnson Merton and Harry Wilmerding, enjoying their opening hunt meet of the season. Joining them in the festivities was the The Coaching Club, including USET Foundation Trustee Tucker Johnson and his wife Charlotte, as well as 2011 World Championship Pairs Driver Misdee Wrigley Miller and her husband James. This hardy group was largely unfazed by the nor'easter that blanketed the area in snow. ■

– *Priscilla K. Miller*



Jazz Merton, MFH and Frederick Root



Tables set for dining in the stable aisles - Essex Fox Hounds Hunt Ball

*The field returning
after hunting*





USET Foundation News

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