

World Class Development Programme Newsletter Update – January 2008

World Class Development Eventing Programme

The World Class Start riders took part in a 2-day squad training session at The Unicorn, where Nick Burton worked with the riders individually on dressage riding and training; riders who are listed for Junior and Young Rider squads rode their potential team horses. Mark Fisher presented the Pliance System to the riders, working with them individually together with their horses. The Pliance Saddle System measures the pressure distribution between the saddle and the horse, with the help of a thin elastic mat. It is possible to assess quantitatively the commands of the rider and the subsequent reaction of the horse. The technique of the rider can be objectively assessed and corrected.

Jennie Killilea worked with the riders on mental preparation and planning, Dr Peter Whitehead informed the riders on medical updates for 2008, Andy Thomas the physiotherapist worked on any physio issues the riders had, Carys Jackson from the EIS worked with riders individually on their own fitness programme and Jenny Hall discussed veterinary and fitness issues with riders' individual horses. Russell Guire from Equianalysis provided video coverage of all the ridden sessions.

The World Class Potential riders have also taken part in a 2-day squad training session at The Unicorn, where Pippa Funnell worked with the riders individually on dressage riding and training, with Angela Tucker working on specific movement practice. The riders then performed dressage tests in front of both Pippa and Angela. Yogi Breisner worked on lungeing the riders, with the emphasis on exercises for jumping. They also received information and updates from various World Class staff.

World Class Development Show Jumping Programme

A squad training session was held at Solihull Riding Club, where Henk Nooren worked with the riders in pairs, concentrating on correct flatwork and attention to detail in the rideability of the horses and correct balance and position of the riders, taking this through to the jumping.

Mark Fisher presented the Pliance System to the riders, working with them individually together with their horses. Sally Nicholson, GB Team Doctor, saw the riders on an individual basis. Russell Guire provided video coverage of all the ridden sessions.

William Whitaker, riding at his first Olympia, won the Accenture Puissance. Riding Insultech Leonardo, William gave the horse a superb rider to clear the wall at 7ft 2in.

William was runner-up in the H&M British Challenge, a class that was only open to British riders, comprising of a 1.50m round followed by a table C course, with riders able to change horses between rounds. William who rode Carnaval Path in both rounds only just missed out to his uncle John.

Daniel Neilson, riding Ungaro won the Accenture Young Show Jumper title in a five-horse jump-off.

William produced a world-class performance to win the Rolex FEI World Cup qualifier at Mechelen in Belgium, producing the first double clear of the class to record what became an untouchable target. This win earns William 20 points and places him fourth, the best British position, in the Western European League with 39 points. With around 40 points securing a place in the Gothenburg final, William is hoping to be heading for Sweden in April.

Ben Maher won the five-star grand prix with his promising mare Rolette. Ben gained his place in the grand prix line-up via two qualification classes – finishing 2nd in a 1.45m two-phase and third in a 1.45m speed competition. The top six overall made the grand prix and he used the penultimate draw of the 12 first round clears to best advantage to claim the class. Ben also won a 1.35m jump-off class with Pablo V.

Potential rider, James Billington has left Michael Whitaker's yard, where he has been based for three years, to take up a riding position with top US show jumping rider Beezie Madden.

World Class Development Dressage Programme

A number of riders on the dressage programme have been training in Germany.

Natalie Allen took two horses to Germany to train with Jurgen Koschel, where she gained invaluable experience for the future. Jurgen was very impressed with Natalie's riding and her young horse Domino D, and at the end of the trip gave Natalie an open invitation to train with him again in the future.

Natalie watched Jurgen and his son Christoph train their horses and was also allowed to ride some of them too. Natalie traveled with the Koschels to Paderbourne where she was able to watch some of Germany's top riders in competition.

Jurgen Koschel endorsed the World Class Development Programme and what it is aiming to achieve with the young riders on the Programme and the support services it provides.

Henry Boswell traveled to Germany to train with Wolfram Wittig, taking with him Skyrocket, a 5 year old Oldenburg gelding by Sandro Hit. The two weeks that Henry was in Germany has been one of the most invaluable and informative times of his dressage career. The emphasis on the training that Henry received was always on improving engagement with the hind leg stepping more underneath, which in turn improves balance and carriage. As Skyrocket and Henry got to grips with the Wittigs training methods they both improved dramatically. Training with the Wittigs has given Henry a simple training system that is easy to follow and has proved invaluable since getting home and putting his new knowledge into practice with all his horses.

Charlie Hutton took three horses to train with Johnny Hilberath and over the two weeks he spent training with Johnny it was impressed on him that he should be "as one with the horse"; meaning for him to use less strength and improve his timing with his aids, therefore giving the horse confidence to use itself more, which in turn would increase its self carriage, balance and cadence within the different movements.

Charlie is naturally tall and strong, but by putting into practice what Johnny was teaching, all three of his horses improved a great deal.

Johnny also impressed upon Charlie the need to allow a horse to work within its natural instinct of flight, but to control this by working with the horse's positive energy, rather than restricting it too much, and by doing this it will allow the horse the freedom to use itself, therefore increasing its balance and self carriage and ultimately confidence in its rider.

Lara Griffiths has recently returned from Germany, also training with Jurgen Koschel, and will report on her experiences in the next newsletter.

The remainder of the dressage riders are consolidating their winter training with their individual trainers and involved with yard visits from Ferdi Eilberg, World Class Performance Director of Coaching, supported by Caroline Griffith, Discipline Co-ordinator.

World Class Development Para Equestrian Dressage Programme

Over the next few months the squad training sessions will focus on helping to prepare any riders that could potentially be selected for the Paralympic Games in September and therefore would move onto Performance Squad.

The February squad training session, taking place at The Unicorn, will focus on feedback in regard to rider performance at the World Para Dressage Championships that took place at Hartpury College in July 2007.

The April squad training session will focus on rider position and symmetry using video feedback and markers on the riders as well as using the Pliance System.

Extra days will also be put on just for potential Paralympic riders to use an acclimation chamber, which will either be at Nottingham Trent University or Gloucester and riders fitness levels will be tested at their local EIS centres.

Test riding will also form a large part of the squad training sessions.