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Ladies Sweep the FEI Grand Prix Freestyle

Devon, PA (October 4, 2015) – With the sun actually peeking out from behind the clouds, the rescheduled FEI

Grand Prix Freestyle took place Sunday morning. It was ladies day with female riders claiming the top three

places. My Lady, a bay Danish Warmblood owned by Janne Rumbough, danced into first place under the

guidance of her rider, Mikala Gundersen. My Lady, who also won last night's Grand Prix Freestyle Qualifier,

demonstrated even more of her scope in the freestyle performance. The mare's elasticity enabled Gundersen

to have fun with the music, showing off, for example, spontaneous transitions and big, expressive tempis.

The judges rewarded the well-executed and inspired ride with a score of 77.875%. It's an impressive score

that may give Gundersen confidence that she's closer to attaining her goal of riding My Lady in the 2016

Olympics for the Danish team.

Gundersen admitted the changes in this year's schedule made yesterday's qualifier more challenging. The wet

weather had interrupted My Lady's warm up routine, causing her to be a little tense. Also, when they came out

under the lights she was in "freestyle mode." Today, she was back to her usual self, enjoying the musical

accompaniment to the freestyle performance. To ensure their music fit perfectly with their movements,

Gundersen had first choreographed her freestyle routine and then consulted with an expert to select the music.

"My Lady loves the music," says Gundersen, "she listens to it and prepares for the next move." Perhaps that is

one more reason, in addition to My Lady's athleticism and her rider's skill, that her transitions are so accurate.

Lisa Wilcox rode Galant, a Belgium Warmblood gelding, into second place with a challenging freestyle that

earned a score of 73.950%. Belinda Trussel and Anton, a Warmblood gelding, took third place with their virtually

a mistake-free ride that merited a score of 73.700%. The 15-year-old horse has not been to Devon since he

was nine and was excited return the Dixon Oval. "He was a good boy," says Trussel. "It was a clean ride, and

I was pleased."

Dressage with the Experts Provides Insight

We were fortunate to have Debbie Rodriguez, 'S' dressage judge, 'r' eventing judge, USDF Bronze, Silver and

Gold Medalist on our Dressage with the Experts team. When asked about her overall impression of the 2015

Grand Prix Freestyle, she said, "It was great fun. I thought it was a very strong class." She also commented

on the musical selections. “Most of the music was appropriate though there were a few that really didn’t sit

the gaits. It wasn’t disturbing, just not conducive to the gait. There were so many athletic horses that it really

boiled down to the suppleness and submission that allowed them to really have fun with the music.”

Ponies Do Dressage Too — the FEI Pony Individual Test

Hannah Irons, who won the FEI Pony Individual Test with a score of 66.341%, riding Bohdjan, is fully aware

of the potential for ponies to excel in dressage. Bohdjan is a 16-year-old gray Dutch Sport Pony that Hannah

has leases from Dressage4Kids, an organization dedicated to encouraging riders under 21 to become true horsemen.

Barbara (Bebe) Davis rode Bohdjan at FEI level before donating him to Dressage4Kids. Irons is thankful for the

opportunity to ride a pony of his caliber. “He’s challenging to ride,” says Irons, explaining that he has a mind

of his own. After all, he is a pony. Since he knows the test so well, he tends to anticipate the movements and

sometimes wants to take charge. Despite challenges, Hannah is learning from Bohdjan, and when she rides

well and achieves a connection with him, she’s rewarded, just as she was today.

Hannah has been coming to Dressage at Devon since 2012, but this is the first time she’s competed here.

“It’s amazing,” she says to be in this environment with high-level, international riders. She plans to return next year,

seeing the show as one step along her journey towards qualifying for the Festival of Champions next year.

FEI Intermediaire 1 Freestyle

The top three of horse-rider teams in the FEI Intermediaire 1 Freestyle all boosted their scores with open,

claiming fluid half-passes. Christina Vinios and Folkestone, her nine-year-old bay Oldenburg gelding, scored

73.292%, the blue ribbon. Katie Riley moved into second place with a score of 70.708%, riding Toy Story,

who is also a nine-year-old gelding. Third place went to Jane Karol and her mare, Sunshine Tour —

one of the few teams this year to have the sun shine on their ride.

Dressage Explorers

Sunday at Dressage at Devon has always had a strong emphasis on juniors and young riders. This year,

Dressage Explorers, a new program that caters to children, youth and young adults, brought even the

non-riders out from behind the scenes. First on the schedule was a chat with Dr. Steve Berkowitz of Unionville

Equine Associates, the official show veterinarian, for a game of equestrian-health jeopardy!

Explorers then had the opportunity to meet the Lipizzans up close and to ask questions of Esther Buonanno,

Temple Lipizzans' Stable Manager, to learn more about their care. director of the Tempel Lipizzans program.

Then off to the Lipizzan barn where they met with Julie Milne,

Next up, stick horses took center stage in the Dixon Oval, another first for Dressage at Devon. Julio Mendoza led

the way and rider Tom Dvorak took up the rear. Both are internationally renowned dressage riders. Their new

young friends, Kathleen DeGenova and Kate Telione, filled out the quadrille, entertaining the audience with

two-footed half-passes, pirouettes, piaffes and more advanced moves. All were winners!

Finally, if you looked around all morning, you could see the Explorers around the grounds in full exploration mode

mode, challenged by the Scavenger Hunt.

Devon Overcomes Weather Trials

The weather conditions that prevailed during the 40th anniversary year for Dressage at Devon were more

challenging than ever before. This forced secretaries to reschedule classes, including the iconic Grand Prix Freestyle,

which usually showcases on Saturday night. Riders to change plane reservations and horses missed out on their regular

warm-up routines. The show staff and their clientele rose to the challenge. Because of the flexibility of all

involved, spectators, riders and horses were able to go home having experienced a world-class show.

About Dressage at Devon

Dressage at Devon, the largest CDI show in the US and the largest open breed show in the world,

combines world-class international dressage competition and one of the world's few complete

sport horse breed shows with the family fun of an International Fall Festival, featuring food and

shopping for all tastes.

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