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## DAY ONE: DEVELOPMENT

By Jane Kidd

### 1. OPENING DAY ONE BY RICHARD DAVISON, MARIETTE WITHAGES AND DAVID HUNT

#### **Richard Davison, discussion leader**

welcomed over 300 guests from 27 countries and pointed out that the program had been a joint effort by the Academy and the International Trainers Club, with the FEI as Patron.

#### **Mariette Withages, chairman FEI Dressage Committee**

said in her opening address that the FEI were more involved in this year's Forum. 'Dressage is in the lift. There can be problems but compared with its growth these are peanuts. It is time to show that we are united behind dressage. We should be strong and not bent by the winds coming from other disciplines'. She continued that the FEI Dressage Committee does have animated discussions. The main goals are fairness, transparency and globality. Most important is fairness to the horse.

**Fairness:** Changing article 401 'the object of dressage'. The concept of Happy Athlete points out what we really want to see, it gives food for thought to riders, judges and trainers, and makes dressage more understandable. We did not change but adapted the directive.

**Transparency:** The FEI wants to demystify dressage, introduced running scores, using earphones during events, the score per horse per judge is published. Judges go to the press conference. There are sub committees with representatives who can exchange views and make proposals. The result is better communication. The committee is working on a handbook to provide guidelines for all interested parties and hopes to have it ready by next season. One is working on the 8<sup>th</sup> draft. It will be available for Federations free in CD or book.

**The uniform of dressage riders:** is rather old fashioned and we are getting advice from top designers. The result could be a fashion show at an important event at end of next year.

**Globalization:** We need to improve skills of those not in Europe and USA.

#### **David Hunt, President IDTC**

said in his opening address that the Forum is an opportunity to come together and discuss. This does not happen in many sports. In the past the FEI decided. Today we discuss together about tests, rules, footing etc.

The Global Dressage Forum was now prepared by a program committee, existing of:

- **Mariette Withages (FEI)**
- **Joep Bartels (Academy)**
- **Richard Davison (IDRC)**
- **David Hunt (IDTC)**

This Forum is fantastic for our sport and our sport has moved forward. At the Forum we have the opportunity to see horses being ridden in different systems. The Forum is an opportunity to look at different systems and we can all have our personal opinions but we have the same goal. A sad thing about our sport is that everybody throws the blame on the judges. I am a supporter of the judges. I have been to their seminars and I know they want to get it right. It is too easy to keep passing the blame. Trainers can use different systems, but judges have to choose one way. Whatever the system the welfare of the horse is paramount. Important that onlookers can think it is a fun sport. We must be aware of what the outside world thinks of us.

## 2. LECTURE BY MICHAEL STONE Sports Director FEI

The FEI was founded in 1921. It is divided into 9 regional groups with 132 National Federations. The FEI General Assembly is the ultimate body. Each Federation has one vote but for technical matters only nations that have competed at championship level for their discipline can vote. Under General Assembly is the Bureau, and members meet twice a year. The FEI needs to encourage more and more people to get involved. The FEI World Challenge, now supported by PSI, involves 55 countries. The Development Department started in 1997 when the budget was 24,000 SF, now it is 350,000SF (Swiss Francs). The number of FEI members increased from 113 to 132 over the last 5 yrs.

Many small countries have too many judges and officials and not enough competitions and horses, so the FEI wants to increase competitions by training riders and horses, developing regional competitions starting by using borrowed horses, and then start working with the officials. There are two funds for development: one from the FEI and one from the IOC, the Olympic Solidarity. The IOC is very keen on globalisation. Olympic solidarity supports technical courses for coaches, scholarship for development of national structure for coaches and athlete scholarships. Reflection by FEI led to questioning whether training courses are of any value if only held 2 x a year. Coaching is essential, coaching for competitions is the key rather than training. Preparing to compete is the way forward.

There was no common coaching system in underdeveloped countries and no system to raise the profile of coaches. The FEI created working groups with experts in coaching. The idea was to develop a coaching system using agreed syllabi, and is based on running courses for coaches under FEI tutors. Then accredit coaches with their NF's and then they coach riders. So the FEI planned to put less emphasis on direct training of the riders. The FEI wants to make the member NF's more responsible and relevant. The overall aim is to bring more people into equestrian sport and to improve welfare and safety.

Dressage has lots of people practicing it, but a few are competing internationally and Northern Europe continues to dominate. We have to close the gap between top and other countries. We need to help NF's to develop, to stage more regional championships and to improve standards. The ultimate goal is truly global Olympics, and that dressage becomes more open. The good news is that the FEI Dressage Committee is the most dynamic of the technical committees.

### 3. LECTURE AND CLINIC BY CARLOS LOPES Lusitano breeder, organizer, judge

The history of the Lusitano goes hand in hand with that of the Iberian Peninsula. Wars in the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BC, and the images of horses on coins from Roman times with the convex profile of the heads make them ancestors of today's Lusitano. Iberian horses were sent to and influenced by breeding in Italy. Statues of 3<sup>rd</sup> Century AD show high leg action and convex outline. In the Middle Ages the Iberian horses were used all over Europe but were eclipsed when horses had to wear armour and riders needed strong cold bloods. Development of Classical riding schools and use of horses for hunting wild bulls meant the Lusitano was in demand. The Portuguese Riding School is 260 years old, which makes it the oldest breeding centre.

Practical demonstrations included presentations by the World Champion of Work Equitation, **Rodrigo Torres**, Baroque Portuguese Equitation, a young rider demonstrating collected movements, and a 6 year old stallion that had competed at the Young Horse World Championships.

Trainer and rider **Martina Hannover** from Germany rode a 9 year old mare. For two years **Martina Hannover** has been training the Portuguese and she has put the emphasis on basics. She had found they spent little time in walk, and did not use a riding in process that loosened up the horse, particularly the back. She said it is no use building a house by starting with the roof.

A problem for development is that the Lusitano is a pure bred, so you have to make the improvements within the breed. Showing them in Young Horse Championships has been a start towards them becoming more competitive in dressage. **Martina Hannover** said the breeders are very interested in improving the breed. The stallion that went to the World Breeding Championships showed a walk that was good enough for dressage competitions.

From the bullfighting everything has to go, go, go and she had made them focus on work in which they are weak and not focusing on piaffe and passage. The horses have to learn to relax and enjoy working with the rider. She encouraged breaks between the exercises and to ride a little deeper, stretching. Lusitanos sit down on the hind legs much more than most horses, and riders need to keep them in front of the leg all the time. For instance 6 or 7 year old horses can do tempi changes, but do not stand still.

#### **DISCUSSION**

***Beatriz Ferrer Salat** had owned one Lusitano and said that it was a very willing horse.*

***Mr. Kottas** was concerned that in producing for modern sport the Lusitanos might get too big. Lusitanos have a long tradition. With Lippizaners they selected the ones for the School Above the Ground. The big ones had problems as they could not take so much weight back. He believed the horses should stay like they are and not change them too much for the sport.*

***Mrs. Withages** said Lusitanos can be hot and not always accepting the aids of the rider, and walks not so good, but they have so much heart and have good highlights. They are willing and we have had some very good examples like Guizo, who was on the Spanish silver Olympic team.*

***Kyra Kyrklund** wanted them to keep their traditional characters, but to go forward. In Finland, in order to preserve their traditional work horse, they had to find uses for the horse and they developed them into Trotters, Riding horses and ponies, and also keep the traditional working horse. It is exciting to have more breeds in dressage.*

***Mr. Lucio:** 'They have had the problem in Spain of whether the Spanish horses should keep their short paces. They found the answer that they gave the horses with suitable paces the right training for dressage competitions. You do not need to change the breed'.*

#### 4. LECTURE BY JOHN LONG Managing director USEF

The USEF has its main office in Lexington, its high performance office in Gladstone, New Jersey and the Drug Testing Lab in Ithaca, New York. The rivalry between USET and AHSA led to the establishment of this new organization in December 2002, with 85,691 members, 2,883 competitions, 26 breeds and disciplines. The USEF had 18 million dollars expenses in the last year. The revenue mainly came from membership, 2 million dollars from sponsorship. The dressage federation has 16,127 members and 625 recognized dressage competitions. Over 85,000 dressage tests are performed in 9 Regions.

Through a systematic event system riders can qualify their horses. High Performance Qualifying Competitions identify those with potential. These competitions are used for a ranking of riders. USEF Training sessions are primarily held by National Trainer Klaus Balkenhol from Germany. There is a Developing Rider Program with riders (Intermediaire 1 level) that have potential to move up to GP. Riders train with Klaus Balkenhol and compete in designated shows. Through the Elite Rider program Mr. Balkenhol works with the top in the States and Europe and these tours are funded by the Federation. There is a USEF Long List and a Developing list. Rider and horse qualify as a combination. A short list exists 6 riders and 8 horses and funds for training and competing in Europe.

New to the US is the emphasis on the breeding side, with 98 newly created Breeders Champs series (USDF) and a USDF Young Horse program. The goal is to encourage 5 and 6 year old dressage prospects. And to encourage breeders, riders and trainers. Thousands of judges have gone through the entry level program, some just want to understand the sport better. At FEI level there are 4 'C' judges, 10 at 'I' and two 'O' judges. USDF Award Programs, including Horses of the Year, is very popular. It is one of the reasons why Dressage is so strong in USA. The US has 15 CDI's but because of geography riders can only compete in two or three. Unfortunately it is more and more expensive to move horses around the States. The USA needs to develop close connections with Europe and the FEI. It needs to work on representation of US judges in European programs. To conclude it is important to mention the first dual World Cup Finals, to be held in Las Vegas, April 2005.

#### DISCUSSION

*Guenter Seidel said part of US's success is because of great support systems.*

*Mrs. Zang said that now the USET and AHSA have united it had become double strong. The future is to zoom forward.*

*Mrs. Withages said that it gives one a warm heart to see that dressage is growing.*

*Mrs. Dillingham said British membership stands at 10.700 from 5.000 five years ago. England is aiming to catch the US.*

*Mrs. Zang has seen the sport grow and opened up the US with the help of the FEI committees under Mariette Withages and Eric Lette.*

*David Hunt asked how many of the top riders had been produced through the system.*

*Mrs. Zang said Debbie McDonald had gone through the system. Her education until recently has been in the US. For the last Olympics over 100 Grand Prix riders asked to be evaluated for the Olympics.*

*Guenter Seidel said he was only L when he emigrated from Germany, so his training was American.*

*Dr. Bartels said that in Holland they have the Rabobank Talent program. You can make the sport grow through having a star but you need to look at the grass roots and how to use the stars. The principle is to use the top riders to inspire and connect them to young talent. The Dutch had 4 out of 8 young people in their Athens teams.*

*Anky van Grunsven was asked about her role and she said she is an ambassador of the Rabobank Talent program. The best trainers and riders in Holland are involved with the kids and that includes also talented kids that do not have the money. They can work or groom for the good riders. There is a program for the trainers. All go for the same goal and have the feeling that they all do it together.*

## 5. CLINIC BY ULRICH KASSELMANN Director PSI sales in Ankum, Germany

**Mr. Kasselmann** has stables with **Paul Schockemohle** in East Germany with land where 2,000 young horses are turned out. They are broken there and then taken to **Mr. Kasselmann's** training stables in Hagen. He showed a 3-year old and pointed out that the most essential thing is that he was relaxed and good in the mouth. It was important for such a young horse to learn to trust and to be balanced in the work. The horse was reaching towards the bit, working from behind. The tail was carried quietly and swinging, he was relaxed at the base. The horse was interested in the lunge, he was listening.

Most important is the confidence of the young horses towards the people they work with.

**Mr. Kasselmann's** trainers start lunging before they break them in, after breaking they use the double lunge, 15 -20 minutes, not longer, twice a week. They use free jumping and do not ride them more than 3 times a week. They use the double lunge because of getting a better contact to the mouth. Side reins can be too strong and not always so comfortable for the horse. They thought it was better for the tongue and mouth.

Some four-year-olds were asked to stretch a little more to the bridle, they worked in a good rhythm and balance. Then sitting trot in large circle and a transition to canter as asked. In canter one had a bit more balance. Then the horses were asked to stretch, taking the reins forward and down and the riders to drive the hinds actively forward to the bit. Stretching was also asked for in trot and walk and in trot the horses were asked to be not too high in the neck but to focus on rising trot and stretching to give the back a chance to come up again.

The daily work: **Mr. Kasselmann** starts riding as 3 year olds. Every day they go to the racetrack to build up muscles in the back and encourage the hind legs to come under. This is easier to achieve in the straight line than in the indoor school. Half an hour on the racetrack, then cooling off, then hand walking. The young horses need to get outside and have fun to go forward.

### DISCUSSION

*Asked how many they breed **Mr. Kasselmann** said that they buy 40 foals and breed 25. They study the pedigree. It can be good to have some show jumping lines for dressage horses.*

***David Hunt** said the horses had been brilliantly presented, they never questioned the contact, just forward, accepting contact in a natural balance. When asked about riding deep **Mr. Kasselmann** quoted **Mr. Theodorescu** who said the horse is the only animal that can look in your eyes, why do they have to look down? When asked about the seat of the riders, **Mr. Kasselmann** told that he asked riders to keep their hands down, to be upright and not lean back. **Mr. Kasselmann** wanted each horse's back to come up and if a rider leans back then he blocks the horse and prevents him from achieving this. When halted it was just asked to stay quiet, young horses did not have to be square or engaged. **Mr. Eilberg** asked how many riders there were at the PSI. **Mr. Kasselmann** answered 15 good riders and two or 3 assistant/student riders. Good riders have 15 rides on the day list. They changed horses, riders and stables regularly. The horses have to go out on the racetrack everyday, even when weather is bad. **David Hunt** asked what points to look for in the horse. **Mr. Kasselmann** replied that the most important factor is the hind leg and whether it comes under the horse, takes the weight and shows a good flexion. It is good to have a foreleg showing freedom but most important is the hind leg.*

The next practical session showed the work in hand. For In Hand work **General Stecken**, the PSI trainer for 15 years, had made the program. The horse wore a saddle with loose side reins attached at the bottom of the saddle. The horse has to trust and accept the whip, taught to pay attention, to stop and go and concentrate on the handler. Lots of pats and praise should be given when it obeys. Two or three half steps, then stop and reward. Some horses take longer than others to relax. Important thing is that the horse reacts to light aids. They should find their own rhythm, using head and neck but not falling on the forehead. The forward tendency must always be kept. The handler stays in front walking backwards, and the assistant uses the whip from behind.

The practical session with two five year olds, showed a horse that was qualified for the German championships and won at L level. They showed a little shoulder in followed by a circle. The riders were asked to organize the horse before the movement and then allow the horse to do the movement itself. Show the horse the direction in circles by opening the inside hand. In the canter with medium strides they were constantly asked to bring the noses in front of the vertical. There was some counter canter, then stretching with the inside hand leading to encourage flexion of the jaw and a good bend. **Mr. Kasselmann** asked a rider to put less pressure on the horse and allow the horse to work more for itself. Unlike younger horses these when stretching, were asked to maintain a bend, with inside hand leading to the inside. If bouncy enough in the canter five year old horses can start teaching the flying changes. It is a big jump from five to six year old classes. A horse must be prepared for the tests.

### **DISCUSSION**

*Do you give a three year old rest at grass? Mr. Kasselmann said they let them loose for 2 to 3 hours each day in the indoor school, use a horse walker, so horses are busy all day.*

*How has the horse market changed? Mr. Kasselmann replied that the demands have changed and we need horses with good readability nowadays. They need to be comfortable, not too strong, and well balanced. Today's riders are spoiled!*

*What age do you start handling on a regular basis? We start our training very young, but most important is that we have very good riders. If horses have confidence we can start 3 years old. But we do not collect and they are worked outside and this clears their minds. Yearlings are in the field with many other horses. They get their feet done and are wormed. An Important thing is the soundness, we x ray horses at two years and repeat it every year and compare.*

*An important thing for Grand Prix success is that the horse finds a good rider, so medium priced horses reach Olympics and top priced horses are never heard of again.*

The next practical session showed a 6 year old that went to the 2004 World Breeding Championships, did not have big movement but had good ride ability, was very straight, very easy to ride, and with good carriage. They had worked on walk from three year old to insure he drops the head and neck and stretches and reaches for the bridle. He did some working canter pirouettes, then forward in medium and allowed to stretch. He was a very willing horse.

### **DISCUSSION**

*Were the World Breeding Championships an entity in themselves or part of the way towards the Grand Prix? Dr. Möller who had ridden at five championships said that as a Young Horse Rider it is like 'our Olympic Games'. The 2004 tests were a little harder and this makes sense. Hopefully more and more countries will compete.*

*Mr. Kasselmann said that there needs to be more collection in the tests so this can be assessed better. For example there could be working pirouettes.*

*Mrs. Withages said that you often see horses presented in an attitude that is close to Grand Prix. An important question is: if you want to be successful in the World Champs do you have to bring the neck up that high? Sometime judges look too much for the nose line. More important than the nose line is that the hind leg is there and the back is swinging.*

*Dr. Möller confirmed that the hind legs are more important than the nose line and the neck.*

## DAY TWO: HAPPY ATHLETE

ATHLETIC ASPECTS AND WELFARE OF SPORT HORSES AND THE 'HAPPY ATHLETE'

By Jane Kidd

### 6. OPENING DAY TWO BY MARIETTE WITHAGES Chairman FEI Dressage Committee

She started the morning session by saying that article 401 had been changed. The FEI had been holding small committee meetings with scientists and at the Forum they would hear the breeders' point of view. There were different views on the Happy Athlete but she hoped all would come to the same conclusion.

### 7. LECTURE BY DIRK WILLEM ROSIE head of Communication the Royal Dutch Warmblood Studbook (KWPN)

**Mr. Rosie** took the first session. He quoted **Conrad Schumacher** that 2/3 of performance of dressage horses comes from 'within' but as it is difficult to see inside you are forced to focus on the outside. One of the questions is: is the horse an athlete or dancer? It is a great comparison between a dressage horse and a gymnast because it is all about physical perfection of a moving body. Dressage is an extreme athletic effort to test the ability to maintain balance at all times. It is the way the horse goes that decides which rider wins the medal so this makes the horse to a kind of instrument. There is a certain similarity between musicians and riders, both need good instruments. Riders and breeders, both look for quality in the moving body of the horse. Breeders have a more limited view of the horse, they just look for physical quality, whereas sport needs character, ride ability etc. Breeders get upset when riders do not realize the genetic potential of horses. What is happiness in a horse's life? Absence of unpleasant feeling and emotions. Horses in fields are happy but it is not immoral to have horses as working friends. Domesticated animals benefit from working with man. Horses experience happiness in a physical way. The problem arise if riders try to make horses to do what they are not capable of.

#### The physical lay out

The physical lay out is connected with movement. It is functional. We want a long foreleg and long neck because the weight will not be transferred to the forehand too much. The layout comes from the FEI rules- lightness of forehand, engagement of hindquarters, acceptance of the bridle without tension or resistance etc. A horse that goes according to the FEI directives is not being physically over demanded.

There is an unhappy start as 60% of the weight is on the forehand. According to FEI directives we look for lightness of the forehand, neck raised and arched. If the horse has a low set neck, it will have to lift up his neck to come off the forehand and stiffen the back. If the neck comes out of the top of the shoulders it will naturally carry the head and neck as directed and will find it easier to have a loose and supple top line. If the withers are higher than the croup and a horse has long forelegs then it is upwardly built and will not find it difficult to transfer weight to the hindquarters. If it is a long lined (rectangular) horse it will be easier to bend, be supple and flexible. If there is a fine connection of the head to the neck with a round line behind the ears and a light underline of the throat then the poll can be the highest point and acceptance of the bit will be easier. Maintaining rhythm in all paces is fundamental to dressage and horses with long legs can develop a greater variety in the length of their stride than short legged ones. They can extend easier and without raising the frequency of the strides. With these type of conformation specifications a horse is likely to be a happier athlete than a horse built on forehand.

**Mr. Holmstrom** from Sweden compared elite and normal dressage horses. He found that the femur was sloped more in elite horses. An upright femur would position the hind limb behind the body while a sloping femur puts the hind leg more under the body. Small angles in the joints of the hind leg reduces the ability of the horse to carry the weight. The hock should be around 150 degrees.

As for the hindleg the upper part of the foreleg is important. The humerus in the front leg in the elite group was longer than in the normal group. The angle between the humerus and the scapula should be big (more than 90 degrees) to enable the foreleg to extend. Also the pelvis in the elite group is flatter, giving more flexibility. This is decisive for piaffe and passage. A more sloping pelvis does not have such a capacity to be flexible. **Prof. Clayton** in the USA filmed elite dressage horses. Normally in the trot the foreleg touched the ground a fraction sooner than the hind leg. Good dressage horses can turn this law of nature around and place the foreleg on the ground a fraction after the hind leg. The biggest effect of training is in the hindleg, making it stronger and faster (**Dr. Willem Back**).

Objective indicators of good movement are for instance the elbow, that can flex 30% more in elite dressage horses than with normal horses (**Holmstrom**). Freedom of shoulder we can see, but shoulder does not do very much, it is the elbow that moves. We should concentrate more on the total movement of the foreleg and whether it lifts and the joints flex. Maximal re-traction of forelimbs and maximal pro-traction of hind limbs gives the power to the horse and he can loosen and round the top line. It gives the top line roundness and the horse can work through the body. Slow stride frequency with a long swing phase helps the horse to balance. Maximal extension of the fetlock joints helps the elasticity. These objectives will help breeders to produce better horses

### **The mental lay out**

A magazine questionnaire went to 700 small tour (Prix St Georges) riders about the emotional temperament, social behaviour and learning ability of their best horse. The most sought after features (in order) were perseverance, zealousness, sensitivity and courage. Not spooky, obliging, steady. As the top ones are in the profile of wild horses, dressage can be considered close to the natural state. It is difficult to turn a lazy horse into a zealous one or a non sensitive into a sensitive one. If we cannot change these characteristics through training then we need to breed them in.

### **DISCUSSION**

*Anky van Grunsven said that the most important thing is that the horse is willing to work and likes it. Bonfire still likes to work. Salinero worked a lot in Athens, sensitive and willing to go. Both horses are very spooky, nervous rather than steady. A sensitive horse is spooky. If a horse is not sensitive then nor is it spooky. When sensitive they see and feel more and with such horses the riders have to find the way to get the horse to trust the rider.*

*Tineke Bartels explained how much time she spent with her sensitive Grand Prix horse Jazz, who was spooky and needed to learn to trust. A rider of a sensitive horse needs to be quiet and the horse has to learn not be afraid. There are no tricks as to how to deal with it. Riders have to find out what makes the horse afraid and how to work with it. It is important to keep their concentration and if concentrated on the rider they have less time to be nervous of the environment.*

*Mr. Rosie told that In the replies to the questionnaire about social behaviour only 57% said top horses were more intelligent than normal. He repeated that the most valued features for learning ability (in order) were zeal, intelligence, perseverance, tolerance, sensitivity. Rosie in summary said that we cannot change the mentality of top riders who do explore the limits of horses. We have to produce horses that suit them. We need spooky horses even if they do make mistakes. The concept of Happy Athlete is a powerful way to endorse and promote dressage horses close to the physical and mental lay outs. And it is a powerful instrument to protect horses, ridden by dressage riders, that do not match these lay outs.*

## 8. LECTURE BY DR. ERIC VAN BREDA Human and equine training physiologist (University of Maastricht)

If we want champions, we have to choose their parents with care. Is it only conformation, temperament, athletic movements that are needed to become a good athlete? Do we take the best and mate to the best, or just pray? 'Dressage horses have historically never been considered as athletes but as dancers and Happy Athletes could make judging more subjective as there is no definition of 'happiness' of the horse', this is the criticism that came towards the FEI, when it introduced the concept of the Happy Athlete. Training an athlete means developing suppleness, coordination, endurance, speed and strength. Also dancers must be fit enough, have strength, endurance, ability to concentrate, suppleness and coordination to maintain their position better. Dancers and athletes share much, and should be treated as equals. Talented athletes and dancers have to train frequently over a long period. Aims of training are to delay the onset of fatigue, maintain improvement in performance, improve skills, minimize injuries, and maintain the dancer/athlete's willingness and enthusiasm for exercise.

### Key Words

**Overload:** in order to have a training effect any system must be charged to a higher level than used to. Have to balance between load and load capacity. If one overloads the body things go wrong. Injuries caused by disbalance between internal and external force. This is the basis from which training should be built.

**Super compensation:** any exercise produces fatigue, but then the body can recover and progress to higher level if the athlete starts to exercise again in a period called super compensation. But if the athlete does not wait and starts training before the recovery is complete then there is a negative effect, as there is if the athlete waits too long. It is difficult to time when an athlete is in this super compensation period. In the beginning a small amount of training leads to considerable improvement, but the closer to the summit the smaller the improvements (Law of reduced Profit). At top level a small amount of improvement is all that can be sought.

Early specialization sport require early specific training, but late specialization sports need a generalized approach in the early training. Do we have to classify dressage as an early or late specialization sport?

Can we measure Happiness? Is it freedom from pain and distress. Humans and animals need natural behavior to avoid stress. It can be defined as the state which humans and animals are behaviorally driven to counter external forces which would otherwise lead to unhappiness. In animals absence of stress is the measure. Science could look to the presence or absence of beta-endorphins, which are natural painkillers which are released when there is pain or fear, exhaustive exercise, stereotype behavior (weaving etc). Other stress (unhappiness) markers include adrenaline, cortisol, growth hormones. Science can also look at heart rate variability to measure stress.

**Mr. Van Breda's** conclusions are: to make a horse into an athlete needs a long term athlete development plan. Dressage has to be categorized as early or late specialization and **Mr. Van Breda** inclined towards late specialization. As happiness cannot be measured in horses in the same way as human athletes, from a scientific point of view it will need more applied research to measure what is a Happy Athlete.

### DISCUSSION

**Mr. Truppa** favoured the dancer because the dressage horse needs grace. A parameter to add is grace. Also questioned whether a lazy horse cannot be made sharper.

**Mr. Maurel** pointed out that this session had led to many different ways of thinking about the Happy Athlete and the discussions needs to continue.

## 9. KYRA KYRKLUND (Fin) AND JAN BRINK (Swe) trainers and riders

Continuing the theme of the Happy Athlete, **Kyra Kyrklund** said it was important to treat the horse as a horse. It is not a machine. Selection is important, temperament is very important. The better the conformation, the easier it is for the horse to do what is wanted. Some horses are not good enough for GP and riders/trainers have to recognize at what level that horse will be happy, perhaps as a young rider horse. Horses live for today, do not think about the future, if sour and depressed they will not do their best job. Horses do not see the big picture. They have a memory of the past, one bad incident can disturb the way of going. People can have a goal and go through the pain barrier. Trainers have to first make the horse strong enough to be able to do what is wanted. Trainers have different ways of explaining what is needed, but it is important for horses to understand what a trainer wants. Your goals and the horse's must match. We should not humanize the horse. The horse is happy when well fed, watered, sheltered and not in pain. Every time we get on a horse, we have to be ready to adjust to that day's state.

A horse needs plenty of exercise. **Kyra Kyrklund** walks her horses before and after training, they get extra hand walking in the afternoon. A Horse is designed to move about 22 hrs out of 24hrs. The horse becomes more mentally relaxed when the whole environment is designed towards this.

**Jan Brink** talked about his training of the Happy Athlete. He said it was team work for horse, rider, groom, trainer, blacksmith and vet to make a top athlete. The environment is important and he wanted as much light as possible in his riding school as light gives a more positive attitude for humans and he believed for horses. The red line when developing his stables was to keep the horses close to nature. The horse should be allowed to be a horse in between competitions, so ride on race tracks, in grass fields, etc. This is important for horses and riders. Contact with other horses in the stables is important. **Jan Brink** does a lot work with young horses and for the stallion tests. He rides his young horses outside, in the forests, up and down hills to give variety, and avoids specializing too quickly. This in the long run brings them on quicker. They jump the young horses and ride in a forward canter. 'Then you can feel the horse gets inspiration. Finally we need to show our appreciation for horses'.

**Kyra Kyrklund** said that she had been influenced by different systems. She had mixed Swedish and German systems. She liked Swedish loosening and German 'getting your act together', and went for a balance between the two. There was no system in Finland so she developed her own. Then she got into the Russian system, and studied how they selected horses when they looked for such things as an openness of the throat and ease with which the neck came up. Even with a good hind leg it is important to be easy for the horse to come up in the neck and not be restricted physically because of such things as restrictions in the throat. "I see myself as a workmen with bag of tools and I am building up the number of tools. I hope everyone at the Forum can go home with one more tool, and add it to, and not replace old tools". In training you have to inspire and explain young people and not just treat them as in the days of the army. **Kyra Kyrklund** has looked into other forms of training, like western and saddlebreds, driving and trotting horses, riding racehorses, training dolphins and circus trainers. This has increased her flexibility in the training process. It is not possible to always train everything in the accepted order. For instance Matador learnt piaffe and passage, but could not do changes, but piaffe and passage strengthened the canter and then he did the changes.

When learning there are comfort zones, stretch zones and panic zones, **Kyra Kyrklund** tried to avoid the panic zone when backing a horse, but she also said that - later on - trainers should dare to approach the panic zone. The important thing is that the rider is always in the comfort zone. She plays between these zones. It is stressful to learn piaffe and flying changes and a good trainer has to know when to back off. All training is pressure and release. Pressure is the aid, horses and riders learn by trial and error. You should not be afraid of error. All riders make mistakes in training of Grand Prix horses. As long as they learn from errors it is okay. Edinburg could do movements but was not mentally prepared for his first international outing with **Kyra Kyrklund** and blew up, but she learnt from this and he was relaxed in Barcelona a few months later. She learnt to go early to a competition and to give him frequent short rides to relax. She did not want the body to be tired, and the mind still tensed.

## 10. PRACTICAL SESSION FROM JAN BRINK WITH BJORSELLS BRIAR

A rider always needs to get his horse to relax and if you do not get this done at home it will not happen at competitions. If a rider gets control over the length and the speed of the steps, he can have control of the body, and can start to get the control of the mind. In trot **Jan Brink** let Briar stretch, but always carrying himself. Then he cantered with transitions. On a circle **Jan Brink** played with the length of the steps without changing the tempo. Still working with a fairly long neck, **Jan Brink** asked for shorter steps without making them quicker or slower, then longer steps. All the time the rider had to think of the upper body centered above the horse with the armpits above the seat bones. The horse has to carry the rider. While keeping the same length of strides the tempo was made slower, then quickened. When training the length and speed of steps the rider has to decide which one to change. When the trainer says 'more forward', it may not be clear if he wants it to be faster or longer. A rider needs to play with the length of the body. A lot of horses go forward, but are hanging on the bit and are not really developing the hind leg.

There were plenty of releases of the rein and a pat at the same time. **Kyra Kyrklund** compared it to clicker training with dogs, and this has the added benefit of relaxing the rider. Briar also needs plenty of breaks, he was tense in walk at the Olympics, he has to relax from one walk step to another and stretch into the bit. It is very important to train the walk. To get a better passage the rider has to change the rhythm or length of strides, not just ask for more passage. Then Briar was taken back to canter to work more on the collection, shorten up and keep rhythm, then get a little slower, pat on outside and ride up into inside rein, push but do not squeeze.

If a horse does bad pirouettes but a good piaffe then is a question of training as they have the same degree of collection. Stay and wait for balance to ask for the transitions. If the rider can keep the collection of piaffe in a transition into canter then this can help with the pirouettes. Changes are a question of control of step and speed. **Kyra Kyrklund** and **Jan Brink** usually work on changes when the horse is fresh. Piaffe had been a little slow, so **Jan Brink** lightened his seat and leant forward a little, no squeezing but using lower leg to speed up. He played with him in piaffe, a little lower in the neck.

**Kyra Kyrklund** then rode Max, a 9 year old by Master. Talented but big, she had decided they should take time. When **Kyra Kyrklund** got on Max he was waiting for a sugar lump that she gave him - one from each side, this encouraged him to not move off. The work started lower and relaxed to insure he was not running off when **Kyra Kyrklund** gave the reins. When he was relaxed she picked up the trot more. It was easy for him to do piaffe, but passage had been not so easy. Piaffe and passage is not so much the ability to lift one leg but more to find the balance when staying on three legs. **Kyra Kyrklund** showed how she plays with the horse in the hand work. She teaches him to lift one foreleg at a time, and then give sugar. It is a good stretching exercise to lift the front leg. **Kyra Kyrklund** then used the walk pirouette into canter to help the collection. She reminded the audience that dressage developed from the need for trained horses in war when they had to be able to ride with one hand and use the other hand to kill the enemy.

**Kyra Kyrklund** finished by discussing the role of the Dressage Society saying: 'We collectively have the responsibility to set the standard and we must ensure the standard is met. It is good that the FEI Committee now consults the trainers and riders. Forums like this are the way to go. I think we are on a good way and really going forward'.

### DISCUSSION

*Mrs. Whitmore asked what level do you start the short and lengthened strides.*

*Kyra Kyrklund replied usually at five years old, but it can sometimes be four.*

*Mrs. Whitmore also commented that to keep contact on the inside rein and give the outside goes against what has been said before.*

*Kyra Kyrklund: horses can suffer from too much inside rein, then they can be too straight and too much on the outside rein. Inside leg to outside rein can be exaggerated to get horses straight, but when the horse is straight then the rider can go back to riding up to the inside rein*

*Mr. Hinnemann: Kyra Kyrklund really showed how to become Happy Athletes as horses and riders, through mental suppleness and balance.*

*Mr. Rosie and Van Breda said that it was very close to what they know from science. Kyra Kyrklund said she was always interested in science, but when she was younger no-one else had been interested. It was good to hear the reasons behind trainers' practical experience. Dressage has a fantastic tradition and we have to go forward to next generation and hope we can give tools to the next generation.*

*Richard Davison summed up by saying it is obvious what an inquiring mind Kyra Kyrklund has. She studies widely. She is more than a dressage rider, and a true horsewoman. It was an honest presentation and she also had the confidence to show and talk about things that go wrong.*

## 11. PANEL DISCUSSION ON THE HAPPY ATHLETE

Trainers represented by : **David Hunt and Kyra Kyrklund**  
Judges represented by : **Mariette Withages and Stephen Clarke**  
Scientists represented by : **Dirk Willem Rosie and Dr Eric van Breda**

### **DISCUSSION**

**Dr. Schule:** *Should 6 year olds compete in Prix St. Georges? Or is it too early, are the movements too difficult? Should the Young Horse classes be used?*

**Panel:** *No scientific proof from human studies that it is too early. Jumping horses are more suitable for early specialization as they need to develop quick reactions. It would seem that an early conclusion is that dressage horses are more towards late specialization, as the development training should be general to strengthen physique.*

**Kyra Kyrklund:** *In Russia riders ask for PSG early but do not ask for so much expression. I think Young Horses are squeezed into too many extensions. What we want is horses that can collect.*

**Anky van Grunsven:** *my top horses have never been good young horses for young horse championships. There is a difference in the type of horses that are good at Young Horse Championships. I am not against young horses, but my potential grand prix horses I like to train at home. You have to take care that they have a natural way of going and if you try to hard for the Young Horses championships, it creates problems for a Grand Prix horse.*

**Sjef Janssen:** *I like the ideas from Mr. Van Breda that the first stage of development should be FUN. That says it all.*

**Mr. Van Breda:** *Why are there titles and medals for Young Horses not just prizes? Maybe young horses should just get judges marks and not the medals. Such competitions are not part of the Long term Athlete Development method.*

**Mrs. Withages:** *We ask questions because what should not happen is that the championships live in their own right. They should be the means, and not the goal.*

**Mr. Rosie:** *We see young horses doing well that can get the extended paces, but this is not necessarily appropriate for GP. Gothic movers are needed for GP and it is difficult to judge this when the horse is young.*

**Mrs. Withages:** *We have to judge what we see.*

**David Hunt:** *The Happy Athlete is a wonderful perception and the right way forward. But it also has a few disadvantages because it can be misinterpreted. If a horse does not look happy will it be marked down? Today we are with experts, but this is not reality. Reality is that when FEI judges come to strange countries they are 'gods', but what message do they leave behind? On the FEI Course at Hickstead there was mention of open mouths and that the FEI have said horses should not have open mouths. The message that was left was that judges should be hard on open mouths. I am worried that riders will shut mouth up. How tight should the noseband be? Some horses have ears back, some swish tails, so please judges can we maintain things in perspective.? I wanted to flag up concerns as to how this session is interpreted.*

**Richard Davison:** *There are dangers that interpretations can be taken too far.*

**Mrs. Withages:** *We have done this exercise because we have changed the wording, but we have not changed the rules, nor the dogma.*

**Mr. Maurel:** *If the judges are horse people they know how to train and breed a horse. Then there is no reason that the judges will be out of line and lose the harmonious development.*

## 12. EVALUATION OF THE OLYMPIC GAMES IN ATHENS

Two minute sections of tests run on screen:

- Robert Dover with Kennedy
- Hubertus Schmidt with Wansuela Suerte
- Deborah McDonald with Brentina
- Beatriz Ferrer Salat with Beauvalais
- Anky van Grunsven with Gestion Salinero
- Ulla Salzgeber with Rusty

### DISCUSSION

*The tests were looked at in terms of the Happy Athlete only. It was a test of the ability to evaluate this. The scientists said Salinero was the happiest horses with his loose top line expressed in the quiet tail and no negative moments. He communicated with Anky, waiting for the aids. There was optimum communication and harmony. The judges agreed. There was clear harmony with instant and willing reactions to every transition and movement. The expression on the horse's face was confident. There was sharpness but trust. This was the perfect team.*

**Dr. Schule:** Good signs are the ears and tail, **Mr. Truppa:** Quality was retained with power.

**Kyra Kyrklund and David Hunt** agreed. The horse and rider were working within themselves and there was still more to come. With Rusty the trainers said there were more problems but the horse was still happy to do the test.

**Mr. Rosie and Van Breda** felt there was some stiffness, some tension in the eye and the movement in the tail indicated that he was not totally loose along the top line.

**Mrs. Withages and Mr. Clark** thought he was working on full power but in collection was not completely at ease. He was still giving his utmost. Delegates comments included that Kennedy may not have been on full power but the test was flowing. Also that he showed a willingness to please even if the body was not so talented as the top horse. The trainers thought he was confident, and not pushed to the limits. The judges however noted the acceptance, steadiness of contact and elasticity through the whole body could have been better. The obedience was good. Wansuela Suerte wanted to work forward for the rider. She was proud and giving much but she had limits to her natural ability. Physically and mentally she was happy. The whole picture was of happiness. She was in the comfort zone at the Olympic final. Brentina reacted to the easiest aids, but the ears did not always indicate happiness. Uncertainty whether it was obedience or eagerness to work. Beauvalais was dynamic but 'wild'. Eager and keen, doing the job to his utmost but lacking ease and ability to always carry the weight on his hinds.

**David Hunt** commented that it had been an interesting exercise. Looking at the eye, whether the performance was within the horse's capabilities, willingness to work and not concerned with irregularities.

**Richard Davison** concluded that there was no overall agreement in the order of who was the happiest athlete apart from Salinero. It was found difficult to evaluate the balance between the power of the athlete and the willingness. Also over the whole test the horse may be happy in some movements that he finds easy and not so in those he finds difficult. There were difficulties in measuring what is a Happy Athlete. Is it a horse that swishes a tail? There are no real facts. Is the mouth an indicator of happiness? The shortcomings in the acceptance of the bit was the reason that the judges placed the eager Beauvalais, working to his utmost, lower than the scientists and trainers. The goal of a Happy Athlete has to be kept in proportion as an FEI directive. It is difficult to interpret the signs of happiness, the mouth, the ears, the tail, and judges need to take care not to focus too much on these.

**Mrs. Withages** gave her thanks for the input made regarding the Happy Athlete during the Forum.

### 13. RUDOLF ZEILINGER (Ger) Danish National Trainer, rider

**Rudolf Zeilinger** said his goal was to make a bridge from Classical Dressage to the Happy Athlete. A main point for a happy horse is a happy rider, relaxed enough and mentally happy. The seat must always be in balance, be central, and swing with the balance of the horse. When the rider is central he is in a balance to give the horse security and that really helps the training. Many young riders are under pressure from parents and trainers to earn success. The horse might work in the right frame but there is no suppleness. Without this no horse can swing, be happy and show potential. Riders and trainers must recognize what is the potential of the horse and what is possible at that moment. They must not overtrain or they will go backwards. The trainer's big responsibility is to tell the owner that the horse is not capable of progressing to expected levels, if necessary.

**Rudolf Zeilinger** worked with a six-year-old. The horse cantered in a good balance with a light connection. He emphasized on riding from behind. Shoulder in and then shoulder in into half pass, keeping the rhythm and fluency. Easy for this horse to do the movements, swinging and active behind. The rider started with less bend, not so steep in the half passes, and the important thing was to keep the basic quality of the gait in the movement. If the horse lost balance / rhythm etc he was not kept going in the movement but returned to the basics and the transitions.

**Rudolf Zeilinger** said: 'teach horses as individuals, the horse will tell what speed to take the training. Some horses at five years are very secure in connection but may not be top GP horses. There are different tests and different possibilities for such horses. There are no rules as to when to start movements. He liked to have a long time to play with the movements so he started early, as long as it is playing in early years. Horses need three or four years to develop strength, balance and confidence to do piaffe and passage'.

Another big thing is how to keep a horse mentally happy through all the training phases. Horses that have a lot of elasticity and power need to be disciplined, but the rider should leave much of the spirit in, so that horses keep their brilliance and learn to use it to fight for the rider. How much can we mentally ask each day? If a human has a hard working day we are mostly happy in the evening. Horses also like to work hard, but the horse must understand what the rider wants. If a horse can do what he is asked for, the rider can put some pressure on him in the training that will make the horse mentally motivated and in the end happy.

About the neck position, **Rudolf Zeilinger** told that the horse has to be on the bit, with the poll as the highest point. But in the training, the rider needs not to ask for this perfection. You have to find the right neck position for each horse, and in each movement. In half steps you can have the neck low to keep the back open and the hind legs moving. It has to be decided individually, whether low or up, as long as it works from behind, through the back and on the bridle.

#### **DISCUSSION**

*Q: David Hunt: other trainers let them down and long in the middle of the work, you only did at the end.*

*Rudolf Zeilinger: I do not think stretching down has to happen always. The horse should be ready, however, to do it when asked for. When this is not possible then the rider has to work to get it.*

*Q: What strategy do you have for introducing new movements?.*

*Rudolf Zeilinger: The horse answers. If he is going well you can do new exercises a little each day. No special rules.*

*Q: Why do we not protect legs in tests?.*

*Mrs. Withages said that it has always been a strategy. Now the FEI allows protection in the prize giving. It can be brought up to use protection in tests as well.*

*Q: Why use string girth?*

**Rudolf Zeilinger:** *I use a saddle by **Schultheiss**. It is very close to the back of the horse, the back gives most information and I want to be close to it. This saddle was only made for a long string girth.*

*Q: Why use a double bridle?*

**Rudolf Zeilinger:** *He is far enough in training, and accepts the snaffle. Horses have to go in double bridle while in training, as they have to get confident and used to it, especially horses that work well in a snaffle.*

The successful breeding stallion DON SCHUFRO (Donnerhall x Pik Bube) was then ridden by **Andreas Helgstrand**. He had his first GP season with him. The horse was worked in and out of collection, the rider quickening the reaction and the hindlegs coming under more. The rider used light aids. **Rudolf Zeilinger** said that it is important to keep the jump uphill in the canter especially in the canter zig zag. Lots of riders fail to think forwards, and then basic quality goes down. If quality deteriorates, you have to go back to working on quality. **Rudolf Zeilinger** asked for subtle differences such as in the flying changes to lift the neck a little. He asked to perform quarter pirouettes on a square, not allow the horse to slow down, he needs to keep the jump, then the rider had to ride a full pirouette and allowed the horse to stretch. **Mr. Helgstrand** did not exercise pirouettes like in the test. He used quarter pirouettes, and made the horse to listen to the inside leg and waiting for the rider aids. This is individual to the horse. Some horses need more forward work to get them better in the end to carry the weight behind.

**Richard Davison** brought the Global Forum to an end saying we had been on a journey and looked at the development and understanding of the Happy Athlete worldwide. It is a wonderful development that people can come to the Forum to hear about all these things and it has been a huge credit to **Mariette Withages** that she has encouraged consultation. Through this forum there is an open line for all dressage enthusiasts. **Mariette Withages** shows courage and openness, the judges show humor.

The sponsors are thanked:

- **Dutch National Federation**
- **Mrs. Lesley Bishop**
- **Mrs. Cathy Kinnear**
- **Mr. Craig Rawlins**
- **Mrs. Lieke Sonnenberg**
- **Horse Academy Foundation**
- **MSP, Mrs. Brigitte de Deken**

The final thanks went to the Bartels family and their hard working Academy team.

# HAPPY ATHLETES AT THE FOURTH GLOBAL DRESSAGE FORUM

By Claartje van Anandel and Bernadette Faurie

The fourth annual Global Dressage Forum was held at the Bartels family's Academy in Hooge Mierde, The Netherlands, on October 24-26. For the first time the Forum was officially supported by the FEI. Central to two days of demonstrations and debates was the rewording of the FEI rule 401.1 to describe the aim of producing the dressage horse as a 'happy athlete'.

The first day centred on the development of the sport. In opening, FEI Dressage Committee Chairman Mariette Withages emphasised the importance for the future of dressage within the Olympic framework of embracing the values of transparency, universality and fairness.

FEI-Sports Director Michael Stone spoke on the global development of dressage, in many countries the fastest growing sport, and the remit of the FEI as one of the largest international sport federations after soccer and tennis. He stressed that dressage is the fundamental discipline worldwide, although only a small number of countries take part internationally. Outlining the importance of the FEI's coaching and development programmes he emphasised: "Stimulating interest in small countries will create a larger audience for the sport." A slide showing 3000 children in Malawi watching a basic dressage competition served to make his point.

John Long, Chief Executive Officer of the United States Equestrian Federation, explained the structure, success, challenges and goals of the governing body of the fastest growing sport in the US, which was also the



Jan Brink and Björnsells Briar with Kyra Kyrklund.

most successful equestrian nation of the Athens Olympic Games. In contrast, the Portuguese Equestrian Federation's presentation outlined the nation's ambition of becoming a player in competitive dressage with the native Iberian horse, the Lusitano. With displays of traditional working equitation, Carlos Lopes took delegates on a journey back to his country's deepest roots in the history of relationship between man and horse, while German trainer Martina Hannover-Sternberg, who has been working with the Portuguese for two-and-a-half years, demonstrated work towards their future.

Ulli Kasselmann was also interesting as he showed how he selects the talented horses to be sold at his PSI auction.

The following day was devoted to exploring the 'happy athlete' theme. From Dirk Willem Rosie, of the KWPN Studbook, and physiologist Dr Eric van Breda came thought-provoking scientifically based examinations into how the horse can be a 'happy athlete', and how that can be achieved. Rosie emphasised the role of correct physical conformation and temperament and stated: "It is the task of studbooks to realise these requirements and provide dressage riders with good horses — so that the horse is never over-demanded."

Backing up the results of Rosie's survey of 700 small tour riders who ticked 'zealousness, sensitivity and perseverance' as necessary attributes for a horse to be a success in dressage, reigning Olympic champion Anky van Grunsven added that in her experience of Bonfire and Salinero, the most sensitive horses are also the most spooky and nervous. She reinforced the importance of dealing with a potential negative side by building the horse's trust in a calm rider.

Dr van Breda, a specialist in comparative human and equine training and exercise physiology at Maastricht University's department of Movement Sciences, illustrated that 'happiness' cannot be measured in equine athletes in the same way as in human athletes, as the horse has no concept of training for a goal, nor fills out questionnaires. From a scientific point of view, measuring 'happiness'

needs a lot more research, including out of competition testing, in order to gauge the effects of the production of  $\beta$ -endorphins and adrenalin, "which produces a happy feeling in performance for a human athlete but counts as a stress-marker for the horse."

Finnish expert and Swedish team trainer Kyra Kyrklund then explained how she has developed her core dressage system from experience in Sweden, Germany and later from the Russians, but she continues to explore very different methods including how circus animals and dolphins are trained. At the core of her philosophy is mutual respect in both management and training, and understanding of the horse's basic nature. She said, "the horse has a right to be a horse...we must take care not to humanise him" and emphasised that it is the responsibility of the rider to acquire a 'toolbox' of skills and knowledge.

Kyrklund's pupil, European silver medalist Jan Brink showed a video of his horses' lifestyle at home featuring his Olympic partner Björnsells Briar, including the amazing opportunity to compare a video of the young Briar doing his work out on the race-track and over cross country fences, with the later 'live' demonstration of his present-day abilities in collection and elevation under Kyrklund's instruction.

The afternoon's debate of the theme 'the happy athlete' followed a video presentation of clips of the top six



Dirk Willem Rosie and Dr Eric van Breda.

Olympic freestyle tests in Athens: Kennedy (Robert Dover), Wansuela Suerte (Hubertus Schmidt), Brentina (Debbie McDonald), Beauvalais (Beatriz Ferrer-Salat), Rusty (Ulla Salzgeber) and Salinero (Anky van Grunsven).

A panel in three groups - judges, trainers and the scientists (Rosie and Van Breda) - and the audience were asked to place each horse in an order using the 'happy athlete' as the sole criteria. Salinero was unanimously placed first but the following placings under this hypothesis were diverse and much discussed.

Although the 'happy athlete' is a description of an overall objective for the development of the dressage horse, and would not be evaluated in a genuine test situation in such a way, International Dressage Trainers Club president David Hunt finally ended the discussion by highlighting the risk of overstressing any specific aspect in judging, as the overall image and the total way of moving and performing is what should always count the most.

At the end of the day, Rudolf Zeilinger showed two horses, a remarkable self-possessed six year old on only his second outing away from home, and the stallion Don Schafro ridden by Danish Olympic team member Andreas Helgstrand. Zeilinger explained his affinity and connection to famous German classical tradition through his years of working with riding master Willi Schultheiss in Warendorf. "The old masters recognised the importance of a happy horse, and they also were exact in their system," he said. "The main point about a happy horse is that he needs a happy rider - confident, relaxed and balanced. The rider must always ensure that the horse understands what he wants."

To conclude, Richard Davison adeptly summarized proceedings. "We have been travelling on a journey together,

developing the concept of the happy athlete worldwide, making us all happy participants," Davison said. He paid tribute to FEI Dressage committee chairman Mariette Withages "...whose courage, openness and sporting attitude would, along with the support and collaboration of the FEI, continue to bring us all further on our journey, for the sake of our sport and the welfare of our horses."

Attended by some 300 people - from international riders, trainers, judges and officials to national enthusiasts - it was a gathering of the dressage world. As Mariette Withages said in her opening address: "We should stick together, and not bend in the wind. Compared with the progress we can make together, the small discussions are peanuts." □



Rudolf Zeilinger.

Das vierte globale Dressurforum fand in der zweiten Oktoberhälfte in der Bartels'schen Akademie im holländischen Hooge Mierde statt. Es war dies das erste offiziell von der FEI unterstützte Forum. Im Mittelpunkt stand diesmal die Definition der FEI-Regel 401.1, nach der es Zweck der Dressur ist, einen „glücklichen“ vierbeinigen Sportler zu produzieren.

Dirk Willem Rosie vom Stammbuch KWPN und der Physiologe Dr. Eric van Breda stellten Untersuchungen auf wissenschaftlicher Grundlage vor, die zeigen, wie ein Pferd ein „glücklicher Sportler“ sein kann und wie man dieses Ziel erreicht. Rosie betonte die Bedeutung eines korrekten Exterieurs sowie guten Temperaments und stellte fest: „Es ist die Aufgabe der Stammbücher, diese Erfordernisse zu realisieren und die Dressurreiter mit guten Pferden zu versorgen — damit die Pferde niemals überfordert werden.“

Dr. van Breda, ein Trainingsphysiologe der Hochschule Maastricht, der sich mit Menschen wie Pferden befasst, zeigte auf, dass „Glück“ bei vierbeinigen Athleten nicht auf dieselbe Weise wie bei menschlichen Sportlern gemessen werden kann: Das Pferd hat kein Trainingskonzept, um Ziele zu erreichen — und es füllt keine Fragebögen aus. Die Messung von „Glück“ bedarf wissenschaftlicher Forschung, um die Ausschüttung von B-Endorphinen und Adrenalin zu ermitteln, „die beim Menschen unter sportlicher Belastung ein Glücksgefühl hervorrufen, aber beim Pferd einen Hinweis auf Stress darstellen“. Die schwedische Mannschaftstrainerin Kyra Kyrklund, die sich

a.a. mit der Art und Weise, wie Zirkustiere und Delphine trainiert werden, befasst, legte dar, dass es bei der Haltung und beim Training auf den gegenseitigen Respekt ankommt. Vor allem müsse man die eigentliche Natur des Pferdes verstehen: „Das Pferd hat ein Recht darauf, ein Pferd zu sein ... Wir müssen aufpassen, dass wir es nicht vermenschlichen.“

Rudolf Zeilinger schließlich stellte zwei Pferde vor, einen bemerkenswert selbstbewussten Sechsjährigen, der erst zum zweiten Mal von zu Hause weg war, und den Hengst Don Schafro unter dem dänischen Olympiareiter Andreas Helgstrand. Zeilinger sprach von seiner Affinität zur berühmten deutschen klassischen Reiterei, die sich in den Jahren bei Reitmeister Willi Schultheiss in Warendorf ausgebildet habe. „Die alten Meister wussten um die Wichtigkeit eines glücklichen Pferdes — und sie gingen ganz systematisch vor“, sagte er. „Damit ein Pferd glücklich sein kann, braucht es einen glücklichen Reiter. Der muss selbstsicher, entspannt und ausbalanciert sein. Der Reiter hat immer darauf zu achten, dass sein Pferd versteht, was er von ihm will.“

Rund 300 Menschen kamen zu diesem Forum zusammen — internationale Reiter, Trainer, Richter, Funktionäre und Freunde der Dressur. Wie Richterin Mariette Withages bei ihrer Eröffnungssprache sagte: „Wir sollten alle zusammenhalten, nicht mit dem Strom schwimmen. Verglichen mit dem Fortschritt, der uns gemeinsam gelingen kann, sind unsere kleinen Auseinandersetzungen nur Peanuts.“



Left: young dressage horses presented by Ullrich Kasselmann, of the PSI Auction in Germany. Below: Kyra Kyrklund and her pupil Jan Brink, riding Bjorsells Briar. Together they provided a fascinating insight into thoughtful training and management of the top dressage horse

*Should we expect to describe top competition horses as 'happy'?*  
*Seamour Rathore reports from the Global Dressage Forum in Holland*

# Taking collective responsibility

## TALENT-SPOTTING DUTCH-STYLE

■ OF the eight riders who represented the Netherlands in equestrianism at Athens 2004, six were under the age of 26. For Joep Bartels, this highlighted the success of the country's systems such as the Rabobank talent programme — based on the principle of using Dutch stars to inspire, scout and develop talent.

"We use our stars and connect up-and-coming youngsters to them," he said.

Anky van Grunsven (pictured with Tineke Bartels) said: "It's vital that the best trainers and riders are involved on our programme and we help the most talented kids. Often, they end up working with the riders and can develop from there."



Pictures by Dirk Caenen

THE wisdom of changing FEI rule 401.1 to reflect that the dressage horse should be a "happy athlete" was the centrepiece of debate at the Global Dressage Forum.

It was held at Dr Joep Bartels's Academy at Hooze Mierde, the Netherlands (25-26 October).

Dirk Willem Rosie of the KWPN studbook said much of the responsibility lay with the breeder.

"A worthwhile and rewarding life as a dressage horse requires the correct physical conformation and temperament," he said. "It is the task of studbooks to realise these requirements — so that the horse is never over-demanded."

So, if a well-put together horse with a willing nature works as a dressage horse, he should enjoy his job.

Dirk Rosie also noted the results of a survey of 700 riders at small tour level who said that zealotness,

sensitivity and perseverance are necessary attributes for a horse to be success in dressage.

Double Olympic gold medalist Anky van Grunsven said that from her experience of Bonfire and Salinero, the most sensitive horses are also the most spooky and nervous: "My very sensitive horses react to everything in training and you must find a way for your horse to trust you more. And the rider must be able to stay calm."

Dr Eric van Breda, a specialist in comparative human and equine training and exercise physiology, moved the debate on by saying that happiness cannot be measured in equine athletes as it is in humans.

"From a scientific point of view, we need to find a way of measuring the dressage horse's happiness."

"But this needs a lot more research and out-of-competition measurements of happiness."

Trainer/rider Kyra Kyrklund went on



to outline her approach to training, which she pointed out was based on 30yr of developing a mutual respect, while understanding the horse's basic nature as a herd and flight animal.

"The horse is not a machine, and the end in training does not justify the means. Importantly, though, we must be not attribute human traits to the horse" she said. "Horses don't have a goal, they don't plan for the future, and therefore we have to make sure that they are happy every day."

This was based on good, sound management practices and variety in training ideas. Kyra pointed out that most of the time riders deal with half-

## Fighting a 50-year medal drought

PORTUGAL could regain its place as a force with which to be reckoned at international level as a result of a concerted effort to breed and train suitable horses.

But as the Lusitano book is closed (breeders cannot introduce other bloodlines to improve certain characteristics) it is hard to change the basic make-up of the Portuguese-bred horse.

Nevertheless, alongside horses used for traditional Portuguese equitation, Germany's Martina Hanover (pictured) presented Lusitano horses bred and selected for international competition with the big movement needed.

Arthur Kottas, former chief rider of the Spanish Riding School of Vienna, warned that when the school selected eight horses from 50 at Piber every year, it tended to choose the bigger ones which were often harder to collect.

"We should keep the Portuguese horse as it is for the next generation — the traditional horse has a good temperament that makes it possible for everyone to ride him," he said.

Kyra Kyrklund felt that the Iberian horse must go forward.

"With the cold-blooded Finnish horse, we bred different lines that established a trotting horse and a riding horse. So the Portuguese should perhaps just establish more sections of this horse, bred for particular jobs," she pointed out.

Luis Lopes, who masterminded the session, summed up: "In Spain, we had similar discussions and at the end found that it was a case of finding the right horse for sport and giving it the right training — but not changing the breeding."

Planning to buy or sell a dressage horse? *Horse & Hound* is the place to look. Horses for sale start on page 98. Classified freephone: 0800 7310 616

## ‘We must not attribute human traits to the horse’

**Kyra Kyrklund**

talented horses and the responsibility is on the rider's shoulders to have a "toolbox" of skills, knowledge and different ways of explaining things to a horse so that he can understand what is required of him.

"The dressage community has to take collective responsibility for this and it's important that FEI committees have representation from riders and trainers," she said.

David Hunt, president of the International Dressage Trainers Club, spoke for many delegates and echoed Kyra's concerns: "The 'happy athlete' is a good perception, but it has its disadvantages — it can be misinterpreted very easily.

"The reality is that when FEI judges make something gospel they sometimes don't realise the message they've left behind."

David used as an example a recent judges' training seminar in the UK where the speaker said that horses should show no resistance in the mouth. Many trainee judges were left with the impression that an open mouth should always be penalised.

"But if judges become overcritical on the mouth, then riders will find ways to shut the horse's mouth.

"I'm pleading with the international judges to look at how rule changes such as this may be interpreted in the real world," he said.

## HORSE INTERNATIONAL

SPORT & BREEDING

### People & Places

#### HOOGE MIERDE



Monica Theodorescu, Beatrix Ferrer-Salat, Pia Laus, Anky van Grunsven and Margit Otto-Crepin.



Joep Bartels with Richard Davison.



Sjef Janssen with Maritje Withages.

# «WHO WAS THE HAPPY ATHLETE?»

**Wer war der glückliche Athlet bei den olympischen Spielen in Athen, diese Frage stand als Thema im Vordergrund bei dem diesjährigen «Global Dressage Forum» des internationalen Dressur-Trainer-Clubs.**

Zwei Wissenschaftler, selbst Reiter, haben darüber eine Studie ausgearbeitet und vorgetragen. Ausbilder, Reiter und Richter äusserten ihre Meinung über diese Studie. Renommierte Trainer demonstrierten im praktischen Training in der Reithalle der «Academy» was mit klassisch ausgebildeten Pferden erreicht werden kann.

Mehr als 300 Teilnehmer aus 27 Nationen waren in die Reitanlage «Academy» von Joep und Tineke Bartels in Hooge Mierde, Holland gekommen. Die Veranstaltung stand erstmals nicht nur auf dem Papier unter dem Patronat der FEI (Weltreiterverband), Mariette Withages, Vorsitzende des FEI-Dressurausschusses war mit dessen Mitgliedern und Richtern der olympischen Spiele in Athen angereist und hat viel zum Gelingen der Veranstaltung beigetragen.

## Der «happy athlete»

Der Paragraph 401.1 der neuen FEI-Reglemente mit dem Wortlaut «das Ziel der Dressur ist, das Pferd durch eine harmonische Ausbildung zum «happy athlete» zu entwickeln, Elastizität, Losgelassenheit und Biegsamkeit ist zu erreichen sowie Vertrauen, Lebhaftigkeit und Begeisterung», hat zu lebhaften Diskussionen geführt. Der internationale Dressur-Trainer-Club hat deshalb zwei Wissenschaftler mit der Untersuchung, was ein Pferd zu einem «glücklichen Athleten» macht und wie dies erreicht werden kann, beauftragt. Das Resultat haben sie dann am Forum provozierend aber auch mit viel Humor vorgetragen.

Dr. Dirk Willem Rosie, Physiologe und Kommunikationschef des KWPN-Zuchtverbands, setzte den Schwerpunkt auf die körperliche Beschaffenheit des Pferdes und sein Tempera-



Sind die Künstler im Viereck immer glücklich?

ment und hielt fest, es sei die Aufgabe des Zuchtverbands, dieser Bedürfnisse bewusst zu werden und den Dressurreitern gute Pferde zu stellen. Dann würde das Pferde nicht überfordert werden, fügte der Wissenschaftler hinzu. Seine Umfrage nach den gewünschten Merkmalen eines erfolgreichen Dressurpferdes bei etwa 700 Reitern der kleinen Tour ergab, sensibel, ausdauernd, eifrig und ruhig müssten die Pferde sein. Doppelolympiasiegerin Anky van Grunsven fügte hinzu: «Nach meiner Erfahrung sind meine Pferde Bonfire und Salinero die sensibelsten Pferde aber auch die nervösesten und guckrigsten, die sich schnell verspannen.» Sie bestärkte dass es wichtig wäre, diese negativen Erscheinungen durch das Vertrauen des Pferdes in einen ruhigen Reiter abzubauen.

## Plan der athletischen Entwicklung

Dr. Eric van Breda, ein Physiologe der Medizin hat sich spezialisiert auf vergleichbares Training und physiologische Übungen bei Mensch und Pferd. Er ist Beauftragter des Projekts Training und übertrainierte Pferde mit Schwerpunkt Wissenschaft und Praktik zusammenzubringen bei der Veterinär-Wissen-

schaft der Universitäten Maastricht und Utrecht. Er kam bei seiner Studie zu folgendem Resultat. Nicht nur das Dressurpferd würde von vielen Menschen eher als Tänzer als Athlet betrachtet. Der Ausdruck «glücklich» führe zu Meinungsverschiedenheiten und würde künftig im Wettkampf als möglicher Parameter aufkommen. Schliesslich spiele neben hervorragendem Dressurpotential, entsprechendem Temperament und sportmotorischen Eigenschaften (Ausdauer, Kraft, Elastizität, Schnelligkeit und Koordination) zumindest dieselbe wichtige Rolle in der Entwicklung eines Elite-Dressurpferdes. «Glück» könne bei einem Pferd nicht mit den selben Massstäben gemessen werden wie bei einem Menschen. Das Pferde habe kein Trainingskonzept und fülle auch nicht Fragebögen aus (!) Grundsätzlich könne eine Stressabsenz beschrieben werden, aber aus wissenschaftlicher Sicht wäre eine ausführliche Forschung notwendig um «Glück» messen zu können. Die Antwort auf die Frage «Was macht den Stradivarius unter den Pferden nicht nur zum besten und glücklichsten?», müsse im Zusammenhang mit einem langfristigen Plan der athletischen Entwicklung gesehen werden und ob ein Dressurpferd als ein Athlet oder Tänzer gesehen würde.

## Training mit Kyrklund, Brink und Zeilinger

Die Finnin Kyra Kyrklund, die jetzt in England lebt, reitet und trainiert, nahm erfolgreich an 5 olympischen Spielen teil. Unvergesslich bleibt sie mit dem Hengst Matador, mit dem sie Silber bei den Weltmeisterschaften in Stockholm und das Weltcup-Finale in Paris gewann. Sie demonstrierte zusammen mit ihrem Schüler Jan Brink aus Schweden, dem Vize-Europameister, beider Ausbildungsphilosophie. Im Vordergrund steht der gegenseitige Respekt und Kenntnis vom natürlichen Wesen des Pferdes. «Das Pferd beansprucht das Recht, Pferd zu sein, wir müssen es nicht vermenschlichen in Bezug auf Haltung, Management und Training», betonte die erfolgreiche Trainerin. Auf die Kontrolle der Tritte des Pferdes beim Lösen, Versammeln und Zulegen legte Kyrklund viel Wert. Dies machte sich besonders in der anschließenden taktreinen Piaffe und Passage bezahlt.

Training mit Rudolf: Der deutsche Erfolgstrainer und internationale Reiter Rudolf Zeilinger war mit zwei dänischen Schülern angereist,

darunter Andreas Helgstrand mit dem Zucht-hengst Don Schuffro (von Donnerhall), mit dem er auf eindruckliche Weise das Resultat der klassischen Ausbildung nach der Ausbildungsskala vorzeigte. «Die alten Meister hatten bereits die Bedeutung eines glücklichen Pferdes erkannt und berücksichtigten dabei die entsprechende Ausbildung in ihrem System», sagte der Nationaltrainer der Dänen. Ein glückliches Pferd brauche in erster Linie einen glücklichen, zuversichtlichen, entspannten und ausgeglichenen Reiter. Dieser müsse sich immer versichern, dass das Pferd auch verstehe, was er von ihm wolle.

## Salinero auf Platz eins

Nach dem Vortrag erwähnter Studie, dem praktischen Training in der Reithalle und anhand von einer Videoaufnahme der sechs besten Pferde in Athen wurde abschliessend von Trainern, Reitern, Richter und den Wissenschaftlern der «happy athlete» bei den olympischen Spielen eruiert. Einheitslich stand der Olympiasieger Salinero an erster Stelle. Dann gingen aber bereits die Meinungen auseinander. Trotz-

dem wurde die Stute Wansuela Suerte unter dem Fünften der OS, Hubertus Schmidt, in der Mehrzahl auf dem 2. Platz gesehen. Die Wissenschaftler formulierten ihre Wahl mit, «die Stute versuchte in einer absoluten Harmonie, dem Reiter mehr zu geben, als ihr Potenzial es erlaubte». Über die Platzierung des Bronzemedallengewinners Beauvalais mit der Spanierin Beatriz Ferrer-Salat im Sattel wurde heftig diskutiert. «Wenn man das Pferd als Tänzer nimmt, war es ein wilder Tanz», meinte humorvoll ein Richter. Dagegen die vielgepriesene Harmonie von Brentina mit der US-Amerikanerin Debbie McDonald, den Vierten von Athen, stand allein im Raum, zum «happy athlete» brauche es mehr und die Stute landete auf dem letzten Platz.

Obwohl keine Übereinstimmung mit den Auslegungen des neuen FEI-Reglements erzielt wurde, wurde das Thema eingehend diskutiert und hat nicht nur den anwesenden Richtern, sondern auch den Trainern und Reitern mehr Aufschluss über die Komplexität der umstrittenen Bezeichnung «glücklicher Athlet» gebracht.

Helga Eppler



# Glücksbringer

Sind Dressurpferde glücklich? Eine Frage, die wohl kein Mensch abschließend beantworten kann. Denn die Pferde verraten es uns ja nicht. Beim „Global Dressage Forum“ in der Horse Academy im niederländischen Eindhoven dachten rund 250 Dressur-Menschen – Reiter, Trainer, Richter und Freaks – aus 27 Nationen darüber nach.

*Als Dressurpferd gezüchtet, geboren und ausgebildet: Don Schufro, der aussieht wie Donnerhall in neu, bringt alle Voraussetzungen für einen „happy athlete“ mit: das richtige Gebäude und das richtige Temperament.*



FOTOS: JYDIE LITKOV

Vielleicht ist Glück auch nur die Abwesenheit von Unglück, von körperlichem und seelischem Unbehagen“, mutmaßte einer, der sich seit Jahrzehnten mit Pferdezucht und Sport beschäftigt, Dirk Willem Rosie, Sprecher des niederländischen Stutbuchs KWPN. „Und vielleicht bedeutet Glück, auch, das tun zu dürfen, was man am besten kann.“ Philosophische Worte. Sie fielen vor den Teilnehmern des Global Dressage Forums in der Horse Academy bei Eindhoven, wo die Familie Bartels einmal im Jahr die „Szene“ zu Fuchdis-

kussionen ruft. Rosie sprach zum Thema „happy athlete“. Der ist zur Zeit in aller Munde (siehe auch „Im Gespräch“ Seite 3). Die Internationale Reiterliche Vereinigung (FEI), Sparte Dressur, mit Chefin Marietta Withages als Vorreiterin, wird diesen Begriff in das Reglement einführen, als weiteres Kriterium, um eine Dressurprüfung zu bewerten. Rosie

machte klar, dass zum Glück auch ganz banal gewisse körperliche Voraussetzungen gehören, damit das Pferd die ver-

langten Lektionen ohne übermäßige Anstrengung ausführen kann. Also: Ein Pferd mit gut aufgesetztem Hals lässt sich besser versammeln als eines mit tief angesetztem Hals, ein langbeiniges Pferd wird leichter die Tempounterschiede

zwischen äußerster Streckung im starken Trab und höchster Versammlung in der Passage zeigen können als ein kurzbeiniges. Und ein langer Rücken schwingt eher als ein kurzer. Alles nicht so wahnsinnig neu, aber noch selten unter dem Gesichtspunkt betrachtet, wie glücklich ein Pferd eigentlich mit dem Job ist, den ihm der Mensch gibt. Und so wie ein schlechtklassiges Rennpferd, das ständig an seine Leistungsgrenze heran und darüber hinaus getrieben wird, bald mit den Nerven am Ende ist, wird auch ein Pferd sein inneres



„Glücksfee“:  
Marietta Withages.



**Kyra Kyrklund mit ihrem Schüler Jan Brink, Teilnehmer der Olympischen Spiele in Athen, auf dem schwedischen Fuchshengst Briar.**



**Martina Hannover, Trainerin der portugiesischen Dressurreiter, auf einer jungen Lusitano-Stute.**

Gleichgewicht auf Dauer nur behalten, wenn es im richtigen „Beruf“ tätig ist.

Dazu gehören auch die inneren Werte, Temperament und Charakter. Was gute Dressurpferde auszeichnet, hat Rosie bei einer Umfrage unter 700 Dressurreitern versucht herauszufinden. Immerhin 35 Prozent beantworteten seinen Fragebogen, bei dem es um die Charaktereigenschaften des jeweils besten Pferdes ging. Als positive Eigenschaften wurden von der Mehrheit der befragten Dressurreiter die Bereitschaft zur Mitarbeit, Gehlust und Feinfühligkeit genannt. „Wenn das gut gebaute Dressurpferd auch das ideale Temperament hat, wird es seinen Job gerne machen“, ist sich Rosie sicher.

Wie so etwas in der Praxis aussehen kann, zeigten Top-Ausbilder in der Reitbahn. Rudolf Zeilinger präsentierte seinen dänischen Schüler Andreas Helstrand mit dem Grand Prix-Hengst Don Schufro, einem Abbild seines großen Vaters Donnerhall und ganz gewiss von innen und außen zum Dressurpferd geboren. Das galt auch für den fünfjährigen Florestan-Sohn, den Zeilinger-Schüler Elmar Schmiedhufen vorritt und dabei auch in der Arbeitsphase ganz ohne „Rollkur“ auskam.

Martina Hannover, die portugiesische Schüler trainiert, zeigte einmal mehr, dass nicht nur Warmblüter aus Hannover eine Chance im Viereck haben. Passend zum Überblick über die Geschichte des portugiesischen Pferdes von Carlos Lopes und Joao Ralao ritt sie eine junge Lusitano-Stute vor, die alles mitbrachte, was ein Dressurpferd braucht.

Die Finin Kyra Kyrklund, eine „Fundamentalistin“, die an eine solide Grundausbildung ohne Sonderwege glaubt, präsentierte ihren Schüler, den Schweden Jan Brink mit dem Fuchshengst Briar, und setzte sich selbst auf ein junges Pferd. Die Schülerin des unvergessenen Herbert Rehbein scheint, selbst wenn sie im Sattel sitzt, noch auf dem Boden der Tatsachen zu stehen. „Behandeln Sie Ihr Pferd wie ein Pferd; vermenschlichen Sie es nicht; es ist keine Maschine. Das Ziel heiligt nicht die Mittel. Das Pferd erkennt nicht die großen Zusammenhänge. Wir haben unsere Ziele. Diese Ziele und die Möglichkeiten des Pferdes müssen übereinstimmen.“ Binsenweisheiten, gewiss, aber gerade im Begriff, sich in der allgemeinen Glückseligkeits-Diskussion aufzulösen. Danke, Kyra.

**Gabriele Pochhammer**

# GOUD VOOR SALINE

tekst: **CLAARTJE VAN ANDEL**  
foto: **DIRK CAREMANS**

## **OLYMPISCH GOUDEN MEDAILLEWINNAAR SALINERO WON ZIJN GOUDEN MEDAILLE OPNIEUW TIJDENS HET VIERDE GLOBAL DRESSAGE FORUM IN HOOGHE MIERDE. HIJ WAS HET PROTOTYPE VAN DE 'HAPPY ATHLETE', ZO BESLISTEN DRIE GROEPEN VAN JURYLEDEN, TOPTRAINERS EN 'BEWEGINGSWETENSCHAPPERS' OP HET VIERDE GLOBAL DRESSAGE FORUM DAT PLAATSVOND OP DE ACADEMY IN HOOGHE MIERDE.**

Björssels Briar kreeg de denkbeeldige 'happy athlete-medaille' van de praktijk van het Forum.

Na een verantwoorde maar redelijk saaie eerste dag over de ontwikkeling van de dressuur over de wereld, spetterde het pas echt op de tweede dag, toen het thema 'Happy athlete' centraal stond. Na het zien van beelden uit de Kür van Athene van de paarden Kennedy,

### **TALENTBEHOUD**

De fantastisch aangeklede accommodatie van de Academy in Hooge Mierde werd optimaal gebruikt, want na twee dagen Global Dressage Forum volgden op donderdag een KNHS/PAVO-seminar en op vrijdag het KWPN symposium over de lessen van Jumpex. Het KNHS/PAVO-seminar met de titel 'Door talentbehoud naar Olympisch goud' kende enkele zeer interessante inleiders. Net als bij het Global Dressage Forum sprak sportfysioloog Eric van Breda onder meer over training en voeding. Wim Emes en Johan Hamminga pleitten voor een nieuw wedstrijd-systeem voor ruiters op B en L niveau, waarbij de ruiters beoordeeld worden op hun manier van paardrijden en het tonen en ontwikkelen van ruitergevoel. Exact uitvoeren van bepaalde oefeningen op de letter moet daarbij ondergeschikt worden aan de ontwikkeling van ruiters en paard. Doorborend op het Global Dressage Forum thema 'happy athlete' reed Imke Schellekens haar nieuwe troef Sunrise, onder kritisch oog en toelichting van moeder Tineke Bartels en Olympisch kampioene Anky van Grunsven. Centraal stond de communicatie tussen ruiter en paard, waarbij concentratie, tempocontrole en nageeflijkheid essentiële factoren zijn. Anky benadrukte nogmaals dat haar systeem van trainen draait om lichtheid en communicatie. Als de basis en de communicatie goed zijn, dan is elke oefening een kleinigheid.

Wansuela Suerte, Brentina, Beauvalais, Rusty en Salinero kozen de drie forums unaniem voor Salinero als meest blijde atleet. Hij verdiende goud juist vanwege dit 'happy athlete-zijn': steeds in harmonie met zijn amazone, steeds wachtend op minimale aanwijzingen, nooit overvraagd worden of 'over-pushed' zijn, het vriendelijke oog, de zeer rustige en ontspannen staartdracht, zijn stille en tevreden aanleuning.

Over de nummer twee was meer discussie. Europees kampioen Rusty behield zowel bij het juryforum Withages en Clarke en het trainersforum Hunt en Kyrklund plaats twee, maar het met de term 'bewegingswetenschappers' aangeduide forum met dr Eric van Breda en Dirk Willem Rosie zag bij Rusty soms spanning in het oog en enige stijfheid in de bewegingsvorm en de staart. Daarom koos dit forum voor Kennedy, de uiterst werkwillige vosruin die met Lone Jorgensen voor Denemarken furore maakte voordat hij voor Amerika bij Robert Dover onder het zadel kwam.

Trainer Johann Hinnemann in het publiek brak op zijn beurt een lans voor de merrie Wansuela Suerte van Hubertus Schmidt op plaats twee vanwege de hierboven al genoemde criteria van harmonie en vriendelijkheid en steeds in harmonie zijn, nooit het paard overvragen. Hoe dan ook, boeiend was de discussie wel! Bovendien vraagt deze discussie naar een bezinning op de eigen dagelijkse praktijk. Hoe vaak zijn wij zelf als paardenmensen voor onze paarden echt goed bezig, zodat zij zich kunnen ontwikkelen tot uitgebalanceerde sportpaarden die uitstralen dat zij plezier hebben in het werk dat wij van hen vragen?

### **ATLEET OF DANSER**

De discussie werd overigens voorafgegaan door een uitstekende duo-presentatie van Dirk Willem Rosie en dr Eric van Breda. Een ware winnaar is een happy athlete omdat hij iets doet wat hem van nature gemakkelijk afgaat, zowel fysiek als mentaal, benadrukte Dirk Willem Rosie.

Dr Eric van Breda stelde onder meer de interessante vraag aan de orde wat voor type training dressuurarbeid eigenlijk is. Denk je aan het dressuurpaard als atleet, dan is dressuurtraining een 'late specialisatie-sport' en richt dressuurtraining zich heel lang op het in het algemeen trainen van motorische en technische vaardigheden en algemeen conditioneel werk. Andere sporten waarbij later pas gespecialiseerd wordt zijn bijvoorbeeld wielrennen, tennissen en roeien. Echt dressuurwerk is dan dus een specialisatie die pas na een basistraining plaatsvindt. Denk je aan een dressuurpaard als danser, dan is dressuurtraining het soort training dat valt onder 'vroeg specialisatie-training', zoals gymnastiek, ritmische gymnastiek, tafeltennis.

"Voor beide type trainingen geldt trouwens dat er eerst

# RO EN BRIAR



aan een fundament wordt gewerkt. Een goed woord: FUNDament. Het moet leuk zijn!", besloot Van Breda.

## BLIJ IN PRAKTIJK: BRIAR

Een technisch hoogstandje was de clinic van Kyra Kyrklund en Jan Brink met zijn ook voor het KWPN erkende medaillewinnaar Björnsells Briar. Kyrklund en Briar brachten het begrip 'happy athlete' in praktijk. Dat begon al met het demonstreren van een video bij Jan Brink thuis, waaruit bleek dat over elk detail van zijn accommodatie is nagedacht. Alle details dragen bij tot het zich prettig voelen van zowel mens als dier, benadrukte Jan Brink. Licht-therapie is in Zweden bekend om depressies te voorkomen of te behandelen. De binnenmanege bij Jan Brink is daarom zo licht mogelijk. De stallen zijn zo gemaakt dat elk paard, weer of geen weer, naar buiten moet, een plein over om de binnenmanege te bereiken. "Je moet een paard toch in de natuur houden. Een paard heeft er recht op dagelijks even buiten te komen, al is het maar om in te stappen of uit te stappen", vindt Jan Brink.

Erg leuk was het om ook de videobeelden van de jonge Briar te zien die thuis aan het steepelen was. Veel te oneconomisch in het terrein en te veel krachtig omhoog

springend voor een snelle galopper, maar ideaal voor een toekomstige dressuurtopper!

De trainingssessie van Briar die Jan Brink vervolgens onder leiding van Kyra Kyrklund verzorgde, was zeer inspirerend. Kyra legde uit dat haar methodiek is ontstaan door de ontspanning van de Zweden, de precisie en werklust van de Duitsers en tenslotte de openheid in hals en nek van de Russen met elkaar te combineren. Het resultaat van de 'blijje Briar' was er naar. Maar Kyra's grootste leermeester was een paard: de hengst Matador. "Van Matador heb ik geleerd dat een paard het grote plaatje niet ziet waar jij naar toe wilt. Daarom moet jij dat als mens voor ogen houden, maar je zult daar ook van tijd tot tijd van af moeten stappen. Het werkt niet om 's morgens op te staan en te bedenken dat dit de dag is dat je paard de wissels om de pas zal leren. Matador bijvoorbeeld begreep helemaal niets van de wissels. Als zesjarige kende hij al piaffe en passage. Dat deed hij vanzelf. Maar de wissels? Ik heb de wissels dus een hele tijd laten rusten en de dingen gedaan die hij leuk en gemakkelijk vond. Toen hij er aan toe was, leerde hij ze en liep hij binnen een jaar series, tot aan de eners toe..."

Kyra Kyrklund:  
"Het werkt niet om 's morgens op te staan en te bedenken dat dit de dag is dat je paard de wissels om de pas zal leren."



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Yes, please reserve my participation to the Academy Global Dressage Forum on the 31<sup>st</sup> of October and the 1<sup>st</sup> of November 2005 and send me more information on the program in April.

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**WE HOPE TO SEE YOU ON THE 31<sup>ST</sup> OF OCTOBER AND THE 1<sup>ST</sup> OF NOVEMBER 2005!**

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