

# 2016



# US Dressage Finals

*presented by Adequan®*

# Recap and Results



[usdressagefinals.com](http://usdressagefinals.com)



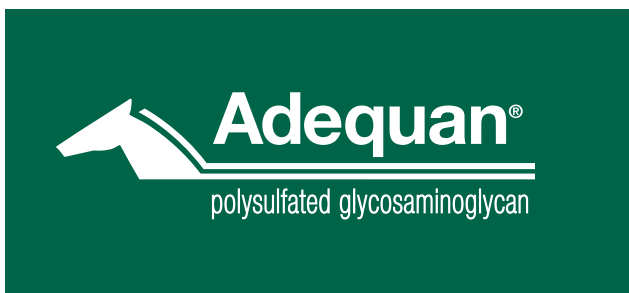


# US Dressage Finals

presented by Adequan®

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# US Dressage Finals

*presented by Adequan®*

## Recap and Results

Since its inception in 2013, the US Dressage Finals, held at the picturesque Kentucky Horse Park in Lexington, continues to be the only national head-to-head competition of its kind. Made possible by the generous support of presenting sponsor Adequan®, as well as our many other supporting and contributing sponsors, the US Dressage Finals showcases adult amateur and open riders competing for top honors at all dressage levels, from Training to Grand Prix, as well as musical freestyles. The 2016 event marked the Finals' fourth year, and it continues to be heralded as a great success. Included here are some highlights of the 2016 US Dressage Finals presented by Adequan®. Congratulations to all of our competitors! We hope to see you all in 2017!

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Featured below are links to the full US Dressage Finals Results, by class, the USDF Online Store for US Dressage Finals merchandise, as well as a link to USEF Network.

## Full Results by Class

<http://results.horseshowoffice.com/Shows/Classes?sid=475&oid=22>



*get your gear from the*

**US Dressage Finals**

*presented by Adequan®*

[www.usdf.org/store](http://www.usdf.org/store)

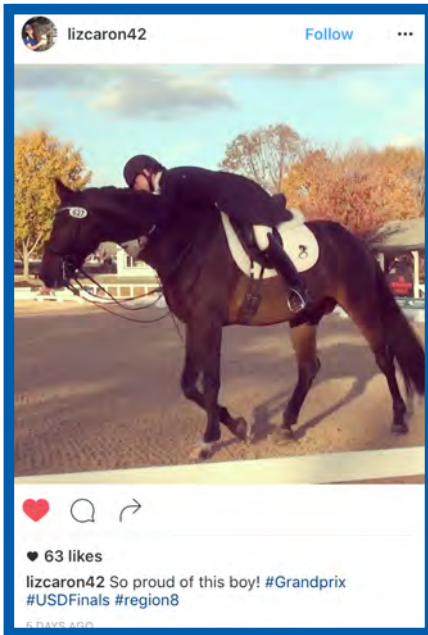
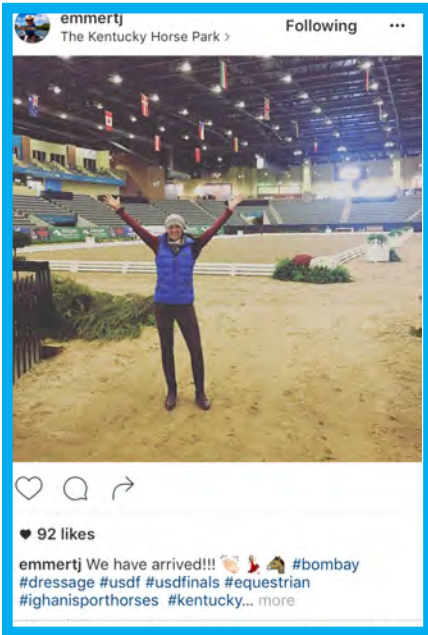


**USEF  
NETWORK**

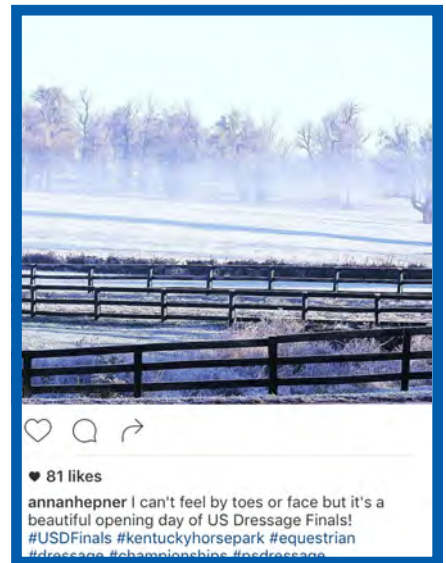
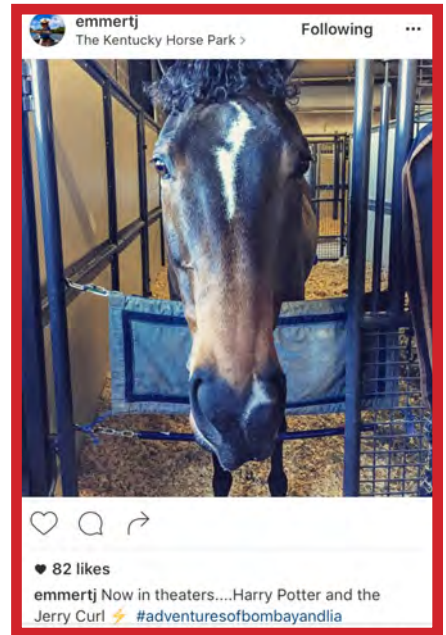
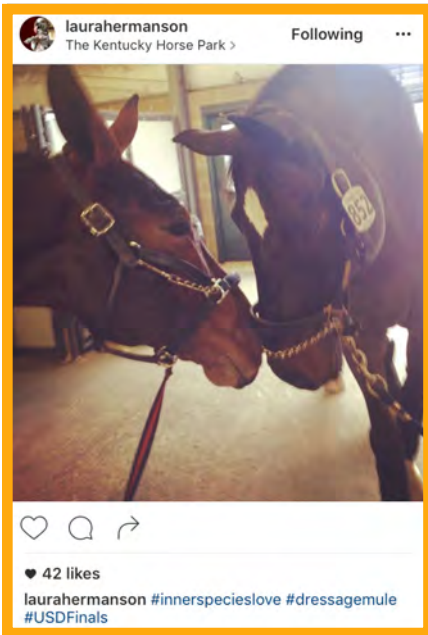
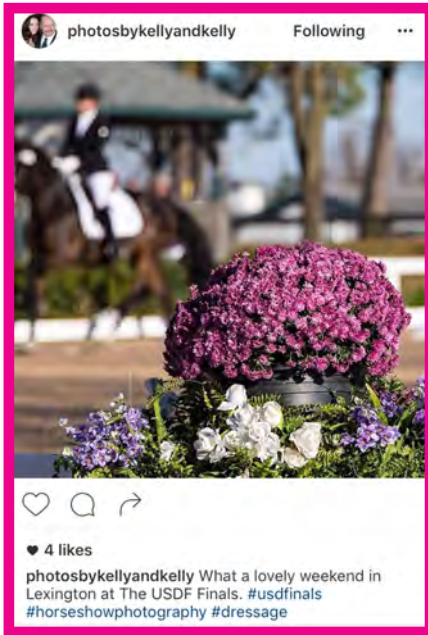
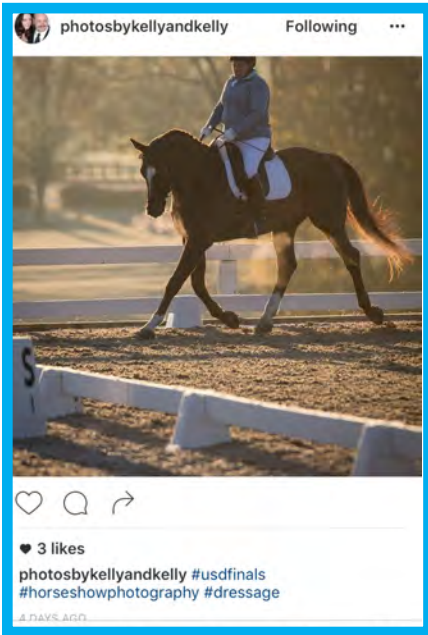
<http://www.usefnetwork.com/featured/2016USDressageFinals>

USEF Network featured rides taking place in the Alltech Arena, including many championship rides. All of this coverage is available to view online at the link above.

Competitors at the US Dressage Finals presented by Adequan® shared their experiences.



Competitors at the US Dressage Finals presented by Adequan® shared their experiences.





# REGIONS CUP

The top three scoring riders of designated divisions competed on regional teams in the US Dressage Finals Regions Cup, vying with competitors from across the country for bragging rights for their respective USDF Region.

Congratulations to our top three teams:

## CHAMPION

### Region 3

70.498%

Team Participants

- Kristy Truebenbach Lund with Living Lucky, 69.470%
- Amy Swerdlin with Quileute CCW, 71.016%
- Endel Ots with Samhitas, 71.009%

## RESERVE CHAMPION

### Region 7

69.172%

Team Participants

- Missy Gilliland with Windermere DDB, 74.167%
- Kendall Brookhart with Rianna, 67.683%
- Charlotte Jorst with Kastel's Akeem Foldager, 65.667%

## THIRD PLACE

### Region 9

69.067%

Team Participants

- Amanda Bailey with Les Paul, 69.621%
- Bonnie Canter with Fifinella GCF, 72.317%
- Terri Sue Wensinger with Valentino, 65.263%

Fourth Place

Region 8

68.048%

Fifth Place

Region 1

67.444%

Sixth Place

Region 2

66.996%

Seventh Place

Region 4

66.096%

Eighth Place

Region 6

63.767%





# PERPETUAL TROPHIES



**Janine Westmoreland Malone Perpetual Trophy**  
Adult Amateur Prix St. Georges Champion  
*presented by USDF*  
2016 Recipient:  
*Rachael Hicks riding Don Cartier*



**Lloyd Landkamer Perpetual Trophy**  
FEI Highest Scoring Mare  
*presented by Janet Foy*  
2016 Recipient:  
*Somerhall*  
Owner/rider *Ashley Wimmer*



**Calaveras County Perpetual Trophy**  
Grand Prix Freestyle Adult Amateur Champion  
*presented by Olva Stewart Pharo*  
2016 Recipient:  
*Lynnette Wadsworth riding Wietze G*



**Veronica Holt Perpetual Trophy**  
Grand Prix Open Champion  
*presented by USDF Region 5 and Friends*  
2016 Recipient:  
*Chase Hickok riding Sagacious HF*



**Miki Christophersen Perpetual Trophy**  
Prix St. Georges Open Champion  
*presented by USDF Region 4*  
2016 Recipient:  
*Endel Ots riding Sambitas*

# HIGH SCORE BREED AWARDS

2016

## US Dressage Finals

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### **American Connemara Pony Society**

National Levels, Adult Amateur Division – Fifinella GCF; Bonnie Canter, owner/rider

FEI Levels, Open Division – Kynnymont Gunsmoke's Gideon, Pam Liddell owner; Jessica Jo Tate, rider

### **American Hanoverian Society**

National Levels, Adult Amateur Division – Sinfonie; Lauren Lewis-Gladish, owner/rider

FEI Levels, Adult Amateur Division - Gentleman; Kristin Herzing owner/rider

National Levels, Open Division – Windermere DDB; Diane DeBenedetto, owner; Missy Gilliland, rider

FEI Levels, Open Division – Hero L; Louise Leatherdale & Leatherdale Farms, owners; Mike Suchanek, rider

### **American Holsteiner Horse Association**

National Levels, Adult Amateur Division – Call Me Waylon; Anne Wilson, owner/rider

FEI Levels, Adult Amateur Division - Radcliffe; Amy Leach, owner/rider

### **American Warmblood Registry**

National Levels, Open Division – Emerald; Diane Breier, owner; Jennifer Conour, rider

### **Arabian Horse Association**

National Levels, Adult Amateur Division – Who'll Stop the Rayn; Micah Andrews, owner/rider

FEI Levels, Adult Amateur Division - Alada High Socks; Kathy Nardi, owner/rider

FEI Levels, Open Division – Ive Been Ripped+; Linda Freeman, owner; Jessica Fussner, rider

### **Belgian Warmblood Breeding Association**

FEI Levels, Adult Amateur Division – Indigo Magiste De Mars; Elizabeth Gervasio, owner/rider

FEI Levels, Open Division – Gran Casso; Jenna Stern-Arnold, owner/rider

### **Cleveland Bay Horse Society of North America**

National Levels, Open Division – Adante's Image; Nancy Kretschmer, owner; John Mason, rider

### **Draft Cross Breeders & Owners Association**

National Levels, Adult Amateur Division – Benjamin Blue; Kerry Rose, owner/rider

### **Friesian Horse Association of North America**

National Levels, Adult Amateur Division – Eagle Fan Bosksicht; Julie Roche, owner/rider

FEI Levels, Adult Amateur Division – Teske van G; Jamie Knight, owner/rider

National Levels, Open Division – Briel B; Karen Dellecker, owner; Gwen Poulin, rider

FEI Levels, Open Division – Xenophon SMF; Sandra Perry, owner; Jesse Collins, rider

### **Friesian Sporthorse Association**

National Levels, Adult Amateur Division – Daen's Velvet Hope; Sarah Sharpe, owner/rider

National Levels, Open Division – Gunner; Patrick Orlaska, owner; Sammi Jo Stohler, rider

## **International Andalusian & Lusitano Horse Association**

National Levels, Adult Amateur Division – Aureo; Patricia McVary, owner/rider  
FEI Levels, Adult Amateur Division – Talisman BHF; Torrey Wilkinson, owner/rider  
National Levels, Open Division – Camomila MCD; Lisa McDowell, owner; Nicole Harrington, rider

## **International Georgian Grande Horse Registry**

National Levels, Adult Amateur Division – Flying W Farms Princess Nadia; Kay Kendzor, owner/rider  
National Levels, Open Division – FWF Princess Juliana; Mary Adams, owner; Jonni Adams, rider

## **International Sporthorse Registry/Oldenburg NA**

National Levels, Adult Amateur Division – Sinatra Hit; Natalie Truman, owner/rider  
FEI Levels, Adult Amateur Division – Fabio; Kristy Truebenbach Lund, owner; Jenifer Gaffney, rider  
National Levels, Open Division – Campione; Elaine DiMarco, owner; Emily Donaldson, rider  
FEI Levels, Open Division – Wranger; Erin Boltik, owner; Heather Kurtz, rider

## **Irish Draught Horse Society of North America**

National Levels, Adult Amateur Division – Anamchara Temair; Annmarie Hernick Brockhouse, owner/rider

## **KWPN of North America**

National Levels, Adult Amateur Division – Havallo; Sara Davisson, owner/rider  
FEI Levels, Adult Amateur Division – Zabaco; Amy Grahn, owner/rider  
National Levels, Open Division – Frazier; Jodi Lemkemann, owner; Martin Kuhn, rider  
FEI Levels, Open Division – Sagacious HF; Hyperion Farm Inc., owner; Chase Hickok, rider

## **North American Danish Warmblood Association**

National Levels, Adult Amateur Division – Hampton; Ashlee Watts, owner/rider  
FEI Levels, Open Division – Montana; Brenda Duet, owner; Jessica Jo Tate, rider

## **Oldenburg Horse Breeders Society NA Division of GOV**

National Levels, Adult Amateur Division – Quileute CCW, Amy Swerdlin, owner/rider  
FEI Levels, Adult Amateur Division – Scholastica; Amy Swerdlin, owner/rider  
National Levels, Open Division – Angela's Angel; Stacia Dyess-Hammond, owner; John Mason, rider  
FEI Levels, Open Division – Somerhall; Ashley Wimmer, owner/rider

## **Rheinland Pfalz-Saar International**

National Levels, Adult Amateur Division – Sing a Song LC; Alison Otter, owner/rider  
National Levels, Open Division – CF Double Dare; Zoe Roy, owner/rider

## **Swedish Warmblood Association of North America**

National Levels, Adult Amateur Division – Black Ice; Lynn Shea, owner/rider  
FEI Levels, Adult Amateur Division – Passhawn; Mary Kraft, owner/rider  
National Levels, Open Division – Recess; Ella Fruchterman, owner, Kari Schmitt, rider

## **The Foundation for the Pure Spanish Horse**

National Levels, Adult Amateur Division – Seron SRF; Lisa Gorsuch, owner; Kelly Slack, rider  
FEI Levels, Adult Amateur Division - Centeno XII; Barbara Bonk, owner/rider

## **United States Lipizzan Federation**

National Levels, Adult Amateur Division – Kulpa; Kate Phillips, owner; Laura Myllykangas, rider  
National Levels, Open Division – Maestoso Alfaya II; Tempel Lipizzans, owner; Jessica Starck, rider

## **Westfalen Horse Association**

National Levels, Adult Amateur Division – Living Lucky; Blue Marlin Farms Inc., owner; Kristy Truebenbach Lund, rider  
FEI Levels, Adult Amateur Division - Fabio Bellini; Rachael Hicks, owner/rider



# US Dressage Finals

Presented by Adequan®

November 10-13, 2016 • Kentucky Horse Park

For Immediate Release

MEDIA CONTACT: JENNIFER M. KEELER, YELLOW HORSE MARKETING,  
jennifer@yellowhorsemarketing.com

Friday, September  
09, 2016

## Here's Your Chance - Regional Qualifying Starts This Weekend for the 2016 US Dressage Finals Presented By Adequan®

Source: Yellow Horse Marketing for the US Dressage Finals

"You bet I'll be back. I've declared and I made my hotel reservations in Lexington months ago!"

Every November since 2013, Julie McCrady and her husband have made the trek to Kentucky from Raymore, Mo. with their home-bred Hanoverian mare Remanessa in tow to compete at the US Dressage Finals presented by Adequan®. They can't wait to do it again, and if things go well at this weekend's Great American Insurance Group/United States Dressage Federation (USDF) Region 4 Championship in Mason City, Iowa, they may get their chance. McCrady will join 600 other competitors who are preparing to ride down centerline over the next two weeks as the first round of Great American Insurance Group/USDF Regional Championships get underway across the country, vying for not only a wealth of awards but also a ticket to Lexington for the Finals, which will be held November 10-13, 2016.

Even though McCrady admits that her mount was so naughty as a youngster that she tried to sell the temperamental redhead, Remanessa has found her purpose in life inside the dressage arena. The pair competed at Training and First Levels during the inaugural Finals in 2013, and then claimed their first national title the following year in the First Level Adult Amateur division. Last

November their journey to the Kentucky Horse Park once again proved worthwhile as McCrady and Remanessa stole the show in the Alltech Arena, dancing to victory in the Third Level Freestyle Adult Amateur



*Julie McCrady won the 2015 Third Level Freestyle Adult Amateur Championship with her Hanoverian mare Remanessa, and looks to return to Lexington again this year to try for a Fourth Level title. Photo by Susan J. Stickle.*

Championship. “To this day she’s not nice on the ground and isn’t ‘lovey-dovey’ at all, but as soon as you put the bridle on her she’s all business,” McCrady explained. “When you breed them, watch them grow up, and do a lot of the work yourself, I think it makes it all the more special.”

Now McCrady is hoping to qualify for the Finals in the Fourth Level Adult Amateur ranks as well as with a Fourth Level Freestyle. “I really love the show – every year it seems to get better and better, and the people who put the event on are great. They make the drive worth it,” she said. “Even the hotel staff, residents and everyone around the Horse Park are so friendly and really seem to cater to riders, bending over backwards to help you. I’ve even encouraged my friends to go there to ride in the open show just so they could be part of the Finals experience.”



*Jessie Hayes and Rivendell hope to earn a ticket to Lexington at the upcoming Great American/USDF Region 1 Championships. Photo courtesy of Jessie Hayes.*

Following this weekend's Region 4 Championship, riders will then compete on September 15-18 in Estes Park, Colo. in Region 5, as well as in Williamston, N.C. for Region 1, where Jessie Hayes of New Jersey is hoping to win a chance to take part in the Finals experience for the first time as a competitor. She will be competing with the six-year-old Hanoverian mare Rivendell at Training and First Level. “When I first saw Rivendell, she was very fat, slightly feral and tried to bulldoze me more than once, but my trainer Lauren Chumley saw something in her that made us decide to buy her,” Hayes remembered. “Little did I know that over the next year, she would blossom into something so incredibly fun and talented that she would take me to the American Eventing Championships, our Area Eventing Championships, and now to Dressage Regional Championships and hopefully on to the US Dressage Finals. She will probably always be a hot little firecracker but she has taken every single thing I’ve thrown at her this past year right in stride and continues to give me her all.”

If Hayes were to qualify for the Finals, she will be thrilled to make the 12-hour drive to Lexington. “Why wouldn’t I want to go to the Finals? I went with Lauren last year as her groom and I had a blast just being there. The Kentucky Horse Park is such a fun venue and

they always put on such a great show – the only thing that could make it better for me is to actually ride in it!” she exclaimed. “I hope to go to the Finals because I want to prove that you don’t have to have a million-dollar horse and you don’t have to be the most amazing rider in the world. All you have to do is have a goal, a willing horse, the drive to work hard and do what it takes to get it done, and of course have really fabulous people to help you along the way. I have no idea if I’ll qualify past Regionals; but if we’ve come this far in just a year, I can hardly wait to see where Rivendell will take me in two or three because there’s still so much in her that I haven’t even tapped into yet. Even though making it to the Finals will be the icing on the cake for this year, no matter what happens I’ll still be able to walk away with a smile on my face.”

Don’t miss your chance to compete! The US Dressage Finals presented by Adequan® is a unique national head-to-head competition which offers a wealth of championship titles and over \$60,000 in prize money, all while showcasing adult amateur and open riders from across the country in Training Level to Grand Prix. As a reminder for competitors, a horse/rider combination must declare their intention to participate in the US Dressage Finals by completing the Declaration of Intent form by midnight on the day prior to the first day of

their Regional Championship competition (including any open class day before the start of championship classes). There is no fee to declare, but horse/rider combinations must declare at the level(s) and eligible division(s) they intend to compete in at the US Dressage Finals. To learn more about the US Dressage Finals presented by Adequan<sup>®</sup>, download competition information, declare and nominate for the Finals, and sign up to receive news and updates, visit the official event website at [www.usdressagefinals.com](http://www.usdressagefinals.com).



# US Dressage Finals

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November 10-13, 2016 • Kentucky Horse Park

For Immediate Release

MEDIA CONTACT: JENNIFER M. KEELER, YELLOW HORSE MARKETING,  
jennifer@yellowhorsemarketing.com

Thursday,  
October 13, 2016

## Records Show 17% Increase in Nominations to Date for This Year's US Dressage Finals Presented By Adequan®

Source: Yellow Horse Marketing for the US Dressage Finals

As Great American Insurance Group/United States Dressage Federation (USDF) Regional Championships are wrapping up across the country, excitement is growing for the fourth annual US Dressage Finals presented by Adequan®, being held November 10-13, 2016 in Lexington, KY. And the numbers prove just how eager people are to compete for a multitude of national dressage titles: the first six regions for which nominations have closed and been processed indicate an increase of just over 17% in nominations, with the biggest percentage increase being in Region 6, whose competitors travel the farthest to attend the Finals. Other regions also showing impressive increases in nominations are Regions 1 at 44% and Region 4 with a 33% jump.

Suzie Hallé of Englewood, CO, is one of those enthusiastic competitors. She traveled to the Kentucky Horse Park for her first trip into the Alltech Arena in 2014; and after earning two Reserve Championships at the Grand Prix level in Region 5, she and her Dutch Warmblood gelding Tennyson-ISF have punched their ticket back to the Finals. "When we competed in Finals two years ago, it was our first season at Grand Prix with only six tests under our belts. We were so green – we were at what I call the Training level of Grand Prix," said Hallé. "But it was such a special trip for us. After I had competed, I remember sitting in the VIP area with my father (who turns 90 this year) and we watched the beautiful freestyles together. I said then, 'You know Dad, if



*Adult amateur Grand Prix rider Suzie Hallé and her mount Tennyson-ISF of Region 5 are excited to qualify for their second US Dressage Finals presented by Adequan. Photo courtesy of Suzie*

I get a chance to come back, I want to ride a freestyle here. Will you and Aline (his wife of 30 years) come watch us?' He said yes!"

Now not only are Hallé's father and his wife flying back to Lexington this November, but her husband will also be joining her at the Finals to share in the experience. "I love the sound system in the Alltech Arena, and I can't wait to hear my music playing. It's soundtracks from action movies interspersed with violin. It is very powerful! I get goosebumps every time I listen to the walk section especially," Hallé explained. "We have more experience at Grand Prix now, and Tenny's in his prime at 16, so my goal is to ride the best two tests we are capable of riding on those two given days. Tenny and I have a special partnership, almost a spiritual connection, developed over almost a decade of being together from Training Level to Grand Prix and I want to give him every opportunity to showcase his wonderful spirit."

With her Finals invitation in order, like so many other competitors Hallé now begins the logistical challenge of arranging safe, affordable transportation for her horse across the country to the rolling hills of the Bluegrass State. Competitors looking for assistance in making transportation arrangements to Kentucky are encouraged to utilize the [US Dressage Finals Transportation Resources webpage](#) which includes links to horse transportation vendors, as well as a Horse Transport Share Forum where competitors can connect with others in their areas to organize group transportation. With the fall Thoroughbred sale season occurring in Kentucky at the same time as the Finals a lot of trucks will be hauling over the road, many with empty spots which could be filled with dressage horses, possibly even at a reduced rate. "The tricky part is getting there," Hallé admitted. "So I was happy to see the link on the Finals webpage for the Transportation Resources where competitors like me can connect to share transportation information. The more this forum is used, the more people from across the country and along shipping routes can network with each other. I think it's a great idea, and I sincerely hope that more people like me will post their plans there. Even if they've already made a reservation, when we communicate and work with haulers to fill empty spots on trucks, it can dramatically reduce the transportation costs for everyone!"

On the other side of the country, the Great American/USDF Region 8 Championships in Saugerties, NY, were once again a huge event, and show secretary Debra Reinhardt saw a high level of excitement among riders competing for a chance to attend the Finals. "When I checked people in, over 90% had already declared for the Finals," said Reinhardt, who also makes the annual pilgrimage to Kentucky as the US Dressage Finals Event Coordinator. "Only one person had to use our computer to declare compared to previous years where there were several declaring at the last minute. This tells me that the Finals are on riders' minds and have become a goal for many of them well ahead of Regionals, and I also heard buzz about earning wild card scores for the first time. I attended quite a few of the award ceremonies and heard from many of the riders, 'Kentucky here we come!'" From the opposite coast, Charlotte Jorst of Reno, Nev. topped a field of 10 competitors in the Great American/USDF Region 7 Open Grand Prix Championship in California aboard her Danish gelding Kastel's Akeem Foldager. In April, she represented the U.S. at the Reem Acra/FEI World Cup Dressage Finals, and now Jorst is looking forward to the cross-country trip to Kentucky to represent Region 7 at the Finals for the first time next month. "Why not?" said Jorst. "It would be great to go to the Finals, and I think Akeem would love it!"

Another huge Regional Championship turnout is expected this weekend in Region 3, where 510 competitors will try to earn one of the final group of invitations for Kentucky. From there, all nominated riders from across the country will have until October 27<sup>th</sup> to submit their official entries and take the last step on the road to this year's Finals ([click HERE to learn more about the entry process](#)). And Suzie Hallé is ready. "I personally can't wait to get back to the Finals." she said. "It's such a beautiful venue. and you form friendships from around the



country that continue on long after the show is over. It makes our big country feel much smaller with an event like this that brings everyone together. I want to embrace this chance to go again because if you think something might be possible, you have to try your hardest to make it happen. It's a long trip for us, but my horse and I have worked so hard, we are both healthy, sound and happy in our work, so we are going to do our best to make it happen again."

To learn more about the US Dressage Finals presented by Adequan<sup>®</sup>, download competition information, and sign up to receive news and updates, visit the official event website at [www.usdressagefinals.com](http://www.usdressagefinals.com).

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jennifer@yellowhorsemarketing.com

Tuesday,  
November 08,  
2016

## From Coast to Coast, Nearly 400 Competitors Converge on Kentucky for This Week's 2016 US Dressage Finals Presented By Adequan®

Source: Yellow Horse Marketing for the US Dressage Finals

She's literally been driving across the country for four days, but Morgan Barrows of Monroe, WA, wasn't going to let a little distance stop her from attending this week's US Dressage Finals presented by Adequan® where she will join nearly 400 other competitors representing all nine United States Dressage Federation (USDF) regions in head-to-head competition for national titles across 30 different Open and Adult Amateur divisions.

Barrows knew what she was in for when she loaded her partner San Corazon on the trailer, since the pair made the same trek to Lexington, KY, in 2014. Then the pair's long journey proved worthwhile, as Barrows and Janice Davis' Oldenburg gelding earned both the Second Level Open and Second Level Freestyle Championships. "We had so much fun two years ago and we did really well, so we definitely wanted to come back," she explained. "Coming to the Finals was such a great experience for us all the way around. The Kentucky Horse Park is incredible, the people are amazing, and being a part of that atmosphere with athletes from all around the country and meeting new people was really special. Now we've successfully moved up to the small tour and hope to go out there and do our best once again. We'll be hoping to keep him feeling fresh despite the long trip, but he's such a professional and I anticipate he'll feel as comfortable with the environment in Kentucky as he was last time."



*Morgan Barrows of Washington State is back at the US Dressage Finals in pursuit of more championship titles with San Corazon. Photo by Susan J. Stickle*

Barrows hails from Region 6, which implemented a new travel grant system this year whereby riders who qualified for the Finals could apply for financial assistance. “Our regional director Carolynn Bunch worked to get it started, and it’s really helped us with some of the costs. Every little bit helps,” said Barrows. “I love competing on the national stage, but being from the Northwest it does mean that we have to travel to be able to do that, and having some funding assistance really helps. I think it’s a great idea and I hope it grows both in our region and for other regions around the country.”

Since she is also participating on the Region 6 Team in the Second Annual Regions Cup Team Competition, Barrows will get a chance to show her regional pride (read more and see all regions’ team members [here](#)). Each regional team consists of three horse/rider combinations from various levels vying with competitors from across the country for special awards and bragging rights. “I think it’s a great way to show our pride and encourage regional spirit,” Barrows noted. “Interestingly, I don’t even know the other two people on our Region 6 team, so this way we get a chance to meet new people not only from around the country but also from within our own region. And then when a region does well, it can really boost interest and excitement for everyone, and we can show people back home how we proudly represented our region and thank them for supporting us.”



*Florida's Marge Savage and her mount Willow's Dream have both bounced back from surgery to attend their first US Dressage Finals in Kentucky. Photo courtesy of Marge Savage.*

She may not be hitting the road for four days, but it’s still been a long haul to the Finals for Marge Savage of Jacksonville Beach, FL. As she prepares to travel 12 hours from the Atlantic coast to Kentucky for her very first US Dressage Finals experience, it’s a trip Savage wasn’t sure she’d ever get to make. “From the minute USDF announced they were creating the Finals, I thought it was a great idea,” she explained. “It’s always been a goal for me, and several of my friends have been (some of them every single year), and they loved it. I think it’s the top event that adult amateurs like me can reach for.”

After qualifying for the inaugural Finals in 2013, Savage chose to stay home due to health concerns with her Oldenburg mare Willow’s Dream. A year later, Savage underwent rotator cuff surgery, and the day she was given clearance to ride again by her doctor, her beloved mare suffered from a severe colic episode. “She went to the hospital and they had to do surgery and remove nine feet of her colon, and then she developed a heart murmur from the ordeal which she still has to deal with,” Savage explained. “It was a very long road, but we did it and got ‘back in the saddle’, only to finish dead last in our 2015 Regional Championship classes. So I wasn’t sure this was ever going to happen.”

But the tenacious pair never gave up. At this year’s Great American/USDF Region 3 Championship show, they claimed top placings to finally punch their ticket to Kentucky to compete in the First Level Adult Amateur Freestyle Championship. “With everything that we’ve been through, this was the year to do it – I wanted to experience this now in case we never got the chance again,” said Savage. “I don’t think most riders get many opportunities like this, so I’m taking advantage of it. It’s a big honor and I feel so proud to be going. I’m riding in a national championship this weekend – it doesn’t get any better than that!”

Due to the large number of entries this year, championship action begins at the US Dressage Finals on Thursday, November 10 when the first round of national titles will be presented in the Alltech Arena. For a truly unforgettable championship experience, limited VIP seating in the Alltech Arena is still available for purchase (to learn more, click [here](#)). For those dressage fans unable to attend the Finals in person, the popular USEF Network will feature live online streaming of select classes from the Alltech Arena on their website, [www.usefnetwork.com](http://www.usefnetwork.com). Coverage begins Thursday, November 10 at 2pm ET (see the entire live streaming schedule [here](#)).

To learn more about the US Dressage Finals presented by Adequan<sup>®</sup>, download competition information, review entry lists, purchase tickets to special events, and sign up to receive news and updates, visit the official event website at <http://www.usdressagefinals.com>.



# US Dressage Finals

Presented by Adequan®

November 10-13, 2016 • Kentucky Horse Park

For Immediate Release

MEDIA CONTACT: JENNIFER M. KEELER, YELLOW HORSE MARKETING,  
jennifer@yellowhorsemarketing.com

Friday, November  
11, 2016

## Leach and Mason Earn the First Two Championship Titles Presented at 2016 US Dressage Finals Presented By Adequan®

Source: Yellow Horse Marketing for the US Dressage Finals

Five months ago, the last thing on Amy Leach's mind was returning to the US Dressage Finals presented by Adequan® to defend her 2015 Intermediate II Adult Amateur Championship title. She just wanted her horse Radcliffe to be healthy again.

"It's been a very difficult year for us. He had some serious health issues and was off from last December until June. We've had some very long days, but he's my family and I fought hard for him," she explained. "When he finally started feeling better, we started back to work just for fun and he felt really good. So we went to a few shows in August, and Regionals was just his fourth time down centerline where we qualified to come here."

Then disaster nearly struck again. "Two days ago, he stepped on me in the stall 15 minutes before he got on the trailer. I knew right away he had broken my foot. My mom had to drive the truck and trailer seven hours to get here and then I went to the emergency room after we arrived," said Leach of South Elgin, Ill. (Region 2). "I didn't even know if I would be able to get my foot in my boot today."

Courageously, Leach did get her dress boot on, and would not be denied another victory as she and her 18-year-old Holsteiner gelding that she's developed from a gangly three-year-old (Rantares x Felicitous by Coriolan, bred in the U.S. by Cheryl Kellerman) earned 67.982% for the unanimous victory under all three judges in the Intermediate II Adult Amateur Championship. "This would not have been possible without so many people helping me, both my friends and members of the show staff, who offered assistance without my



Amy Leach and Radcliffe earned the first championship awarded at the 2016 US Dressage Finals presented by Adequan® for the Intermediate II Adult Amateur division.  
Photo by Susan J. Stickle

even having to ask for anything. It's been so amazing and I'm so appreciative," Leach continued. "Our intention was just to enjoy this experience and have fun after everything we've been through, and he's a total ham – he lights up in the show ring. It's our fourth time here, and I'm so glad to be back. It's our favorite event and I so appreciate all the sponsors and people who make it happen. It's not about competing and coming out on top – for me, it's about enjoying each moment with him. I even took time to look around me today in the arena, and it was a great feeling."

Fellow Region 2 competitor Amy Grahn of Lake Bluff, Ill. and her 12-year-old Dutch Warmblood gelding Zabaco (Contango x Piacenza by Juventus, bred in Florida by Roy and Beth Godwin of Bear Creek Farm) were first down centerline and gave Leach a run for her money with a solid mark of 64.254% to earn the Reserve Championship title. "My horse showed in the Grand Prix here two years ago, and then when he came up for sale I was lucky enough to try him. I'd never ridden at this level, so for the first two months I couldn't even get him to canter, so we've come a long way!" she laughed. "We had a good clean test and he'll work his heart out for you. For our first time here and riding at this level, I'm thrilled. I have to say that I have been so impressed with how nice everyone is here. It's so welcoming, and the facility and organization are the best. I've never been in anything like that – going in that arena is overwhelming."



**Heather Mason and Warsteiner were crowned Intermediate II Open Champions at the 2016 US Dressage Finals presented by Adequan®.**  
*Photo by Susan J. Stickle*

Leach and Grahn were two of the nearly 400 horse/rider combinations representing all nine United States Dressage Federation (USDF) regions and 39 states as well as the District of Columbia in attendance at this year's US Dressage Finals presented by Adequan®, being held November 10-13 at the Kentucky Horse Park in Lexington. Due to the high number of entries (which have steadily increased every year since the Finals' inception in 2013), the first two championship classes were held on Thursday afternoon, a day traditionally reserved for "warm-up" classes held as part of the Dressage in the Bluegrass open competition.

The day's second awards ceremony was held for the Intermediate II Open division, where Heather Mason of Lebanon, N.J. (Region 8) rode Warsteiner to victory. Mason found the Dutch Warmblood (Riverman ISF x Welona by Roemer) as a two-and-a-half year old in Europe and purchased him as a resale project, but soon decided to keep the now 13-year-old gelding with the big personality for herself to develop through the levels. And Mason's brave decision to make a last-minute tack change and discard her double bridle for the Finals resulted in a winning score of 69.737%. "It's the first time he's shown in a snaffle bridle since Third Level," Mason

explained. "I decided to change it up after Regionals because he's always gone well with it, even though I was having second thoughts this morning because he was jumping around! But I had made the decision so I stuck with it, and it paid off. He felt really good and elastic today, we just worked to keep the test steady and not too electric. He is the barn favorite and he'll stay with me forever."

Finishing with Reserve honors was Karen Lipp (Ball Ground, Ga.) of Region 3 with Kathleen Oldford's 11-year-old Hanoverian mare Whitney (White Star x Grace by Grand Cru) on a score of 68.202%. "I showed her in the USEF Young Horse Program as a four-, five, and six-year-old, then the owner rode her for a while, and now

we're back together to work on the Grand Prix," said Lipp. "She's a hot, electric horse and I was a little worried about the atmosphere because it's a lot for them to deal with, but she stayed with me in there and I was very happy with her."

Also competing in the Intermediate II Open class was none other than USDF President George Williams, who finished sixth with Sara Anderson's Dutch Warmblood mare Uniq. "I have to say, from its inception I've wanted to ride in the Finals, but it just hadn't worked out until now," said Williams. "I just started competing this horse this spring, and I find myself here. It's been a lot of fun and it's great to see everything from the competitor perspective, and yes, I had that same magical feeling that so many others have experienced. There is something exceptional about riding in the Alltech, it's a great atmosphere here, and it's even more special knowing all the hard work and vision it took to create this event in the first place."

Wrapping up a busy first day, exhibitors enjoyed a Competitor Welcome Party and Trade Fair Kick-Off on the concourse of the Alltech Arena. Championship competition resumes Friday at 8:00am ET – follow the action through updates on the [USDF Facebook page](#) and the [US Dressage Finals website](#), as well as watch live online streaming on the popular USEF Network at this link:

<http://www.usefnetwork.com/featured/2016USDressageFinals/>. To learn more about the US Dressage Finals presented by Adequan<sup>®</sup>, download competition information, review day sheets and results, and read daily news releases, visit the official event website at <http://www.usdressagefinals.com>.

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# US Dressage Finals

Presented by Adequan®

November 10-13, 2016 • Kentucky Horse Park

For Immediate Release

MEDIA CONTACT: JENNIFER M. KEELER, YELLOW HORSE MARKETING,  
jennifer@yellowhorsemarketing.com

Saturday,  
November 12,  
2016

## Riders From Coast to Coast Are Crowned Champions at the 2016 US Dressage Finals Presented By Adequan®

Source: Yellow Horse Marketing for the US Dressage Finals

Windermere DDB is living proof that even former bucking broncos can be crowned champions at the US Dressage Finals presented by Adequan®, a unique national head-to-head competition for exhibitors of all levels being held being held November 10-13 in Lexington, Ky.

Coincidentally, just a year ago, Missy Gilliland of Phoenix, Ariz. happened to be horse-shopping for a client in the central Kentucky area during Finals week and decided to purchase a young Hanoverian gelding named Windermere DDB (Waterford x Donnerella by Donnerhall, bred in the U.S. by Lisa Dunn of Creekview Farm). “Of course it wasn’t until after we get him home to Phoenix that we found out he has a long history of bucking people off, and had been turned out to pasture for two years because of it,” Gilliland explained. “When we first got him you couldn’t walk him out of the crossties saddled without him being a bucking bronco.”

But Gilliland persevered and was able to channel her mount’s energy in the right direction, including claiming a victory in the Great American/USDF Region 7 Open Training Level Championship in September in Burbank, Cal. for owner Diane DeBenedetto. “So then we had a decision to make about going all that way to the Finals. I left it up to the owners and they decided in just a minute that they wanted to do it,” said Gilliland. “I guess when things are going so well and you have such a great season with a horse, you can’t pass up an opportunity like this because you never know when you might have it come around again. I didn’t know how he’d handle the trip



Windermere DDB gave rider Missy Gilliland of Phoenix “everything he had” to win the Training Level Open Championship at the 2016 US Dressage Finals presented by Adequan®. Photo by Susan J. Stickle



and the atmosphere, and the first day here he was pretty bug-eyed, but every day he's figured it out more and more."

The pair's long journey proved worthwhile as they topped the Training Level Open Championship with a winning score of 74.167% over Martin Kuhn of New Berlin, Ill. (Region 2) who won a tie-break for reserve with 73.712% aboard Frazier, a six-year-old Dutch Warmblood gelding (Sir Sinclair x Melvira by Gentleman, bred in Florida by INSPO, Inc.) owned by Jodi Lemkemann. "I was a little worried in the warmup – it was early this morning, and he was freaking out a bit about the sun and the shadows, but I had just enough time to get him settled," said Gilliland. "During my ride he kind of puffed up in the right way and we had a great time. He has definitely stepped up to the plate and I'm so glad we came. I love the venue and everything about the show, and so far it couldn't be a better experience. I'll be back for sure." Kuhn also had his hands full in the warm up arena, "but he really settled down in the test and had no mistakes. He's very talented and eager to please. I was here in 2013 for the first Finals and was amazed with how smoothly the event went, and in our first year back since then I continue to be impressed."

In the Third Level Open division, Michael Bragdell of Colora, Md. (qualified in Region 8) earned top honors with a score of 72.350% aboard Sternlicht Hilltop, a six-year-old Hanoverian stallion (Soliman de Hus x Rhapsody GGF by Rascalino, bred in the U.S. by Rachel Ehrlich) owned by Hilltop Farm Inc. This pair were last year's First Level Open Champions, and also placed third in the USEF young horse championship program in August. "We made some tweaks from our warm-up ride yesterday and had a great test today, and I'm so pleased," said Bragdell. "My main goal for this year was the six-year-old championships and we did that, so we just kept going, one step at a time. With young horses, you listen to what they tell you and if they're ready to take the next step forward, you do it. He's got such a great workmanlike attitude and knows to stay focused on me even though he's a breeding stallion."

Finishing a close second was Nora Batchelder of Williston, Fla. (Region 3) who rode her seven-year-old Hanoverian mare Fifi MLW (Fidertanz x Wolkenstanza MLW by Wolkentanz, bred in Florida by Mary Lou Winn of Home Again Farm) to a score of 72.222% in just their fourth show together. "She's a big powerful girl and she really picked herself up and showed off in the ring today, so I was really proud of that," said Batchelder. "We were ecstatic to get to come here. Having the chance to show a young horse in a national championship atmosphere is an incredible opportunity."

In the lavish Alltech Arena, FEI-level competition kicked off the morning schedule with hard-fought Intermediate I Open Championship. As the last competitor to enter the arena, Mike Suchanek of Cambridge, Minn. (Region 4) didn't let the pressure of the moment, or a bobble down centerline, get in the way of earning a winning score of 71.798% aboard Hero L (nine-year-old Hanoverian gelding [His Highness x Waterlily L by Wolkenstein II] owned and bred in the U.S. by Leatherdale Farms). "By the time I got to C I thought to myself, 'okay, I've got to pick it up and come together on this.' And the rest of the test went great. I'm amazingly proud of my horse and happy for the entire Leatherdale team to get this win for them," said Suchanek, who also credited his special relationship with his mount. "When I started working for the Leatherdales in 2010, Hero was the first horse I ever sat on there. He was just three, and we've built up quite a connection over the years. To now enter into the FEI levels, I'm just so proud and I enjoy all of the challenges that come with that."

Finishing as Reserve Champion was Ashley Wimmer of Winston-Salem, N.C. (Region 1) who earned 71.096% with her own 11-year-old Oldenburg mare Somerhall (Sir Donnerhall x Arantscha B by Archipel) who she has also developed from a young age. "I brought her up through the young and developing horse program, and I think that experience and exposure definitely helped prepare her for this moment," said Wimmer. "She was impressed with the atmosphere in the Alltech but she's matured enough to where she came back and let me

ride her anyway. In Europe the horses are used to this type of environment, but in the U.S. there's not many places like this, so it's great experience for us."



**Bonnie Canter and Ffinella GCF of Texas proved that size doesn't matter in winning the Second Level Adult Amateur Championship at the 2016 US Dressage Finals presented by Adequan®. Photo by Susan J. Stickle**

A popular phrase notes that "everything's bigger in Texas," and one could say that also applies to Ffinella GCF. The 15-1-hand Connemara/Hanoverian cross mare may have appeared almost diminutive next to her huge Warmblood competitors, but in the Second Level Adult Amateur Championship she proved that size doesn't matter, carrying her owner/rider Bonnie Canter of Houston, Texas (Region 9) to an impressive score of 72.317% and victory in the class of 30. In fact, the talented mare has never let her small stature get in the way of accomplishments: last year, she and Canter competed against the best young horses in the country in the USEF five-year-old championship program at Lamplight. "She has been so great this weekend. I've had her since she was just two, and she has that little bit of 'pony' in her and she loves a trip and loves to feel special," said Canter. "Second Level is tough, there's so many things that can go wrong, but she was forward and flowing and enjoying the cool fall temperatures. The weather has been so beautiful, the grounds are wonderful and footing is perfect – you can't imagine riding someplace any nicer. It's been a great time."

Small animal veterinarian Lucy Tidd of Germantown, Md. (Region 1) returned to the Finals for the second time with her seven-year-old Dutch Warmblood mare Evita to earn Reserve with 71.057%. "She's a little bit of a worrier, but she was much improved over our performance last year at Training Level where she was a little tense," said Tidd. "Today she had a solid test and was really listening. She's starting to really mature and come into her own now. It's so fun to come back here and be around all of the top amateurs from around the country."

Last year's Third Level champions Katherine Lewis of Aiken, S.C. (Region 3) and her 12-year-old Oldenburg gelding Donneur (Donnerschwee out of Akorina by Cordeur) successfully made the move to Fourth Level, earning the unanimous victory under all three judges to win the Adult Amateur division with 68.111%. But Lewis' partnership with her mount almost never happened. "I saw Donneur when he was three and I tried to buy him, but he didn't pass the vetting. I kept searching for a horse for eight more months, but could never get him out of my head. So I asked a friend who's a vet to look at him again in Germany, and he gave me the right answer! But then he came home and was so wild in turnout that he blew suspensories in both front legs, and we totally rehabbed him each time," Lewis explained. "My horse was definitely 'up' today but he was listening and it was such a fun ride. It's like the Olympics for amateurs here. After coming last year, I planned out all of 2016 just to make sure we'd be back."

A fortuitous move off the wait list resulted in Kathryn Bennett of Manassas, Va. (Region 1) and her 12-year-old American Warmblood mare Just Georgie riding to a score of 66.963%, winning a tiebreak for Reserve. "I bought her as an unbroken three-year-old and I backed her myself. She's been a bit of a tough go but she's a lot more willing now and I'm doing things with this horse I never dreamed of," she said. "I remember being at Training Level and seeing someone doing flying changes and thinking I'd never be able to do that. It's been a little bit like the blind leading the blind, but she's turned into the most amazing horse and I'm so lucky."

Twenty-four talented competitors from across the country vied for the Intermediate I Adult Amateur Championship, but it was last year's champion Rachael Hicks of Prospect, Ky. (Region 2) and her 11-year-old Westfalen gelding Fabio Bellini (Fuerst Heinrich x Dakota by Davignon I) who came out on top with 69.123%. But Hicks almost didn't get the chance to defend her title. "I'm not up to date on my rules so I thought since he won last year that we were no longer eligible at this level, and I wasn't ready to move up to Grand Prix. So I didn't pursue qualifying at all," she explained. "All of a sudden I read something USDF sent out right before the last weekend of the qualifying season which said that I could win three times. I literally ran out, loaded him on the trailer, drove all the way to a show in Michigan, and got my qualifying scores in one weekend. And here we are! So now I've learned my lesson – read your rules! It worked out well and I was pleased with our ride. He's such a trier and has gotten more confident in himself over the last year."

Jessica Nilles took time off from her job as a physical therapist to come to the Finals for the first time, and now will go home to Franklin, Wis. (Region 2) with a Reserve Championship title earned with her 13-year-old Dutch Warmblood gelding Wish (Flemmingh x My Fonsa by Voltaire) on 68.421%. "We received a wild card and we just had to come, and we're both so excited to be here," said Nilles. "I think my horse has the biggest heart of any horse I've ever known, and our test felt like the most expressive and fun that we've had all year. It was a great feeling to have him so 'up' and feeling powerful with me in there."

Perhaps the most dramatic turnaround performance of the Finals so far was Lauren Thornlow and her 13-year-old Oldenburg gelding Royal Konig (Rubin-Royal by Pica Ramira by Pablo). Their long trip from Snohomish, Wash. (Region 6) may seem shorter on the way home after earning the Grand Prix Adult Amateur Championship with 64.000%. "It definitely was the 'comeback kid' ride," said Thornlow. "I had a freestyle ride yesterday and everything that could have gone wrong did. It's the first time I've ever gotten below 60% on this horse in the 10 years I've owned him. I was definitely not in a good place yesterday, so I told myself

that I had to pick myself back up and get it together." A short morning schooling session seemed to get Thornlow and her sensitive mount back on the same page, and it paid off in spades when the afternoon's championship title was on the line. "He can be a very difficult ride and sometimes he thinks he can just get by on his good looks," she laughed. "But today it felt like he was with me the whole time in there. I think as far as our connection and communication went, it ended up being our best Grand Prix ever. We've grown together since I was a young rider and everything in our relationship has seemed like it's meant to be. It's been a little bit of a roller coaster but we've found a good balance, and I'm so happy to have him in my life."

Kristy Truebenbach Lund of Wellington, Fla. (Region 3) also rebounded from a tough first day to ride her 13-year-old Spanish Warmblood gelding Akvavit (Sylvester x Onni by Jazz) to the Reserve Championship with 62.700%. "We also had a disaster ride yesterday in the Intermediate II, but I'm so pleased with him today," Truebenbach Lund said of her mount, which she "got out of a bankruptcy sale in Spain and bought off a video. He's a hot horse, but he will do anything for me, and if you ask him to jump he says 'how high?'"



**"Comback kids" Lauren Thornlow and Royal Konig won the Grand Prix Adult Amateur Championship at the 2016 US Dressage Finals presented by Adequan®. Photo by Susan J. Stickle**

Capping off evening festivities, 15 horse/rider combinations contested the Grand Prix Open Championship where Chase Hickok of Wellington, Fla. (Region 3) rode Hyperion Farm Inc.'s 17-year-old Dutch Warmblood gelding Sagacious HF (Welt Hit II x Judith by Cocktail) to a top score of 70.667% to win the Veronica Holt Perpetual Trophy (presented by USDF Region 5 and Friends). "We wanted to focus on positive, harmonious performances with Sagacious and I felt like we really accomplished that tonight, especially given the atmosphere," said Hickok. "I can't really put into words what an incredible opportunity it's been for me to ride this horse. From day one he's been such a generous teacher, and it's a testament to him that we've accomplished so much together." This was Hickok's first trip to the Finals in Lexington, but it won't be her last. "We graduated last year from the Under-25 division and were looking for a new goal to set for us. This felt like a natural choice because I think it's an awesome program, it's a great way to cap off the season, and we were really excited to come and see it for ourselves," she explained. "Everybody's been so nice, from the volunteers driving the coffee cart in the morning to the staff handing out carrots for the horses, we'll certainly be coming back. This will now have a permanent spot on our calendar."

Anna Whit Watkins of Moody, Texas (Region 9) was equally pleased with her performance with her 20-year-old Dutch Warmblood gelding Oublette (Amulet x Jinnardi by Expo), earning 68.000% for Reserve honors. "He was really on tonight – he likes his job and loves a crowd," said Watkins, who also earned the Reserve title at this level at the inaugural Finals in 2013. "It's great to come back again. Everyone that I've spoken with is just so excited to be here because it's such a unique experience. For competitors who don't usually the chance to get out of their home state or region much, to come here and see the diversity from across the country in such a supportive atmosphere is an incredible experience."

Competition resumes Saturday at 8:00am ET with 12 additional championship divisions – follow the action through updates on the [USDF Facebook page](#) and the [US Dressage Finals website](#), as well as watch live online streaming on the popular USEF Network at this link:

<http://www.usefnetwork.com/featured/2016USDressageFinals/>. To learn more about the US Dressage Finals presented by Adequan<sup>®</sup>, download competition information, review day sheets and results, and read daily news releases, visit the official event website at <http://www.usdressagefinals.com>.



# US Dressage Finals

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MEDIA CONTACT: JENNIFER M. KEELER, YELLOW HORSE MARKETING,  
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Sunday,  
November 13,  
2016

## Riders Have the “Best Day of My Life” at the 2016 US Dressage Finals Presented By Adequan®

Source: Yellow Horse Marketing for the US Dressage Finals

Katherine Lewis of Aiken, S.C. had already had a fairy-tale trip to the US Dressage Finals presented by Adequan® after being crowned Friday's Fourth Level Adult Amateur Champion. But when her distinctive freestyle music featuring the American Authors hit “Best Day of My Life” rang out over the loudspeakers in the Alltech Arena in Lexington, her winning week was about to get even better. “What more is there to say for a freestyle when you're here riding in this type of atmosphere on your once-in-a-lifetime horse?” she asked.

That special horse is the 12-year-old Oldenburg gelding Donneur (Donnerschwee out of Akorina by Cordeur), who has reformed his formerly self-destructive ways into cruising to another Finals victory in today's Fourth Level Adult Amateur Freestyle Championship with 73.778% (see Lewis' winning freestyle ride [HERE](#) courtesy of US Dressage Finals videographer Richard's Equine Video). “We had to learn to manage him in turnout, because he's jumped out, crashed on pavement, and taken high-speed farm tours. We had to be so vigilant because he kept hurting himself,” she explained. “But at the same time we didn't want him to have to be locked up forever. So finally we just held our breath and turned him out in a 12-acre field with a retired show hunter to babysit him. And thankfully it worked.”

Lewis also had to figure out how to channel her mount's energy in a positive direction in the electric setting of the Alltech Arena. “It's such an amazing venue and it gives my horse lots of extra lift and presence, but he also can get quite worked up especially during awards,” she said. “My incredible trainer Shawna Harding is



Katherine Lewis of South Carolina had the “best day of my life” in winning the Fourth Level Adult Amateur Freestyle Championship at the 2016 US Dressage Finals presented by Adequan®. Photo by Susan J. Stickle

staying at my house taking care of all my animals so we could be here, and she and my husband figured out a way to Facetime our schooling and warm-ups. Her help has been invaluable to me, and we worked out a plan to use Donneur's lift and brilliance in that ring to our advantage. It's a fine line because he's an overachiever and we want him to feel good about himself, but he still has to listen. Shawna always says, 'don't bore me, wow me,' so that's what I tried to do and it worked!" Lewis' freestyle music also has a family connection. "My daughter and son-in-law are here with me, and they used two of the songs from my freestyle including 'Best Day of My Life' in their wedding at our farm last year," she explained. "It was a little bit of a home job putting this together, but I'm so proud to win with their wedding music." Taking home the Reserve Championship was Anne Chapin of Charlottesville, Va. (Region 1) with her nine-year-old Oldenburg mare Luna Popp (Liberty Gold x Fein Dancer by Feinbrand, bred in the U.S. by Isabel de Szinay) on 68.833%.



Maryland's Michael Bragdell had fun with his 80's-themed performance to win the Third Level Open Freestyle Championship at the 2016 US Dressage Finals presented by Adequan®. Photo by Susan J. Stickle

Michael Bragdell, Colora, Md. (Region 8) also enjoyed his freestyle as he rode William and Laura Mitchelson's six-year-old Dutch Warmblood gelding Faberge Blue (Contango x Kroniek U by Democraat, bred in Maryland by Marie Emrey) to the winner's circle in the Third Level Open Freestyle with 73.556%. "I'm a big 80's fan so Karen Robinson was excited to put this together for me. It's fun, my horse seems to love the music, and I think it goes really well with his gaits," said Bragdell. "I'm so excited for his owners. He grew up on our farm and he's always been a worker bee – he's a thrill to ride and I love his brain and work ethic. He's the type of horse that if he's not ridden first in the morning then he's a little disappointed in me." Jennifer Roth of Sunbury, Ohio (Region 2) earned Reserve honors with her 11-year-old Hanoverian gelding Reebok (Royal Prince x Andromache by Arrian, bred in Pennsylvania by Diane and Jack Vickery) with 72.889%. "I used music from Game of Thrones, because who doesn't love dark and scary music?" she laughed. "It's my horse's first season back after two years off for a rear suspensory injury, so it means a lot to be here. I'm just so glad to have my horse back."

In the Second Level Open Freestyle, Region 2's Jennifer Conour of Carmel, Ind. rode the nine-year-old American Warmblood mare Emerald (Andre x Opal, bred in Illinois by Indian Hills Stables) to victory for owner Diane Breier with a top score of 72.778%. "The chilly temperatures didn't bother her at all, she's very steady and such a good girl. She was purchased for her owner who asked me to help ride her so I get the pleasure of competing her here. She's so solid in her work, really good with her simple changes which have coefficients, and she seems to like her music," said Conour, who also explained why the music has special meaning for Breier. "Her owner picked out her music because it was her father's favorite music from the movie 'The Sting', so she thinks of her dad every time she hears the freestyle music." Finishing in Reserve with 72.111% was Deirdre Malburg of Belton, Texas (Region 9) with Boldness Be My Friend SLR, a nine-year-old Friesian cross gelding (Gabriel x Savannah SLR by Whitesville) owned by Raelynn Stephens. "He also is a very steady horse and I can always count on the fact that he's going to go in the ring and do his job," Malburg explained. "He's half Friesian, a quarter Thoroughbred, and a quarter Shire and was purchased by his owner for \$500. I got him about a year ago and he wasn't the easiest to work with at first, but he had a breakthrough this year and has decided he loves dressage and loves competing. After going through three freestyles we now use tango music because he chose it!"

After successfully qualifying in Region 7, Kendall Brookhart decided to bring her nine-year-old Oldenburg mare Rianna (Regazzoni x Desert Princess by Diamont, bred in Arizona by Sharee and Kendall Brookhart) all the way to Kentucky from her home in Cave Creek, Ariz. “I had heard some wonderful things about competing here so we were very excited to come,” said Brookhart. “We had planned to bring Rianna in 2014 but she came down with a cough so we couldn’t put her on the trailer and had to scratch. So it’s been a two-year wait, but now I couldn’t be happier to be here.” Her patience paid off with a win in the Second Level Adult Amateur Freestyle Championship on the strength of a score of 71.722% for a performance using music from Madonna that Brookhart had originally planned to use with Rianna’s dam. “It was so much fun riding in the Alltech today. She was a little on edge and spooked pretty hard in the corner so I had to ride creatively and adjust as I went, but I’m really pleased. She gave me all that she could today.” Hometown girl Michelle Morehead of Lexington, Ky. (qualified in Region 3) rode her nine-year-old Oldenburg mare Silhouette (Staccato\* x Lafonsa by Hofnar, bred in Virginia by Donald and Yolanda Williamson) to a close second with 71.444%. “Right before we went in the ring, my trainer told me I had to go for it, so we did,” she said. “My previous mare had suffered a career-ending injury and I was just devastated. Soon after my trainer found Silhouette who was up for sale, and she said I really needed to look at her. So she kind of fell in my lap, and it’s been quite a blessing to say the least.”



Kendall Brookhart waited two years for her chance to come to Kentucky, and now will go home to Arizona with the Second Level Adult Amateur Freestyle Championship title from the 2016 US Dressage Finals presented by Adequan. Photo by Susan J. Stickle

Region 9’s Ashlee Watts and her family had to go the extra mile to make it back to this year’s Finals with her eight-year-old Danish Warmblood gelding Hampton (Blue Hors Hotline x Madigan L), but those efforts paid off with a victory in the First Level Adult Amateur Championship with 72.059%. “I am an equine orthopedic surgeon in College Station, Texas, and I almost didn’t come due to work commitments,” she said. “But the more I thought about it, the more I said, ‘I have to go.’” So her husband drove the horse to Kentucky while she flew in the day before competition to meet him, which didn’t leave much time for preparation. But Watts didn’t let that, or an unfortunate off-course error in her test, keep her from victory. “Hampton was more settled today and was perfect in our test. To come here where it’s such a showcase with so many great riders and amazing horses, with an atmosphere that is competitive but so pleasant and happy, it’s a great way to end the year.” Reserve Champion was Lauren Lewis-Gladish of St. John, Ind. (Region 2) who rode her six-year-old Hanoverian mare Sinfonie (Soliman de Hus x Bravour by Belissimo M) to a score 71.961%. “This is my dream horse – I saved money for 15 years to be able to get a horse like her,” Lewis-Gladish explained. “I’ve owned her for two years but she had a foal last April and she’d never been shown prior to being bred, so this is her first season out. Today she settled in and decided to show me what she’s capable of doing and tried so hard to please me. It’s so amazing that I’m sitting here and we’ve accomplished so much in such a short time.”

Heather McCarthy of Prairie Grove, Ill. (Region 2) has found plenty of success at the Finals in past years, and she once again found the winner’s circle as she rode Sandi Chohany’s five-year-old Oldenburg gelding Au Revoir (Ampere x Lara by Liberty M) to a score of 73.971% to claim the First Level Open Championship title. “This is a new horse for me – we’ve only been together since April and this was his first big show season. I rode him a little conservatively yesterday not knowing how he’d handle everything, but today he was just perfect and I could really go for it,” she said. “I’ve attended every single Finals and look forward to it every

year. I have an even bigger group with me than ever before, including several first-timers, and we wouldn't miss this for anything." McCarthy just edged out Mike Suchanek of Cambridge, Minn. (Region 4) who rode three horses to top ten finishes in the class, including Reserve honors with the five-year-old Hanoverian mare Duchess L (Damsey x EM De La Rosa by De Niro, bred in the U.S. by owner Leatherdale Farms) with 73.627%. "It's just her first year of showing so I am really proud of her coming all this way," he noted. "She's still growing in strength but her gaits have been really improving."

Amy Swerdlin of Region 3 took the long drive north from Wellington, Fla. as well as the chilly temperatures in stride as she and her homebred six-year-old Oldenburg gelding Quileute CCW (Quaterback x Gluckslady by Gluckspliz) claimed the Third Level Adult Amateur Championship with 67.650%. "He was quite fresh and excited today but he stayed with me, and despite a few bobbles overall I was very happy," she said. "It's even more special because I bred him myself and I was there when he was foaled. There were so many good riders in the class but I think he has a lot of presence and is a bit of a show-off so that helps him do well." Lisa Rush of Dell Rapids, S.D. (Region 4) also traveled a long way to the Finals and was rewarded with Reserve Championship honors with her seven-year-old Westfalen gelding Finestep HW (Florenciano x Merana by Medici) on a score of 67.393%. "My horse was also fresh today, but all in all he did everything I asked him to do," noted Rush, who added that she and her daughter trailered her mount 17 hours to Kentucky in order to participate in the Finals for the first time. "Three years ago I purchased him sight unseen off the internet and imported him. It was quite a leap of faith, and at first you think, 'what have I done?' But he's been fantastic and it's turned out really well."



**Shannon Stevens' sight-unseen online purchase of Pik L's Donabella paid off with a victory in the Fourth Level Open Championship at the 2016 US Dressage Finals presented by Adequan®. Photo by Susan J. Stickle**

Region 8 riders claimed top honors in the Fourth Level Open Championship, where Shannon Stevens of Annandale, N.J. rode her seven-year-old Hanoverian mare Pik L's Donabella (Pik L x Donatela by Don Primero, bred in the U.S. by Horses Unlimited) to the win with 71.556%. "I bought her when she was two years old, sight unseen from an online auction. There was something I saw in her in the first 30 seconds that made me feel I had to have her, but my husband thought I was out of my mind!" she laughed. "My mare is a super energetic, exuberant type so my goal going into this was to ride a clean, conservative, harmonious test and I think we achieved that. To be honest, she's a humbling horse and every day can be a bit of a challenge, but she's pushed me to become a better rider. I've learned so much from her and I was really pleased

with our performance today." Region 8 team mate Jane Hannigan of Harvard, Mass. rode the seven-year-old Oldenburg gelding Fackeltrager (Fackeltanz x Whisper D by Gribaldi, owned by Ruling Cortes LLC) to Reserve with 69.741%. "We did Third Level here last year and wanted to come back because it's such great experience for him to be in this environment," said Hannigan. "It was cold and windy today and he was a little snorty but he tried his best to pay attention. He tried to do too many flying changes but he was just trying too hard. He's a very elastic mover and the lateral movements are his strength."

After traveling all the way across the country to compete, a Region 6 competitor once again grabbed headlines as Morgan Barrows of Monroe, Wash. rode Janice Davis' eight-year-old Oldenburg gelding San Corazon (San Amour x Ridehna by Rohdiamant) to victory in the Intermediate I Open Freestyle Championship with 71.708%. "I came out knowing I needed to do better than I did in the Intermediate I class yesterday, but pulling the first ride in the class is not a position I like being in. I don't get nervous during the ride, but I do get extremely anxious after the ride so it was hard for me to watch the rest of the class," said



Barrows. “I’ve been using this freestyle in CDI’s this season and I knew what I needed to do to amp it up, so I took those risks and it paid off. It’s a long way for us to come to the Finals, but we had a super trip coming here and have no regrets. For all of those people sitting at home considering coming in the future, I would have to say, ‘get in the truck and go.’ It’s great here in Kentucky and I’m not sure there’s anywhere else that can do this event like this.” Earning her second straight Reserve Championship of the weekend was Ashley Wimmer of Winston-Salem, N.C. (Region 1) who earned 71.583% with her own 11-year-old Oldenburg mare Somerhall (Sir Donnerhall x Arantscha B by Archipel). “She was a little bit tense in the Alltech today but I was able to get her settled for the most part. We had a mistake in the three-tempi’s but it was completely my fault, and the rest was really good,” said Wimmer. “My freestyle was designed by my daughter and it suits my horse really well because she’s a very elegant, light-moving horse. That can be a challenge to get right, but we get great scores for it.”

Less than one-tenth of a point made all the difference for Darcy Gaines of nearby Versailles, Ky. (qualified in Region 4) to win the Intermediate I Adult Amateur Freestyle with 69.917% aboard her 11-year-old Dutch Warmblood gelding Amigo (by Scandic). “I’m so thrilled. Everything I asked for, he responded – he was right with the music and didn’t make any mistakes. I couldn’t have asked for anything more from him today,” said Gaines, who described her long journey to find her current partner. “I spent about 13 years buying and selling inexpensive horses to build up enough money to buy a really fabulous horse. But after only a year and getting to show at Prix St. Georges one time, he suffered a career-ending injury and I thought I was done with the sport. But I kept working my tail off and saved every penny I could, and went to Europe where I found Amigo as an unbroken two-year-old and didn’t spend a lot of money on him. I’ve brought him along all by myself and I still do everything I can to support this hobby I love.” Alexandra Krossen of Basking Ridge, N.J. (Region 8) and Heather Mason’s 11-year-old Hanoverian cross mare Damani (Duvall x Godiva by Gesandt, bred in the U.S. by Virginia Godfrey) earned the Reserve Championship for this division in 2015, and returned to Kentucky to earn the same honor this year with 69.833%. “Damani came to Heather as a sale horse, and last year was our first season together. Luckily I still have the ride on her,” said Krossen, who works for a pharmaceutical company when not in the saddle. “She was a little hot today but that actually made things flow a little easier, despite a bobble in our three-tempi’s.”

Under a stunning November moon shining over the frosty Bluegrass countryside, Region 3 riders quickly heated things up in the Alltech Arena as evening festivities got underway with the Grand Prix Adult Amateur Freestyle, where Lynnette Wadsworth of Hastings, Fla. rode her 17-year-old Friesian gelding Wietze G (Rypke x Wijke by Reitse) to claim both the win and the Calaveras County Perpetual Trophy presented by artist Olva Stewart Pharo with 66.750% over Phyllis Sumner of Atlanta, Ga. with her 15-year-old Hanoverian gelding Wilby (Walt Disney I x Doretta by Darling) on a score of 66.500%.

As the next-to-last combination to canter down centerline in the Grand Prix Open Freestyle, the elegant pair of Chase Hickok of Wellington, Fla. (Region 3) and Sagacious HF (17-year-old Dutch Warmblood gelding Welt Hit II x Judith by Cocktail, owned by Hyperion Farm Inc.) quickly took command of the crowd and powered to their second Finals triumph in as many days. Their winning score of 74.167% gave them the unanimous victory under all three international judges including Janet Foy, Lilo Fore, and William Warren. “We are just ecstatic with the results from this weekend! Our goal was to come here and have a positive experience in anticipation of moving up to the CDI Grand Prix level during the upcoming Florida season, but this far exceeded our expectations,” said a delighted Hickok. “I really love our freestyle. The music actually came with Sagacious, and I’ve tweaked it a bit to suit us and changed around the choreography some, but the credit for the design and music selection really goes to Marlene Whitaker. It’s such a fun freestyle to ride and I think the music really suits Sagacious and highlights his strengths.” After winning Thursday’s Intermediate II Open title,

Heather Mason of Lebanon, N.J. (Region 8) and her 13-year-old Dutch Warmblood gelding Warsteiner (Riverman ISF x Welona by Roemer) had another strong performance to finish with Reserve honors on a score of 72.917%.

The US Dressage Finals presented by Adequan® will conclude on Sunday as the last group of eight champions for 2016 are crowned. Follow the action through updates on the [USDF Facebook page](#) and the [US Dressage Finals website](#), as well as watch live online streaming on the popular USEF Network at this link:

<http://www.usefnetwork.com/featured/2016USDressageFinals/>. To

learn more about the US Dressage Finals presented by Adequan®, download competition information, review day sheets and results, and read daily news releases, visit the official event website at <http://www.usdressagefinals.com>.



**In their first trip to Kentucky, Chase Hickok of Wellington, Fla. and Sagacious HF powered to victory in the Grand Prix Open Freestyle Championship at the 2016 US Dressage Finals presented by Adequan®. Photo by Susan J. Stickle**



# US Dressage Finals

Presented by Adequan®

November 10-13, 2016 • Kentucky Horse Park

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## The Show Must Go On at the 2016 US Dressage Finals Presented By Adequan®

Source: Yellow Horse Marketing for the US Dressage Finals

Debbie Hill comes to Kentucky every year for the US Dressage Finals presented by Adequan®, and has gone home to Gurley, Ala. (Region 3) with her share of championship titles. But this year, much to her dismay, uncharacteristic mistakes by each of her three mounts had so far kept her out of the winner's circle. She was down to her last ride Sunday afternoon in the Fourth Level Open Freestyle on a horse she'd already had a disappointing performance with earlier in the week. And then the lights went out. "I came into the arena and just thought, 'oh no'," said Hill.

A blown transformer just after 2pm ET had utility crews scrambling and left the Alltech Arena shrouded with only emergency lighting to illuminate the arena floor. But as the saying goes, "the show must go on" and officials, staff, volunteers and competitors all came together to make sure the last class of the day went off without a hitch. Still, Hill wasn't optimistic about her chances with Cartier, a nine-year-old unregistered Dutch Harness gelding owned by Robbie Rice.

"This is his first year of showing and he's quite green, and he can be very afraid and spooky. When that happens, the first thing he does is back off and throw his neck up," she explained. "I had a very hard time in the warm-up because it was so dark. But once we got in the ring, I was pleasantly surprised that he came through! I'm so thrilled that he's come so far because he really is fun, and I always hoped he'd succeed."



Dancing in the dark – Debbie Hill and Cartier on their way to winning the Fourth Level Open Freestyle Championship at the 2016 US Dressage Finals presented by Adequan®.  
Photo by Susan J. Stickle

The pair's unanimous win under all three judges with an overall score 74.389% for their Pink Panther/James Bond medley could also be considered for a "Least Likely to Succeed" award. "We were told by his previous owner that he came from the Amish, and went through the New Holland sale as a driving reject," Hill said of her mount. "He was put up for sale as a dressage horse, and when we first saw the sales video my client was like, 'no way'. But there was something about him I liked – I couldn't put my finger on it. There were moments where he had that nice swing in his gait and he has a lot of presence. When we went to see him, it was out in the middle of nowhere and there was no arena to ride him in. His owner said he just rode him out in the forest! Everybody said 'no', but I thought I could make something out of him.



**Rachael Hicks won the Prix St. Georges Adult Amateur Championship for the second straight year, this time aboard Don Cartier at the 2016 US Dressage Finals presented by Adequan®. Photo by Susan J. Stickle**

"Right from the start, Cartier was so sweet and willing, but it was a mess," Hill continued. "It was quite a struggle trying to get him to put his neck down, bring the hind legs under and his back up. He had no idea how to even be on the bit. For the first six months I was like, 'what are we going to do with this?' Thankfully Roel Theunissen really helped me with him. Of course in hindsight, I'm so lucky we took a chance on the horse, because he's certainly rewarded my faith." Finishing with Reserve honors on her home turf with a score of 72.778% was Reese Koffler-Stanfield of Georgetown, Ky. (Region 2) aboard her seven-year-old Dutch Warmblood gelding Elancourt (Ampere x Belita V by Stedinger).

Endel Ots of Wellington, Fla. (Region 3) has competed around the world, and he turned his first trip to the US Dressage Finals into a winning one aboard the seven-year-old Oldenburg gelding Samhitas (Sir Donnerhall x Heidebluete by Abanos) owned by Ots and Gary Vander Ploeg. The pair earned 71.009% in the Prix St. Georges Open Championship to be awarded the Miki Christophersen Perpetual Trophy (presented by USDF Region 4). "He's only seven so this is his first year at the level, but he was very solid," said Ots. "We've competed together in Europe for the 2015

Young Horse World Championships as well as Devon this year, so he's used to competing in venues like this with a lot of atmosphere. I'd heard and read about this show and wanted to come, and it's been fantastic. If I had more horses ready I'd bring them too. I couldn't recommend the show any more." Having already earned the Intermediate I Open title earlier in the week, Mike Suchanek of Cambridge, Minn. (Region 4) added Reserve Champion Prix St. Georges honors to his resume with Hero L (nine-year-old Hanoverian gelding [His Highness x Waterlily L by Wolkenstein II] owned and bred in the U.S. by Leatherdale Farms) with a score of 70.132%.

Last year's Prix St. Georges Adult Amateur Champion Rachael Hicks of nearby Prospect, Ky. (Region 2) successfully defended her title Sunday morning to be awarded the Janine Westmoreland Malone Perpetual Trophy (presented by USDF), but this time it was aboard her nine-year-old Rheinlander stallion Don Cartier (Don Schufro x Carmina by Cartier) with a score of 68.377%. "The good and the bad of it is that we weren't in the indoor where he sees spooky monsters, but it was freezing out there at 8am! I couldn't even feel my fingers and couldn't adjust my reins because they felt frozen in one position," she laughed. "I don't know that it was our best ride, but it was very steady and good enough to get the job done. He needs as much event exposure like this as possible to keep progressing, and we now hope to try the CDI Adult Amateur division in Florida." Hicks just edged out California's Elma Garcia from Thermal (Region 7) with 68.246%. Her 14-year-

old Hanoverian mare Wenesa (Westemhagen x Dancing Girl by Davignon I) hitched a plane ride to Kentucky with Thoroughbred racehorses returning from the recent Breeders' Cup at Santa Anita. "I think we held back in our Intermediate I ride earlier in the week, so we really went for it today. My changes were clean and big and bold, and I'm just delighted," said Garcia. "I told my coach right from the beginning of the year that I wanted to qualify for the Finals and have this experience. This is a 'bucket list' event and I don't know how you can't come if given the chance – I'm just so happy we came and proud of my mare."

Mike Suchanek of Cambridge, Minn. (Region 4) may have been the busiest rider at the Finals this year, but his efforts were rewarded with yet another title for Leatherdale Farms as Hannigan L (five-year-old Hanoverian gelding [Herzensdieb x Pia Colada by Pik L] bred in the U.S. by Leatherdale Farms) was the only performance to break the 70% barrier to earn 70.163% and the win in the Second Level Open Championship. "I love these youngsters!" said Suchanek. "In warm-up he was a little excited at first about the freestyles going in another ring, but he settled and the ride went perfectly. He likes to perform and I had a lot of fun out there. The Second Level work comes easy for him – he has the gaits and the stature to pull it off. His canter work is very good, he's very well-balanced. I couldn't have been more pleased with him." Finishing with his second Reserve Championship title of the week was Martin Kuhn of New Berlin, Ill. (Region 2), this time aboard Colleen Rull's six-year-old Hanoverian gelding Rapson (Rapture R x Wisteria by Warkanson, bred in U.S. by the St. Louis Equestrian Center) with 68.943%.



Tempel Lipizzan trainer Jessica Starck rode Maestoso Alfaya II to victory in the First Level Freestyle Open Championship at the 2016 US Dressage Finals presented by Adequan®. Photo by Susan J. Stickle

As a trainer for the world-famous Tempel Lipizzans, Jessica Starck of Old Mill Creek, Ill. (Region 2) is usually helping to prepare the legendary white stallions for special appearances across the country. But this week she stepped into a different type of spotlight to win the First Level Freestyle Open Championship with Tempel Lipizzans's U.S.-bred six-year-old stallion Maestoso Alfaya II (Maestoso Legeny x Alfaya by Favory V Jacinda) with an impressive score of 74.178% using music from the 1940's. "He was right with me, which is a blessing because he's a very spooky horse and he can either be 'on' or 'off'. I was the most nervous for this class that I've ever been out of everything we do," said Starck. "But he stepped up to the plate and kind of took over, and we had a fun, beautiful ride. I've been working with him for about a year, and dealing with the spookiness has been difficult. To bridge over to the competitive sport was a little bit of a stretch at first, but it was a great goal and we did it. This experience has really helped him mature, and he may take the skills he's learned this year in the competition arena to become part of the Tempel stallion show in the future. It would be great fun to do both." Taking home Reserve honors with 71.722% was Nicole Harrington of Amelia, Ohio (qualified in Region 4) aboard Camomila MCD, a five-year-old Pura Raza Espanola (Hielo MOR x Jazmin MOR by Zodiaco II) mare owned and bred in the U.S. by McDowell Equestrian Inc.

The competition couldn't have been more hard-fought than it was in the First Level Freestyle Adult Amateur Championship, where the top two combinations finished on the same score of 70.722%. A tiebreak gave the ultimate victory to Malena Brisbois of Nokesville, Va. (Region 1) with her homebred 12-year-old Swedish Warmblood gelding Amadeus (Briar 899 x Rock Starlet by Rocamadour). "It's fun to be able to ride a horse you've had since he was a thought in your head and take him to the national championships," said Brisbois. "Our freestyle uses the song 'Rock Me Amadeus' by Falco, so it's very fitting and he puffs up when he hears his music – he loves to hear his name over the loudspeakers! This was our last freestyle ride before we move up to Second Level, so it was a great way to finish." Fellow Region 1 competitor and former eventer Jessica



Malena Brisbois and her homebred Swedish Warmblood gelding Amadeus won a tiebreak to claim the First Level Freestyle Adult Amateur Championship at the 2016 US Dressage Finals presented by Adequan®.  
Photo by Susan J. Stickle

Keating of Ashburn, Va. also rode her homebred mount Divine Comedy (13-year-old Belgian Warmblood gelding [Nevada x Cair Paravel by Castle Guard]) to earn Reserve with her Fleetwood Mac-themed performance. “He’s 15.2 hands but I’m 5’10” so he looks deceptively small – he’s a little guy but he takes big steps,” Keating noted. “This is our first year doing dressage and I actually wasn’t going to come to the Finals. But someone said to me at Regionals that with horses, if they’re sound, healthy, able, and you get the chance, you have to do it. So I really took that to heart and my experience here has been fantastic.”

After being the bridesmaid in Saturday’s First Level Adult Amateur division, pharmaceutical sales representative Lauren Lewis-Gladish of St. John, Ind. (Region 2) finally walked down the aisle to claim

the Training Level Adult Amateur Championship with her “dream horse” Sinfonie (six-year-old Hanoverian mare [Soliman de Hus x Bravour by Belissimo M]) with a winning score of 72.121%. “Can you believe it?” she exclaimed. “I was really looking for her to trust me, and she really gave me her all. We’ve had some ups and downs since I got her because she had her foal last year and we just started back riding this spring. Then when we got here the other night, she slipped and fell on the cement and I didn’t even think we’d be competing. Coming here is overwhelming, so for them to look to you for guidance like she did today and go like she did, it’s very special.” Earning the Reserve Championship with 70.379% was Sara Davisson (also representing Region 2), a special education teacher from Calamus, Iowa. This was Davisson’s third trip to the Finals, but she wasn’t so sure about coming this year with her Dutch Warmblood gelding Havallo. “It was a little nerve-wracking to think about coming this year with a four-year-old, and I was kind of on the fence about it,” she explained. “But he won at Regionals and I took the chance even though you never know how things can go with young horses. He handled everything like a pro and just kept getting better and better throughout the week. He really is a rock star. This was the first time in nine years that my in-laws got to see me show, so it was a family affair and made it all the more special.”

Birgitt Dagge’s seven-year-old Oldenburg gelding Laxwell (Lingh x Dessous by Donnerhall) recovered from an untimely hoof abscess just in time to earn a unanimous victory for her and Region 3 in the Third Level Freestyle Adult Amateur Championship with 71.000% over Teresa Fickling of Macon, Ga. (also of Region 3) aboard her eight-year-old Dutch Warmblood gelding Dolcetto O (Sandreo x NN by Welt Hit II) with 68.944%. “A special thank you to my farrier who is here and re-shod him about 10 times on Wednesday trying to get him figured out, and it worked,” said Dagge, a realtor from Bonita Springs, Fla. “He loves the atmosphere in the Alltech because he thinks he’s awesome, and of course I do too! I love doing freestyles and he’s a super horse – this is just his fourth time doing this freestyle, and his flying changes were very good today. We had to work for the last few days to get our momentum back, but today was our day.”



Laxwell recovered from an untimely hoof abscess just in time to carry owner/rider Birgitt Dagge of Florida to win the Third Level Freestyle Adult Amateur Championship at the 2016 US Dressage Finals presented by Adequan®.  
Photo by Susan J. Stickle

Adding to the excitement of the final day, the top-scoring riders in various divisions from each of the Great American/USDF Regional Championships competed on regional teams in the second-annual US Dressage

Finals Regions Cup, vying with competitors from across the country for awards and bragging rights for their respective USDF Region in which they qualified to attend the Finals. Coming out on top after four days of championship competition was the Region 3 team comprised of Kristy Truebenbach Lund and Living Lucky at Training Level Adult Amateur, Amy Swerdlin with Quileute CCW at Second Level Adult Amateur, and Endel Ots with Samhitas in the Open Prix St. Georges. Their winning average score of 70.498% was good enough to successfully defend their 2015 Regions Cup title ahead of Region 7 with 69.172% and Region 9 with 69.067%.

More information including final results, photo galleries, and news archives from the 2016 US Dressage Finals presented by Adequan® are available on the official event website [www.usdressagefinals.com](http://www.usdressagefinals.com). Video on-demand from select championship performances is also available on the USEF Network at [www.usefnetwork.com](http://www.usefnetwork.com).

# Road To The Finals

By Jennifer M. Keeler

*Every year when riders and horses from across the country gather in Lexington, KY, for the US Dressage Finals presented by Adequan®, they not only bring top performances to the Alltech Arena – they also bring amazing stories. From overcoming tough odds, facing life’s daily challenges, healing from medical and veterinary conditions, or simply being the unlikely underdog, the tales which unfold at the Finals are nothing short of inspiring.*

*Leading up to this year’s Finals, which will return to the Kentucky Horse Park on November 10-13, 2016, we will share with you three riders’ journeys on their Road to the Finals, available exclusively on USDF’s new digital publication titled YourDressage through the USDF app. Each month, through the good, the bad, and the ugly that entails life with horses and competing in the sport of dressage, these three riders will allow readers behind-the-scenes access as they try to qualify at the Great American Insurance Group/USDF, to pursue their dreams of competing with the best of the best at the Finals. This month, you’ll meet our featured riders and horses. Here are their stories:*





# Ride of Redemption

Amy Paterson and Wies V/D Klumpert

Region 4

**H**ow do you go from the glory of riding Grand Prix in the biggest show you've ever attended, to having the worst test of your life? Would you have the courage to put it all on the line again and pursue a ride of redemption?

That's exactly what Amy Paterson is determined to do.

Paterson's family owns Greenwood SportHorses in Lee's Summit, MO. An accomplished adult amateur competitor in Region 4, Paterson also works full-time as a mortgage loan officer with NBKC Bank. "My entire family is involved with the horses, starting with my dad Bob Stuhr who is the 'head tractor driver' and arena groomer extraordinaire," laughed Paterson. "My mom Angela also rides and has a wonderful FEI schoolmistress – she is a great supporter and good 'eyes on the ground' for me. And last but not least, my husband Doug may not have a background with horses, but he is incredibly supportive and is my #1 cheerleader!"

With the help of her trainer Melissa Allen, Paterson has taken her former "fire breathing dragon" Dutch mare Wies V/D Klumpert all the way through the levels to Grand Prix. "I've had 'Wie' since she was just six years old and at a very green Third Level in her training," Paterson explained. "She could trot like an auction horse and sort of do a flying change each way, but she was very hot and was missing a lot of basics. With a lot of hard work on both of our parts, she has turned into a wonderful, reliable amateur's horse, and even though sometimes I wish I still had all that energy for the Grand Prix where she needs it most, I'm quite happy not to be sitting on a live wire anymore. I remember a few years ago schooling her at Lamplight Equestrian Center in the Chicago area before a show, and Wie was absolutely electric! I walked out of the ring thankful

to have survived, only to find my husband asleep in a chair next to the ring. I was like honey...really? You should have been standing by the ring with a net!"

With their collective energies channeled in the right direction, Paterson and Wie claimed USDF Adult Amateur Champion awards at Third, Fourth, and Intermediate 2 Levels, as well as a multitude of Region 4 Championship titles. Then



in 2014 Paterson realized her dream of attending the US Dressage Finals in Kentucky, where she and her mount were crowned as the Intermediate B Adult Amateur National Champions. "It was an amazing experience, and a moment I will never forget," she remembered.

But as Paterson quickly discovered, success in the sport of dressage can be fleeting. "After how well we did at the Finals in 2014, I figured, eh, how hard could Grand Prix be?" she said. "Well, surprise! It's really hard! Showing Grand Prix for the first time in 2015 was sort of like when I took college calculus — it takes more than just good note-taking and "good looks" (on my horse's part) to do well. You have to have some real skill, help, determination, and support to be a good Grand Prix rider.

"But we prevailed and qualified once again for the Finals, so I returned to Lexington to ride in the Grand Prix Adult Amateur division with stars in my eyes," Paterson continued. "Unfortunately, I had a dreadful test – by far the worst fail in my dressage career to date. Every movement with a double coefficient (and there are many, many, many of them in that test) was botched. After coming in with expectations of glory, I ended up last in the class and utterly deflated."

But like a phoenix rising from the ashes, Paterson overcame her disappointment and for the last nine months has "been on a mission to return to the Finals for a chance at redemption!" But how far will she have to go for an opportunity to ride for glory in the Alltech Arena once again?



*Amy Paterson with mom and dad*

# From Ranch Life to Equestrian Paradise

Cindy Olson and Pikko del Rio  
Region 3

After what she described as “the amazing fortune” of representing Region 4 at the US Dressage Finals in both 2013 and 2014, 55-year-old adult amateur and former Western rider Cindy Olson moved herself and her horse halfway across the country to further pursue her dreams. Now, she’s working towards another chance to come to Lexington.

“I got started riding late in life because my younger years were devoted to practicing pediatrics and raising my own children,” Olson explained. “My journey in dressage has only taken place over the past six or seven years. I began riding western on an unruly paint horse when I was 45, and shortly after that I had the opportunity to attend the Alltech/FEI World Equestrian Games and watch Edward Gal ride Totilas to victory. My life hasn’t been the same since.”

Her 12-year-old Hanoverian gelding Pikko del Rio, bred in New Mexico by Horses Unlimited, is a full brother to Olympian Lisa Wilcox’s latest Grand Prix star, Pikko del Cerro. Olson described Rio as a horse that is not only incredibly talented, but also has quite the sense of humor. “Every morning when I arrive at the barn, he pokes his head out of his stall and literally stares me down until I bring him his morning apple, and after we finish riding he gets a handful of frosted oatmeal cookies,” she noted. “If I don’t remember, he patiently reminds me by nudging me, or if that doesn’t work, by pulling the bottom of my shirt out from my pant waist before I realize what is happening. He likes to pick up my whip when it is propped against the fence, hold it in his teeth and taunt me with it. You may not think these are the traits of a champion, but that remains to be seen.”

Together Olson and Rio competed at the inaugural 2013 US Dressage Finals at Training Level, and then returned a year later at Second. “Participating is the US Dressage Finals has been the best



competition experience I have ever had. The venue is horse and rider friendly, the facility is beautiful, and the heated barn was a wonderful haven. I remember every time I saw another competing pair, I would say, ‘that’s a beautiful horse,’ and after I said it so many times, I had to laugh because all the horses were beautiful,” said Olson. “For me, a highlight was to enter the arena with my name and the name of my horse lit up on the scoreboard, which made me feel very proud. But I think Rio would say that the highlight for him was the time he managed to get away from me when I took him out to graze on the cross country course. I watched as he took off running and wasn’t sure I’d ever see him again. He had a nice buck and gallop, but fortunately the green grass was too tempting and he stopped after a short distance to sample it.”

After years of enjoying rural horse ranch life in Nebraska, in 2015 Olson decided to take on a cross-country move to Wellington, FL. What prompted her to make this life-changing decision? “I had the opportunity to haul Rio to Wellington for a couple of weeks for two consecutive winters with my trainer from Nebraska, Jami Kment. After the first trip, I was looking for a winter condo, and after the second, I was hooked and ready to relocate year round,” Olson explained. “Rio’s breeder, Anne Sparks, suggested I

work with Mikala Gundersen who had originally trained him, and fortunately she agreed. Luckily there is a big demand for pediatricians, so I was able to find a job without difficulty and I have been able to work out a flexible schedule so I can ride five mornings a week and then work from noon until 8:00 pm. That’s the only way to beat the blazing summer heat.”

Despite the inevitable disruption and exhaustion of making permanent relocation and settling into a new job and training schedule, Olson and Rio have blossomed in their new environment. “Wellington is horse heaven, and I am still amazed by the world-class equestrian events we are able to attend for no or very little cost; and during the high season, there is a different show we can participate in or attend every single week,” she said. “This is just the latest chapter in our story which has certainly had some twists and turns along the way, including my hospitalization when Rio got excited to play with the other horses and bucked me sky high just a few weeks after I bought him in the summer 2012. But as scary as that was, I didn’t let that stop me, and now we’ve come so far together. We’ve already qualified for the Region 3 Championships in Atlanta at Third Level, so this year I am ready to try for the Finals again. I can’t wait.”

# Nervous Nellies UNITE!

Lysa Hodgson and The Usual Suspect

Region 1

**I**t took a lot of courage for Lysa Hodgson of Aberdeen, NC, to share her Road to the Finals story.

“I’m a chicken about everything, and so is my horse,” she confessed. “To say I have ‘show nerves’ is like saying my fair skin turns a bit pink in the sun, when in reality I burst into flames somewhere around the 10-minute mark. So the idea of sharing my journey with your readers is about as terrifying a thought as I can conjure. At the same time, I don’t think I’m alone in my neuroses and fears. I think there are plenty of us out there who worry about every aspect of showing and traveling with our horses, yet we push forward and slowly grow our comfort zones. Nervous-nelly chicken introverts UNITE!”

All kidding aside, Hodgson may be fearful but she is also determined and persistent – this year will be her fourth attempt to qualify for the US Dressage Finals. Her initial effort was during her first year of showing in 2013, and while she easily earned her qualifying scores she admittedly couldn’t muster the confidence to travel to the Regional Championships. The next year, Hodgson did travel to Regionals and finished in the middle of the pack at Training and First Levels, but just missed the wild card cut-off score. Things looked even more promising in 2015 after she earned the last of her qualifying scores in March. “My plan was then to simply focus on training at home and clinics in preparation for Regionals,” Hodgson explained. “Unfortunately, in July I suffered a treadmill injury. Yes, a treadmill injury, which resulted in my wearing an air-cast for months due to horrible tendonitis in my foot/ankle from over-use while trying to get fit for Regionals.....go figure!”

Treadmill incidents aside, Hodgson describes her home life as “rather boring. I’m a pharmacist at the local hospital, and I work evening shift which allows me to ride and do all of the farm chores in the morning. I have an incredibly supportive horse-show husband Terry who is an Army officer and my complete opposite – nothing fazes this man. You could light his foot on fire and he would stop to make cowboy coffee over the flame before slowly



smothering it with whatever happened to be nearby. We have a small farm which we share with three horses, two mini-donkeys, a dog, and seven cats. My trainer Anne DeKeyser is a wonderful soul who carefully balances my fears with my desire to progress. She’s been with me since I made the conversion to dressage six years ago after spending almost three decades in hunter/jumper land.”

Hodgson’s competition partner is The Usual Suspect or “Bogey”, a 12-year-old Percheron/Thoroughbred cross gelding who was a PMU rescue and later abandoned at a boarding barn due to the owner’s financial situation. “The barn sold him to me for back board payments, so now I’ve had him for six years which is as long as either of us has been attempting dressage. Bogey is a patient partner with a good work ethic, as long as he’s not tired or hungry...just like me. Unfortunately, we both need a hand to hold when things get too exciting. It’s a bit comical if you can get over the fact that I look like I’m about to pass out,” she laughed. “We’re currently schooling Second Level, but really trying to solidify First Level in the ring. I’m stuck in that ‘conscious incompetence’ point in the learning cycle, which is incredibly frustrating, yet offers glimmers of hope that keep enticing me to continue the journey.”

Hodgson plans to compete at this fall’s Region 1 Championships in Training, First Level, and First Level Musical Freestyle in her quest to finally conquer her fears and qualify for the US Dressage Finals. “If you’re looking for someone who can give you guaranteed photo ops with a champion’s sash around her neck, then I’m probably not the best candidate because my expectations are a little lower,” she chuckled. “My goals are to not have a heart attack, keep my trainer from wanting to strangle me, and really try to enjoy the whole process. I also look forward to having the opportunity to empower and embolden other nervous riders with my story of making it happen even when you’re terrified. I swear, this year I’m really going to do it. I might be worried about a million things along the way, but I WILL be in Lexington for my birthday on November 10th. Just have a bottle of wine ready!”



# Ride of Redemption

Amy Paterson and Wies V/D Klumpert

Region 4

After braving the jump to Grand Prix only to be rewarded with a disappointing showing at last year's US Dressage Finals, Region 4's Amy Paterson knew she needed to make some dramatic changes in order to have a chance at redemption in the Alltech Arena. In this case, those dramatic changes included driving across the country to train in the equestrian mecca of Wellington, FL.

"After I came to terms with what happened at the Finals, my husband Doug encouraged me to take Wie to Florida and train there for the winter season. Have I mentioned how wonderful he is?" laughed Paterson. "So the day after Christmas, Doug and I packed up like the Clampetts of the Beverly Hillbillies, loaded Wie in the trailer, and began the 22-hour drive to Wellington."

Escaping the snow in her hometown of Lee's Summit, MO, afforded Paterson the incredible opportunity to work with some of the sport's best riders. "I had the good fortune to work with Allison Brock and also took a few lessons from Shelly Francis," she noted. "I wasn't in full training and only averaged about a lesson a week. But that gave me time to really process what each trainer suggested in order to continue our progress." This proved to be a successful strategy—when Paterson and her Dutch mare rode in three national competitions in Florida, the pair won all but one adult amateur Grand Prix class with scores ranging from 62% to 69%. The debut of their new freestyle earned an impressive 70% score.

"I did not have any coaching at the shows, and did this all by myself—literally—no help at all from set up, tacking up, schooling, just me...alone...with Olympic riders and trainers all around," she explained. "It's not something I would recommend to another adult amateur rider, and not something I would do by myself again, but I have to say I am really proud of what my horse and I accomplished. It was an invaluable experience to be able to show consistently and gain my confidence back after the disappointment of our 2015 show season."

On their way home from Florida, a rejuvenated Paterson and Wies stopped in Georgia where they earned their final qualifying scores for the Great American/USDF Region 4 Championships in



*Reward for their efforts. Wie wearing a blue ribbon from the Global Dressage Festival.*

September, before taking a well-deserved break. But before long, the summer show season was underway and the pair returned to the arena for additional mileage. Shaking off the cobwebs, they cantered down centerline at the KCDS Summer Dressage show in Kansas City on July 17-18. "It was extremely hot for the show that weekend, but I was pleasantly surprised by how much energy my horse had," Paterson said. "In Florida, Ali Brock sent me home with the task of getting Wie more fit, and I think we are getting there! After the issues I had in last year's Finals class, I am much better about running through the test, so didn't feel too rusty at least for the Grand Prix. The freestyle had a couple moments when I felt like I was re-acquainting myself with the music and timing, but overall it felt pretty good. It was wonderful to show at home again, and it was great to have my family, trainer and friends there to cheer me on."

With her final prep competition completed, Paterson now turns her attention to final plans for the Region 4 Championships in Mason City, IA. "I can't fit another recognized show into my schedule between now and Regionals, so my job will be to stay tuned up and run through the tests prior to competing again. I plan on going over to my trainer's barn to run through the tests a few times, maybe go to a schooling show to keep us sharp, and I plan to have my mom video tape me as much as possible. It helps so much to see our training sessions. I am also on the obligatory 'white breeches diet' and starting to watch what I eat, walk and ride more to lose a few pounds. Nothing like wearing white breeches to keep you honest about what you eat, and I have to at least try to look fabulous for the Finals!" she laughed.



*They did not travel light for their trip south to Florida.*

# From Ranch Life to Equestrian Paradise

Cindy Olson and Pikko del Rio  
Region 3

While the summer months are the height of the show season for much of the country, in sweltering south Florida it's a time for a break for most equestrians. But Cindy Olson and her 12-year-old Hanoverian gelding Pikko del Rio don't waste a minute – they have their sights set on cooler days at November's US Dressage Finals, and in the meantime have devoted their efforts towards training.

“In the summer, training is adjusted to take the Florida heat and humidity into account. It is easy to get dehydrated, and some days it feels like I am participating in an episode of Equestrian Survivor: whoever passes out and falls off their horse first gets kicked out of the village,” laughed Olson. “I stuff cool packs in my helmet and my pockets to cool off, and I drink Pedialyte. Most weeks we still ride five times per week with one day off and one day hacking out. The main difference is that the intervals we ride have to be shorter, and we have to take an extra break. The horses are offered water with



Cindy Olson the day she earned her Bronze Medal at Global Dressage last season.



Cindy Olson (middle) braving the Florida summer heat with trainer Chenett Chemnitz (right) and assistant trainer Alex Garrett.

molasses to encourage them to drink more.

“We have to keep an eye on Rio. If the humidity is too high or it is too hot, we have to wrap things up early,” Olson continued. “We attempted to go to the show and had to scratch because the heat index was 106. I was woozy and I could tell it was making Rio sluggish. I'm disappointed but we'll keep cleaning up our Third Level test and look forward to the next competition at the Jim Brandon Equestrian Center this fall.”

For the past year and a half Olson has worked with Mikala Gundersen in Wellington, and during summers when Gundersen is competing in Europe, Chenett Chemnitz takes over training duties. “Mikala teaches classic dressage technique and always considers the horse first. In training, if there is a problem, it is always considered the rider's problem, not the horse's,” Olson explained. “When I first arrived, I had to deconstruct my riding technique, using lunge lessons and riding without stirrups. I have continued to take Pilates classes, and as my core

strength developed, I have been able to ride with my leg off and apply leg more effectively, and to be more steady and sensitive with my hands. That being said, we still have a long way to go. I've had to learn how to trust my horse and my riding ability, so that I do not block his lovely gaits. At the current moment, as we prepare to compete at Third Level at Regionals, our focus for this summer has been on collection.”

But it's not all about sweating it out in the ring for Olson and Rio. Their weekly hacks on miles of trails along the canals of Wellington include sightings of interesting waterfowl and an occasional alligator. If the weather is uncooperative, Rio utilizes a covered treadmill for exercise. In contrast to her former home in rural Nebraska, Olson also appreciates the many resources readily available to equestrians in Wellington. “We have all amenities and a wide variety of equine experts are right here, from the grooms and trainers, to the farrier and the vet, the saddle specialist and massage therapist. “For instance, Rio has a high wither and

if the front of the saddle has fallen, he starts to dip his shoulder. I wasn't able to determine what his problem was until I moved to Wellington. Now with the help of Bernardo Vergara of TrustIn Saddlery, I appreciate the importance of a well-fit, well-maintained saddle. It was pretty dramatic to see the issue disappear instantly when I had the new saddle, and a great relief that my horse didn't have a soundness problem or a rider problem."

Florida's tropical climate also dictates special attention on the

grooming front. "Down here, grooms and trainers are always on the lookout for any nicks or scratches," Olson explained. "If discovered, wounds are tended to meticulously so that summer sores aren't able to set in. The flies lay larvae in the wounds and cause sores which are difficult to heal. We use a product called Heel Guard to help wounds heal quickly. Horses are washed almost every day, often with anti-fungal shampoo, and they have fans placed around them to dry before they are

put in stalls. So basically Rio usually gets a mini equine spa treatment daily, plus standing on the Thera-Plate after a workout while he dries. He's better taken care of than I am!"

In our next installment, see if Olson's and Rio's hard work pay off as they head to the Great American/USDF Region 3 Championship in Atlanta and continue their quest for an invitation to the US Dressage Finals!

## Nervous Nellies UNITE!

Lysa Hodgson and The Usual Suspect  
Region 1

Many equestrians suffer from some degree of anxiety related to riding and showing, and this is no different for Lysa Hodgson. "I struggle with all kinds of fears when it comes to competing, including of course concerns for my physical safety, especially the older I get and the more financial responsibility I have. In the past, I've read non-horse self-help books about dealing with anxiety and they always say something like, 'imagine the worst case scenario....take it to its final conclusion' and I think to myself, 'I'm dead or paralyzed and the horses are at the slaughter house....who writes this stuff?? I don't feel any less anxious!" she laughed. "I've tried a lot of things over the years ranging from meditation, coloring books, sports psychology help, breathing techniques, etc. etc. etc. Sometimes I think it helps because I can find that 'zone' and 'stay in my bubble', but other times I'm a complete wreck. I feel like it's a constant process of moving forward, falling back, and then trudging forward again."

Another common concern that so many riders can relate to is a fear of failure or of disappointing trainers, family, horses or themselves. But conversely, Hodgson also admits to one more unlikely fear: of success. "Sometimes it's easier for an introvert when you DON'T do well because then there's no attention on you, no expectations, and you can just hide in the crowd," she explained. "For instance, it's much easier to cheer on all of my friends and their successes while telling myself I did great just for participating, than it is for me to walk up on stage and accept a Horse of the Year award at our GMO's awards banquet, even though I'm proud of our hard work. So while I'm somewhat embarrassed to be showing at Training and First Level again this year, we have no business showing any higher. I can't sit the trot and Bogey struggles with lengthening, so the work continues." Hodgson says keeping perspective is important. "When I start to throw myself a



Lysa and her horse *The Usual Suspect* along with her husband Terry.

pity party over the glacial pace of our advancement, I have to stop and remind myself that it's a true First World problem."

On top of everyday fears, many riders add on a hearty serving of insecurity in their pursuit of the seemingly glamorous sport of dressage. "My horse and I don't 'look' like your typical dressage dream team," Hodgson admitted. "Let's face it, I don't look good in white breeches and Bogey clearly isn't a well-bred dressage mount—he's a '6' mover, maybe a '7' if the judge just finished lunch that included wine, and a '5' if the wine was cheap. I really question my sanity when we get to a big show like Regional Championships where we stick out like a sore thumb. But that's when I try to remind myself that every person at the show is on their own personal journey with their own

personal limitations and roadblocks, and their own personal history of successes and failures. Bogey and I are simply writing our next chapter just like everybody else, and we're nowhere near the end of the story."

Hodgson's and Bogey's story and their Road to the 2016 Finals continues thanks in part to their having eight USEF-licensed/USDF-recognized competitions within 20 minutes of their farm, and for them, more is definitely better. "For us nervous types, I think repetition until something is boring is a very important concept," said Hodgson. "It's hard to replicate all the scary things about a show without actually going to a show. I can turn down centerline a million times at home, but we all know it's completely different when someone's kid is playing on the bleachers, the wind is howling, the loud speakers are crackling, there's a loose horse, you don't like three of your braids, the person in front of you just scratched and the judge is hungry! That kind of experience and pressure only comes from competing in a show environment, so my goal is to get as many trips down centerline under those conditions as I can afford. Having so many shows close to home helps eliminate costs like hotel rooms, farm sitters and missed work."

So far in 2016, the cautious pair have competed at four shows which Hodgson classified as successful by virtue of the fact that "we stayed in the ring, finished with a score, not a letter, and generally left feeling positive about the experience," she

chuckled. "A recent show was Rise N Shine in Pinehurst, which is part of a fun series where classes only run until noon because of our hot summer weather. My First Level Test 3 scores were 65.5% for second place and 67.2% for first place, so I was very pleased even though we had all the usual comments of 'braced', 'needs longer strides', 'more ground cover,' etc. Bogey was well-behaved and I didn't faint, so I put that in the win category." When her regular trainer Anne DeKeyser isn't available to travel to shows, Hodgson credits her "adopted trainer" Briana Atwell for helping make the show experience a (mostly) positive one. "I really appreciate all of her guidance and calming wisdom. She's held my hand and Bogey's hoof through many terrifying moments," she added.

For the first year, Hodgson and her mount are pushing their comfort zones with riding a freestyle, with the big show debut held in May. "I was incredibly nervous, and Bogey isn't a fan of loud sudden noises so when it came to showtime, I wasn't sure how he would do with booming music coming out of the loudspeakers," she remembered. "We trotted around the ring, checked in with the judge and scribe, and I positioned Bogey in our predetermined perfect starting spot. I raised my hand like all those riders I've watched on YouTube, and I heard the announcer say 'Your music is playing,' and sure enough our music started. As we trotted along, a big smile spread across my face...until I turned down centerline and saw the judge literally leap from the judge's box while wildly waving papers in her hand. I couldn't tell if she was battling an army of angry wasps or if I had done something wrong. And then I realized that she never rang the bell. I wanted to crawl under the nearest rock I could find. But it all turned out fine - we started over and had only one minor almost-bolting episode, but nothing we couldn't handle."

Despite the rocky start, both horse and rider have since become more comfortable with their performance and are hoping to qualify for the Finals in their First Level Freestyle division. "I'm learning that different judges will feel differently about my music and choreography, and that's okay," said Hodgson. "We still have lots of little bobbles and timing issues to clean up, not to mention the general work of trying to unclench my hands, thighs and butt cheeks, but I have to say I'm enjoying the whole freestyle process." They won both freestyle classes at July's Rise N Shine show with scores of 65.500% and 68.300%. In early August, the pair earned two more wins and their first freestyle score over 70% while having to rebound from the horror of watching as the previous rider was bucked off, kicked in the head and carried off in an ambulance. "As soon as the ambulance left I had to go in the ring," said Hodgson. "I walked down to check-in with the judge and she was clearly able to see that I was ghost-white and not doing well, but she simply said, 'Now is the time to practice focusing.' I knew she was right. There was a time not too long ago that Bogey could have easily added to the chaos and danger in that situation, but he was rock solid and I'm so grateful for that. And as desperately as I wanted to scratch at that point, it wouldn't have helped anything. We just needed to get in there and do it. So we did, and I'm super proud of both of us."



*Lysa with her trainer Anne*

# Ride of Redemption

Amy Paterson and Wies V/D Klumpert  
Region 4

As Amy Paterson set out on her six-hour trek to Mason City, IA, for the Great American Insurance Group/USDF Region 4 Championships on September 8-11, all she could see were ominous skies on the horizon. News from Paterson's trainer Melissa Allen, who was already at the show, wasn't any more promising: heavy rain had already forced cancellation of part of the show. But the reassuring voice of Siri coming through Paterson's iPhone promised that sunshine would make a triumphant return for the weekend, so Paterson pressed on. She had no choice, since competing at Regionals was Paterson's only chance to earn an invitation to return to the US Dressage Finals in Kentucky with her Dutch mare Wies V/D Klumpert.

Paterson was traveling to Iowa with her mother Angela for support since her husband Doug was away. "Doug 'accidentally' scheduled his annual guy's weekend over Regionals so he wasn't able to make the trip to cheer me on," she laughed. "But before he left, I was afraid he'd jinxed me: once he found out I was the only Adult Amateur competing in the championship Grand Prix classes, he started to say I was a lock for Kentucky. Fortunately, I stopped him before he opened Pandora's Box and tempted fate! These are horses after all, and there is never any guarantee Murphy's Law won't rear its ugly head and prevent us from qualifying for Finals!"

Paterson wasn't taking any chances. With people stationed around the competition arena to remind her to drop her whip and to attend the awards ceremony on time, she avoided any eliminations. Both Paterson and her mount stayed healthy and sound ("I even fit into my white breeches, which is always a success!"), and the weather did not wreck any further havoc on the show schedule. In fact, Siri did not lie as by the time Paterson rode her Grand Prix Freestyle on Saturday afternoon, the weather was truly beautiful and the rings had mostly dried out, setting the stage for Paterson's big moment. "Wie was really with me during my ride, and we hit almost all of our marks with the music (Rhianna's 'Diamonds' and Adele's 'Set Fire to the Rain')," said Paterson. "I was so flattered when a rider came up to me and said our ride was inspirational! I don't think I did much inspiring of people last year when I showed, so that was really nice to hear! When a freestyle works, people really feel it – it's what makes them so special." Paterson



*Amy and her mom*

*Amy with her trainer, Melissa Allen*





and her mount earned a 70.375% for first place in the class, successfully punching their first ticket to Kentucky.

Sunday dawned spectacularly for Paterson's second class, the Grand Prix Adult Amateur Region 4 Championship. With Wie giving Paterson the feeling she was looking for in the warm-up, she was antsy to get in the arena before her mare's "balloon of good energy" deflated. "I didn't want to leave anything in the warm-up, but I shouldn't have worried," Paterson explained. "Not only did our balloon not deflate, but a procession in honor of September 11th consisting of emergency first responder vehicles with sirens fully blaring and what must have been about a hundred motorcycles roared down the busy street next to the show grounds during my test. As I'm going down centerline to the sound of sirens and roaring motorcycles, all I could think of was that I was so glad I was riding the trained 13-year-old version of Wie and not the wild six-year-old model!" Despite the distraction, the pair persevered and Paterson came out of the ring with a big smile on her face, with the "best feeling in a test I have ever had on her – I felt like it was a 90%!" The official recorded score which took into account some minor mistakes made was 67.750%, good enough for another win and second consecutive Finals invitation.

Interestingly, Paterson reported that both of her classes were judged by Kristi Wysocki and Natalie Lamping, who between the two of them have judged her at a championship show a total of nine times throughout the years. "Kristi saw us at our very first outing eight years ago at a local breed show where Wie almost bucked me off while schooling during the lunch break," Paterson remembered. "They are judges I greatly respect, and I knew they would give me a true barometer of where we are in our training – but kind of like asking my mom if she likes your haircut, you better be ready for a true answer! But Kristi wrote on my Grand Prix test that it has been an honor to watch the development of Wie through the years. Her comment brought tears to my eyes, and has made me reflect on the amazing journey I have been on with this horse."

Now in post-championship celebration mode, Paterson is also taking a small break from the saddle – and her diet ("I don't have to wear white breeches again for two months, so for now I am eating pizza!"). But she needs no reminder to keep her game face on and an eye on her goal: a good showing at



*Amy and Kristi Wysocki*

the Finals. "I just want to come out of the Alltech Arena this time with a smile on my face knowing I had done the best I could do," Paterson said. "That will be the best 'ribbon' of all." Will Paterson achieve her goal with a ride of redemption at the Finals? Be sure to watch all of USDF's coverage of the US Dressage Finals presented by Adequan® to find out!

# From Ranch Life to Equestrian Paradise

Cindy Olson and Pikko del Rio

Region 3

The week before their biggest show of the year, pediatrician Cindy Olson and her 12-year-old Hanoverian gelding Pikko del Rio weren't thinking much about dressage. They were trying to survive the wrath of Hurricane Matthew as the Category 4 storm barreled towards their home in Wellington, FL.

Thankfully the winter equestrian paradise was spared the worst of the storm, and as the rain clouds parted the pair began their 10-hour journey to Conyers, GA, to join 510 other competitors for the Great American/USDF Region 3 Championships. Together Olson and Rio competed at the inaugural 2013 US Dressage Finals at Training Level and then returned a year later at Second,

and after a summer devoted to training were now hoping to earn one of the final group of invitations for Kentucky, this time at Third Level.

"The venue at the Georgia International Horse Park was lovely, and the organizers and volunteers of the show deserve a big thanks for all of their efforts," said Olson. "It was a picture perfect few days and I did remember to take a moment to look around and enjoy the moment. Despite the long trip and our harrowing week leading up to the show, Rio was happy and energetic and he behaved perfectly at the show."

On Thursday the pair enjoyed a solid performance in their Third Level warm-up test, followed by their Third Level

Adult Amateur Championship Test on Friday. "We rode a clean test and received a 61.7% score, placing somewhere in the middle of the pack of about 35 riders," Olson explained. "So unfortunately we did not qualify for the Finals this time, but I was very happy with our test and all the progress we are making."

Although disappointed to not be returning to Lexington this year, Olson is already looking forward to trying again in 2017. "Now I have my qualifying scores for next year's Regional Championships which will be closer to home in Wellington, so I'm excited to try for the Finals again. It's been a lot of fun sharing my story and I wish everyone best of luck in Kentucky this year!"



*Cindy Olson competes in Conyers, GA.*

# Nervous Nellies UNITE!

Lysa Hodgson and The Usual Suspect  
Region 1

After months of preparation, anxiety, and perseverance, Lysa Hodgson of Aberdeen, NC, and her PMU rescue The Usual Suspect (“Bogey”) were finally on their way to the Great American Insurance Group/USDF Region 1 Championships, held September 15-18. “I always feel a little out of place with Bogey at big shows, but we had been working hard and we had every right to be there along with everyone else,” said Hodgson. “As intimidating as they can be, I also find these shows to be inspiring. There are lots of big names running around and it’s always interesting to see how they operate their barns and school their horses. I gain more respect for some and lose respect for others based on their behind-the-scenes activities, but in general it’s an exciting environment and I go home determined to double my efforts.”

While Hodgson was off to a good start in that she was already familiar with the Senator Bob Martin Eastern Ag Center in Williamston, NC, and felt comfortable showing there, she still had plenty of other things to be anxious about. “My concerns for this show in particular were two-fold: we had to arrive on Wednesday so we could compete in a practice freestyle test on Thursday, and then we had championship classes on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. That’s five days away from home and five days in a stall for Bogey who is used to having 24/7 access to his pasture, not to mention that he’s so big he barely fits in the stalls. But secondly, we had to ride in the dreaded indoor, where we have not had good experiences in the past!”

Hodgson’s neighbor, Heather Mehal of Big Dog Stables, was at the show for coaching until Saturday, and she helped keep both Hodgson and Bogey focused on the task at hand. “Bogey can be very explosive and anxious in the warm-up, yet he seems to attract the badly behaving youngsters, the FEI horse doing exuberant tempi’s towards us, and someone always feels the



*Lysa and her horse The Usual Suspect with their fifth place ribbon.*

need to practice their medium canter coming up behind us. But thank goodness Wednesday’s schooling ride, with Heather coaching, was uneventful.”

But on Thursday the pair wasn’t so lucky, and found themselves having to contend with an issue that so many competitors have to try to find a way to cope with at shows: rude behavior in the warm-up. “We were getting ready for our



*Lysa and her horse competing at the Great American Insurance Group/USDF Region 1 Championships  
Photo by High Time Photography*

practice freestyle test in the indoor, and I was a nervous wreck,” Hodgson explained. “We had to warm-up in one of the open schooling rings as opposed to the more controlled and less populated championship warm-up rings. I was clearly a nervous adult amateur about to show, riding an obviously anxious horse with a red ribbon in his tail. At first when I saw only one other rider out there, I thought it was my lucky day. This rider was a professional dressed in schooling attire, and it’s a large warm up ring, so I thought it would be perfect. I would hug my little 15-meter circle in the corner and he could have the other huge part of the ring. But nope. I finally had to say something when he kept cantering very close up behind Bogey, who was getting increasingly frazzled.

“Me: Hi, my horse can be really explosive in the warm-up.

“Pro: Oh, you don’t know explosive!

“Me: Great! Then I’ll just stay down in this little corner and you can have the rest, sound good?

“Pro: No, I’ll be using the whole ring!

“And he did, and I was really disappointed because it was just blatantly rude and unsportsmanlike. I completely understand that my anxiety is not his problem, but it wouldn’t have killed him to keep a little distance from us for 10 minutes. We went in the scary indoor and had a terrible test. But we survived.”



*Lysa starting her training level test*



*Lysa and her horse The Usual Suspect taking a victory lap.  
Photo by High Time Photography*

Following the disastrous start, now Hodgson had to face her first Regional Championship freestyle championship ride on Friday. She had two choices: be filled with pure dread, or take the unusual stance (for her) of being MORE confident because she and Bogey had survived the previous day’s debacle. “I took the bull by the horns and decided to be confident,” she explained. “The warm-up was just fine, and everyone played nice and genuinely wanted to see each other do well. I’ve never actually been able to keep my brain together in that indoor arena in the past – it usually turns to mush and I stop riding and stop thinking and I generally fall apart. But not this time! I rode that horse of mine and he stepped up and made it happen! I was so proud of us!”

Hodgson’s new “can-do” attitude paid off. Competing in the combined First Level Freestyle division (including Open riders, Adult Amateurs, and Juniors/Young Riders), the pair not only earned their very first Regional Championship ribbon for fifth place, but their 68.680% score easily earned them a wild card invitation for the US Dressage Finals. “We finally did it! We’re going to Kentucky!” she exclaimed. “The only downside was I then had to do an awards ceremony....in the indoor....with clapping and loud music and other horses. Yes, I know you don’t HAVE to do the awards ceremony if you get permission ahead of time to miss it,



*Bogey is on his way to Kentucky!*

but I promised myself that if ever had the opportunity I would do it. Heather walked with me and stood there until it was time for the victory lap, and Bogey was awesome! He really took care of me.”

Saturday was the pair’s Training Level Adult Amateur Championship, and Hodgson couldn’t help but be impressed by what she saw. “There were some phenomenal horses in that ring! I almost turned around and asked where the Intro classes were being held,” she laughed. “We put in an accurate but lackluster test as Bogey was feeling the effects of what was then our fourth day of being at the show.” Hodgson didn’t hold out much hope, but not only was she surprised to see the results listing her as placing sixth in the huge class, but also earning another wild card score for the Finals. Her confidence was growing. “Of course, this accomplishment meant another awards ceremony, but this time I felt much better about the whole thing and Bogey knew the deal, so we did great,” she said.

By Sunday, many competitors had packed up to head home, and Hodgson longed to do the same but one more championship First Level test awaited. “By now I was alone with only my husband to help me,” she explained. “Terry’s a great guy, but he’s not a horse person and certainly not a coach. I also knew I had a very tired horse and that didn’t bode well for our performance. But at the same time, it goes back to the idea of doing something until it’s boring or ho-hum, instead of scary, so I needed to give it a try. We were in a good position because we were already

going to the Finals, and if Bogey was tired he was more likely to behave even if his performance would be questionable.

“Since I didn’t have a coach now either, my husband strapped on a head-set and just kept repeating things he heard other trainers say to their students,” she continued. “That made me laugh and relax. Bogey actually felt pretty good in the warm-up, although the test itself wasn’t pretty. He ended up having a bolt/spook

episode when one of the maintenance guys made a loud noise just outside the ring, but to Bogey’s credit, there was a lot of general commotion going on and he handled 99% of it really well. I was also proud of my reaction to his exuberance and my determination to just keep riding. We finished with a 62.5% which was disappointing, but at least it was high enough to count as a qualifying score for next year’s Regionals.”

By the end, Hodgson’s normally difficult-to-load horse practically jumped on the trailer to go home and enjoy a roll in his sand pit and sprawl out to sleep that night. “I almost hate to break it to him that because he did so well he ‘gets’ to go on a long trailer ride, compete in a huge new environment, sleep in a tiny stall, and then go for another long trailer ride home. It still hasn’t sunk in that we actually did it, but I have officially entered the show, made hotel reservations, and secured time off from work. The rest of the details I’ll have to work out in the coming weeks, but for now I just have to say that I’m proud to represent the ‘little people’ of our sport competing on a rescued draft cross, riding in a pasture with uneven ground, and training with people nobody has ever heard of....but still earning our ticket to Kentucky!”

Stay tuned to USDF’s coverage of the US Dressage Finals presented by Adequan® to discover if Hodgson and Bogey will finally conquer their fears as they compete for the first time on the national stage in Lexington!

# The Final chapter

Reprinted from *YourDressage*, November 2016

*Although we finished our stories following these three riders through their attempt at qualifying and going to the 2016 US Dressage Finals presented by Adequan® at the Kentucky Horse Park we thought we would find out what happened to our riders. We already know from our last issue that Cindy Olson did not qualify, but what happened with our other two riders, Amy Paterson and Lysa Hodgson? Here are the rest of their final stories.*

## Ride of Redemption

Amy Paterson and Wies V/D Klumpert

Region 4

After riding the equestrian roller coaster of being crowned 2014 Intermediate B Adult Amateur Champion at the US Dressage Finals presented by Adequan®, to having the worst test of her career just a year later, it looked like Amy Paterson's mission to return to Kentucky for a ride of redemption with her Dutch mare Wies V/D Klumpert (or "Wie") was almost a foregone conclusion. The pair had earned two victories at the Grand Prix level at the Great American/USDF Region 4 Championship, entries had been submitted, travel arrangements made, and Paterson couldn't wait to get back in the Alltech Arena for another shot at glory.

But horses have a way of humbling us all. In the final days leading up to the Finals, a quick check of online day sheets indicated a letter no one wanted to see next to Paterson's name. "If you looked up my name on the US Dressage Finals website for ride times, you would find it...with a big fat 'S' next to it for scratch," she explained. "I managed to keep Pandora in its box through Regionals, but an ill-timed and placed kick by Wie in her literally padded stall left her with a sore hind ankle. So instead of celebrating in Lexington, we are on day 40 of tack walking. Thankfully the last vet check was encouraging, and we should be trotting by December and back to full work in January."

Horsemen and women must regularly face disappointment in sharing their lives with horses, but the dramatic change in fortune

hit Paterson harder than expected. "At first I surprised myself by being pretty stoic when it became obvious she wouldn't be ready in time for Finals," she said. "However, the week of Finals was a different story. My husband deserves sainthood – I would spontaneously break out into tears and he would immediately hug me and say, 'what can I do to help?' Sniff, sniff and I would feel better



again until the next Facebook memory popped up with my posts from the 2014 and 2015 US Dressage Finals...boo hoo...hug hug...sniff sniff....and I'm off again. For some people it's wine; for others it's a long walk on the beach; but for me it's pizza. I watched the USEF Network live feed of 'my' Adult Amateur Grand Prix class on Friday and drowned my sorrows in pepperoni pizza."

In the grand scheme of things, Paterson admitted that missing a horse show is nothing but a minor speed bump, and all that matters is that her horse is on the mend. "However, the US Dressage Finals are truly special," she continued. "Even if it is as a volunteer/spectator, I am not going to miss that show again. Between my 'boo hoo' moments, I really enjoyed all the coverage and reading the back stories behind the participants. This show really means a lot to so many people.

"Riders, you have heard this before, but take it from me: if you and your horse are healthy and sound, take advantage of every moment and opportunity you have. It all can change so quickly. I am looking forward to next year and will give Wie plenty of time to heal and leg back up. I am lucky enough to have her little four-year-old sister Hibiscus (by Charmeur out of Sarina V/d Klumpert), and who knows...maybe I will be lucky enough to have both girls at Finals next year!"

# Nervous Nellies UNITE!

Lysa Hodgson and The Usual Suspect  
Region 1

Of the three amazing riders profiled in this inaugural Road to the Finals series for *YourDressage*, perhaps the competitor who believed she had the smallest chance of actually making it to Lexington was Lysa Hodgson of Aberdeen, NC and her PMU rescue The Usual Suspect (“Bogey”). But ultimately, she would be the only one to trot down centerline at the world-renowned Kentucky Horse Park on a crisp November morning. But first she had to drive all day to get there – and as any competitor knows, road trips can be just as nerve-wracking as waiting for the judge’s bell to ring.

Hodgson admitted that the week leading up to her departure was incredibly stressful between working, packing, cleaning and worrying. “I kept waiting for that ‘one thing’ to happen that would keep us from leaving,” she explained. “Would something happen to the truck or trailer? Would Bogey get an abscess or hurt himself out in the pasture? I thought that ‘one thing’ did happen when my 24-year-old retired mare decided to use my right foot as a launching pad when something startled her just days before we left. But thankfully no – my foot wasn’t broken, and since I already have to wear a compression sleeve on that foot as a leftover from the treadmill incident (Ed. Note: see the August issue to read more), so that kept the swelling down. It looked like if something was going to stop this adventure it was going to have to happen on the road.”

The drive from North Carolina to central Kentucky may be scenic, but it’s no fun when pulling a horse trailer. “I was terrified,” confessed Hodgson. “Not only were we driving through the mountains, but I was letting my husband drive the truck and trailer, which is something I never do. Unfortunately, I didn’t have a choice – I suffer from vertigo and because I knew the twisting, turning, steep grades and pressure changes would potentially cause an attack, I couldn’t take that risk. I realize that a nine-hour drive is very reasonable compared to what many competitors faced, and the mountains we have are nothing compared to any mountain range out West, but for me this was a BIG deal. In the end, I had to close my eyes several times and I made a lot of big gasps, but the trip was uneventful. Terry did a great job driving, and it also helped that we had my neighbor, Heather Mehal and her husband Don, following us in their truck. I had faith that between four adults and two trucks, we could handle one horse and one trailer.”

Hodgson was pleased to see that when the team arrived at the Kentucky Horse Park on Thursday, Bogey walked off the trailer and settled right in. This being her first time to the facility, she couldn’t help but be impressed. “The venue is spectacular. We have the Tryon International Equestrian Center close to home in North Carolina, and it’s also a phenomenal



Lysa riding her horse, *The Usual Suspect*, at the Finals. Photo by Kathy Lanham

facility, but the Kentucky Horse Park just oozes an old-school royalty type feel. They’ve clearly ‘been there, done that’ when it comes to hosting world-class competitions. Everything was beautifully done. All of the officials and volunteers knew what they were doing and what was going on, the footing was always perfect, and the rings ran on schedule.

“I was lucky to be stabled in the heated Alltech barns, which were a saving grace when it was in the 20’s outside and I had to bathe and braid,” she continued. “I brought so many types of blankets for Bogey not knowing what to expect, but I ended up leaving him naked every night because it was so warm in the



Lysa and her husband Terry. Photo by Kathy Lanham



*Lysa snapped a photo of Bogey “laughing” at Terry*

barn with the doors closed. But honestly, if I get to come back in the future, I’m not sure what I will do in terms of stabling. I definitely wanted the full experience this first time and that meant being in the Alltech barns and close to all of the action in the Alltech arena. However, all of the lower level classes are held in the rings up the hill, much closer to the shed row barns, and the small rentable round-pen paddocks are up there as well, something Bogey would have really appreciated. The shed-row barns are also right beside part of the cross-country course, so there is easy access to acres and acres of grazing. While the Alltech barns are just across from the same grazing area, you have to walk up a paved hill, and across and down a paved road. The shed-row barns really limit the amount of walking you have to do on pavement although they don’t completely eliminate it. I don’t think that’s a big deal if your horse is good, but for the explosive types like Bogey the pavement was very nerve-wracking. On the other hand, the Alltech barns offer heated bathrooms, as opposed to a port-a-potty for the shed-row barns. They also had real wash-racks with warm water, as opposed to just a fence to hitch up to and cold water for bathing. All of the barns have paved floors, so stall mats were definitely needed,” she advised.

On Friday, it was time to get back in the saddle for the pair’s first day of schooling. By this time, the show was well underway with six competition rings running concurrently, and even with the expansiveness of the facility, the grounds were buzzing with activity. “There were limited open schooling

areas, mostly just a large covered ring on the other side of the competition area, and I HATE riding in covered/indoor rings,” said Hodgson. “To top it off, that morning Bogey was incredibly explosive. Just getting across the pavement to the lunging area was a feat. I couldn’t even handle him myself. Heather is much taller than me and that really helps when hand walking a very large, badly behaving horse. It also helped that she wasn’t worried about the pavement – it was his job to stay on his feet, not hers. We put 30,000 steps on our Fit-Bits that day walking him back and forth, and back and forth, until he finally settled down. Even though I’ll admit I was scared, my ride in the covered proved to be uneventful. I couldn’t get up the courage to canter, but there were no ‘episodes’ and we all considered it a success. In hindsight, I’m so glad we decided to arrive on Thursday even though my championship rides weren’t until Sunday because it gave us a good chance to see everything and get him settled.”

Saturday dawned frosty but sunny for Hodgson’s first day of competition in a warm-up Training Level Test 3 class, part of the Dressage in the Bluegrass open show running in conjunction with the Finals. “It was more for my own nerves than anything else,” she laughed. “Heather took us back to the covered arena since he’d been in there the day before, and then to the designated warm-up area for that ring. I was so proud of both of us! The warm-up went great even though there were lots of other horses in the rings, and he was very relaxed and at ease with everything. The test itself was fine – it wasn’t spectacular, but I was happy to have a safe positive ride. I was thrilled later on when I found out how well we did – third out of 17 with a 68.400%!”

But on the big day, their newfound momentum fell a little flat. “Sunday morning I could tell Bogey was very tired – he didn’t



*Lysa and Bogey. Photo by Kathy Lanham*





*Lysa and Bogey on day three of finals, preparing for their freestyle*

need any lunging, he didn't react to the slamming port-a-potty doors or zooming golf carts, and he didn't jump at the horses acting up as he passed the lunge area," Hodgson remembered. "He definitely peaked on Saturday, but on the other hand I felt safe, and it was such a good feeling. He warmed-up beautifully, but unfortunately in our Training Level Adult Amateur Championship he really wanted to stop to use the bathroom instead of pick up the canter in the second corner. That didn't go so well and it definitely affected the rest of our test because we finished dead last with a 62.650%....almost the same score we received when we did our very first Training Level test years ago. You can't get any lower than dead last at Training Level.

"Our First Level Freestyle Adult Amateur Championship class was a little more than an hour later in a different ring with a different warm-up area, but I still had my safe tired horse," she continued. "Surprisingly, we ended up way ahead of our music – I'm not sure if it was the amazing footing pushing him along or if he was just that tired and heavy that we were freight-training our way through the test. We fared slightly better, placing 17th out of 24 entries with a 63%. Regardless, it wasn't the test I wanted, but it certainly wasn't the worst we could have done. And we survived!"

Even with a disappointing final placing, Hodgson emphasized that she accomplished her goals. "We arrived safely. We completed



our tests. We finished with a number, not a letter. Nobody died. We had fun, we made new friends, and we made it home safely," she noted. "While the championship rides were far from our best performances, I had a horse who was relaxed in the warm-up rings and well behaved in the show ring. He wasn't fazed by all of the beautiful flower arrangements around the rings or the large glassed-in judge's booths. He didn't even notice the large electronic leader board, something neither of us has ever seen before in a ring. He was super tired, but he was so well behaved for those rides without even a hint of squealing, bucking or bolting. It makes me want to go back and try even harder next time.

"The whole experience was so emotional, way more emotionally draining than I expected. We had so many ups and downs over that five-day period," Hodgson continued. "I was so worried about the drive, and then I didn't even want to ride at all on Friday because of Bogey's antics. I was honestly happy that we made it safely and was seriously considering just going home without competing. Then to have a great result on Saturday in preparation for the big day, only to have that big day be anti-climactic and a little disappointing. However, it was only disappointing because I actually rode and survived and he was well-behaved, and I know we could have done better. If he had been acting up and bolting and bucking, I would have been thrilled just to have stayed on and in the ring.



"I feel like we just returned from venturing out into a bigger world and we're better for it, even if it was terrifying at times. I want to take a little of that new found bravery and try to apply it our everyday life here on the farm. Besides, we've already been to the Finals so if something happens while pushing boundaries at home....oh well! No one can ever take away our Finals experience. We finally made it thanks to a huge team effort and a lot of patience and perseverance. The whole thing was an amazing experience, and I'm still in awe that it actually happened. I'm not sure I will ever be able to repeat it, but at least we can 'check the box' that we've done it once!"

Well done, Lysa and Bogey. And we look forward to seeing you next year. - JMK

# Mark Your Calendars...



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