



Isabell Werth Competes and Clinics in Wellington

By Caryn Vesperman

At the end of February, Isabell Werth flew to Wellington, FL to compete and give a mini clinic. I was fortunate enough to be able to scribe at E for some of the competition, so got to see my dressage icon up close. Isabell is the most decorated dressage rider in Olympic history (not to mention her world records, European championship titles and World Cup wins). Currently she has 14 medals across seven Olympics, including eight Gold medals, going back to 1992. It's her longevity in this sport (starting at age 5!), and the fact that she has accomplished so much on many different horses, that illustrates she is not a "one hit wonder."

The Queen of Dressage Competes—Up Close

One thing about the Global Dressage complex is that spectators sit close to the action. Isabell had intended to fly her horse, Quantaz (Quaterback x Hohenstein) to Wellington, but due to a slight injury, she instead brought the 11-year-old Oldenburg gelding, Special Blend (Sezuan 2 x HW's Hurrikan x Blue Hors Hotline), a horse borrowed from a student.

At the competition, in front of a packed stadium, Isabell pulled off the championship win in the Grand Prix to qualify for the Friday freestyle class, where she also rode away as champion. Isabel, the No. 2 ranked rider in the world, scored 73.13% in the Grand Prix test (even though one of Special Blend's front shoes went flying off—clearly visible to the audience and on video) and 82.66% in the freestyle.

The Queen of Dressage Teaches —Again, Up Close

At the impressive Helgstrand Farm, an international training and sales operation, Isabell rode several horses and taught a few riders as well. She made riding look so easy, even on horses she had only been on once before.

The first horse Isabell rode was New Rock by Indian Rock (World Cup Silver medalist in Dallas/Ft. Worth). She worked him in the trot, focusing in the beginning on shoulder-in, reminding us that you use the inside leg to the outside rein, being careful not to over bend the neck so the horse falls through through the outside shoulder. "The shoulder-in is the mother of all exercises," she explained.

From shoulder-in she moved to half-pass. She said it is essential that the rider makes sure the horse first has a



Isabell and So Perfect in the awards ceremony at the Global Dressage Festival. The two won the Grand Prix and the Grand Prix Freestyle classes.

free shoulder. "The inside rein should lead the horse and should not cross the neck." She also said that sometimes you have to leg yield in the opposite direction to keep the horse from falling in the direction he's moving and improve balance. Isabell suggested that if you feel you need more freedom in the half-pass, go a little more forward versus sideways. The point was that sometimes you have to change your plans to address the issues you're feeling and not continue in the movement just because you started it.

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Also important is contact. “The right connection is the key to everything,” she said. “Too light in your hands can be as bad as too heavy.”

To move on from what Isabell calls “the pony trot” (short and quick strides), she suggests focusing on cadence. (Cadence is the marked accenting of the rhythm and emphasizing the beat at the suitable tempo to get springy impulsion and suspension.) To do this, Isabell touched the horse with the whip to help get the horse’s hindquarters more under. The half-halt then helped the horse reach from the hind legs to raise the front end to a more uphill balance.

For flying changes, Isabell advised not to do them the way they appear in the dressage tests. Do the changes on different lines so the horse doesn’t take over, anticipate or worry that they’re coming.

If you need to generate more activity in the piaffe, Isabell suggested cantering a circle with haunches in and then transition to piaffe. “This helps keep the horse quick and elastic.”

For those looking for a new horse, Isabell explained what she looks for in a dressage prospect: “Elasticity, rideability and their movement.”

Isabell shared so much good guidance that it was hard to write as fast as the suggestions came. However two pieces of advice that really resonated with me were:

“You have to find the key to each horse. It’s your job to adapt to them. You have to figure out how to fix the problems.”

“No horse is perfect, and the perfect days are really rare.”



Isabell teaching from the saddle and on the ground in a free open house (complete with food and beverages) at the Helgstrand Farm in Wellington, FL.





Caryn Vesperman Editor

All advertisements, articles and photographs should be submitted by the 15th of the preceding month of publication, unless prior arrangements are made for additional time.

Calendar of events will appear in both the *eQuester* and on the WDEA website.

Payment should be submitted via PayPal through the WDEA website

(newsletter@WiDressage.org) or mailed to the editor with a check made out to WDEA.

CONTACT

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Call/text:
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President's Message

Ah, the struggles of a volunteer organization! We are so reliant on volunteers to keep us running, but unfortunately volunteers eventually want to move on, have unexpected changes and challenges in their lives, or just get jammed up with so much on their plate something has to give.

So I was very grateful when Jessica Sims joined our board as a Member at Large back in February. We now have a great mix of professional dressage trainers and adult amateurs who have experience ranging from marketing, teaching, accounting, engineering, medicine to being business owners. It gives us a wide berth of skills, talents and ideas.

When I took the role of president on, I said I had to give up being newsletter editor—just too much on my plate including serving on the American Hanoverian Society Foundation, chair of the American Hanoverian Society editorial committee that manages the creation of their annual stallion directory and awards magazine, riding my three horses, judging and, oh, yes, seeing my husband occasionally!

However, as I often saw in the corporate world, it's not easy finding replacements and often the original job has grown in responsibilities. Currently we have two open volunteer positions (newsletter editor and member-at-large).

For newsletter editor, I've had talented people express interest, but with further probing, the person isn't interested in handling all the aspects of the newsletter (writing, editing, layout and distribution), but would like to be responsible for a specific subset such as editing or layout/design. Totally understandable! Approximately 70% of respondents in our member survey indicated they value the newsletter (rating it at a 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale), and nearly 65% want it to continue monthly or every other month, so we know it's appreciated. Maybe it's time to consider co-editors?

With the dissolution of several chapters because the region didn't have volunteers willing to be president, VP, secretary or treasurer, the chapter members chose to dissolve. That left an educational and social hole in these areas. However, with that happening, it opened up more Member-at-Large positions. These positions are important because they are the liaison between members in these "underserved" areas and the board. In fact, we're kicking off an initiative that assigns the MALs to help these areas organize events—from simple social gatherings to clinics or schooling shows—whatever each area's members deem they need. The MALs will not organize these events in the areas, but will help find resources and answer questions so our members in these areas have access to educational opportunities. Watch for an email coming from me over the next few weeks, introducing you to your MAL.

Regarding the awards program, we've had a switch in the chair. The new chair is Jessica Kaczmarek, whom I'm very excited about and grateful she has volunteered. Jessica is an adult amateur who competed this past year at Grand Prix on her horse, Calgary JG, and she is the Midwestern representative for The Distinguished Rider (Kingsley boots and more) and the owner of Above and Beyond Custom Equestrian. She's taken on a big task as awards chair, since we also added a schooling show awards program last year (thanks to Celeste Pauli for getting that off the ground). With Jessica's equestrian business experience, I know she'll not only handle all the behind-the-scenes paperwork very well, but she's very familiar with the wishes of competitors, since we all see her at so many shows throughout the Midwest and beyond! When you see Jessica, please thank her for stepping up and filling an important need in WDEA. Also, I want to extend a big thank you to past awards chair, Sandra Malott, for handling the awards program since 2024.

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President Message continued

It's not easy being a volunteer or taking the step to volunteer, but it's SO appreciated by all those who benefit from volunteer efforts. Volunteering, like riding, can be hard work and sometimes discouraging, but the rewards far outweigh the frustrations. Over the years, I have met so many volunteers who have become friends, who have made this horse journey more meaningful, and have an added layer of enjoyment to my horse obsession. Being passionate horse people actually prepares us to be volunteers because hopefully, as the saying goes, "horses teach us patience, persistence and partnership."

So if you know anyone who might be interested—or are interested yourself—in the two open positions, feel free to contact me.

Two WDEA Volunteer Opportunities

Newsletter Editor

Do you enjoy writing, editing and doing design work for publications like a newsletter? Do you want to put your skills to use to keep members informed, educated and even entertained about what's going on with dressage and eventing in Wisconsin, as well as what's happening on the national level with the USDF? Here's the answer: WDEA needs a newsletter editor.

Responsibilities:

- Write articles as necessary, solicit and coordinate other editorial including stories, calendar and advertising submissions, and manage layout, production and online distribution of the newsletter.
- Make judgments on editorial submissions that are in keeping with news and not business promotions, unless article is, for example, a profile of a member and his/her business. Bring any questionable sub-missions to the board's attention, prior to publishing.
- Work closely with the WDEA webmaster on shared website content as well as our Facebook pages.
- Serve on the WDEA board of directors.

Must be comfortable producing an electronic newsletter (created in Word or some other design program), then converting the finished piece to a PDF and distributing it to members via email.

As always, send your newsletter submissions (articles, calendar of events, kudos, photos, etc.) to newsletter@Wldressage.org.

If you have thoughts, concerns or suggestions for WDEA as our organization, send to president@Wldressage.org,

Happy trails with your horse this spring. Finally we can get out of the indoor arena!

Caryn

Interested or have questions about any position? Contact our WDEA President (president@Wldressage.org) or any board member via the [WDEA website contact page](#). We look forward to hearing from you!

Member-at-Large (MAL)

Here's a way to get involved to help encourage the interest, organizing and awareness of educational and social opportunities within WDEA!

Your MAL volunteer activities include, but are not limited to:

- Attend the Board of Directors' meetings held approximately three to four times a year (usually by teleconference, so very little
- travel to these meetings is required),
- Represent your members' needs and interests in your area and on the board,
- Serve as a chair of committees, as needed.

Meet Your WDEA Board of Directors:

Mary Hanneman

State Board Position: Member-At-Large

Why do you volunteer for WDEA? While USDF does a great job advocating for the sport of dressage and has created a national infrastructure to support the sport, I feel it is important to have local Group Membership Organizations (GMOs) to organize local educational opportunities, shows, clinics, etc. that members can attend without having to travel great distances. That takes local volunteers. I think I've done almost all the jobs (except newsletter and webmaster), at both the State and Southwest Chapter level. It has been a good learning experience for me and has given me an appreciation for all the work that goes into keeping a GMO and chapter operating. Many thanks to all the volunteers who have come before us or are currently contributing to keeping WDEA, formerly WDCTA, humming along since 1975.

Horses: I've kept my horses at home for almost 40 years, while making a commitment to all that they would have a home with me until they pass on to horse heaven. The last of my horses passed in January 2020. She was my only homebred, with me from her first breath until her last.

My horse addiction started at age 3 when my parents took me to Menominee Park in Oshkosh, where they had pony rides. Naturally, I fell in love with one of the ponies named Frisky. When I was 7, the park pony people decided to retire and sold all the ponies at auction. I was devastated until I learned my dad bought Frisky for me. Frisky was a 7-year-old Welsh pony who taught me so much, even how to hitch and drive a cart. Frisky and I cruised around the little village where I grew up; I'd pick up my friends with the cart—it was like having my own car as a little kid! Since Frisky, I've been blessed with a variety of other breeds – a Quarter Horse, Thoroughbred, Paint, Belgium Warmblood and two Polish Arabians. My final horse was a Hanoverian gelding—Phoebus (a.k.a. Phil)—who, before he passed in 2019, took me on a journey competing as an adult amateur from Training Level to Intermediare I.

Since my last horse passed, I've had the good fortune of riding the Oldenburg mare, Allie, at Caryn Vesperman's for the past six years. She's a retired jumper. Now, at age 26, she isn't thrilled with the idea of working on the bit, so we spend most of our riding time together on the trails, which we both love. Thank you for sharing Allie with me, Caryn!

Adult Amateur or professional: Adult Amateur

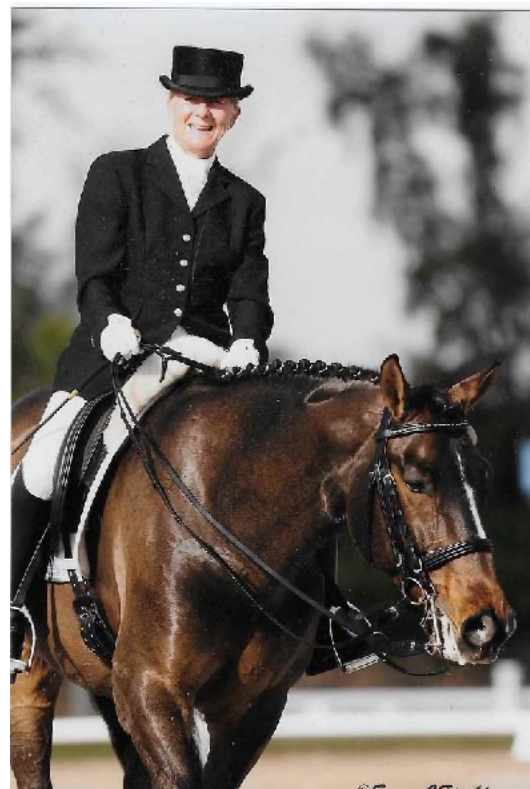
This series with both horse and non-related horse questions and answers is intended as a "get to know" your volunteers on the WDEA Board.

Job:

I retired in 2019 after a long career in financial/ insurance services marketing and market research.

Trainer/ clinician You Work With:

When I decided to switch to dressage from hunter/ jumpers in the late 1990s, I asked JJ Tate to help me, after watching her ride during a Charles de Kunffy clinic. I was one of her first students when she first hung out her shingle as a trainer at Wyngate Dressage Center near Walworth, WI. At first, I rode her



(Above) Mary on Phoebus and (below) on Allie.



Continued on next page

Profile continued

school horses, so I had the opportunity to actually “feel” the passage, piaffe, pirouettes and flying changes. My addiction quickly kicked in. After purchasing my first, and only, dressage horse, Phoebus as a 5-year-old, I credit JJ and Janet Foy for having the patience to help me achieve the seemingly impossible dream for a former hunter/jumper rider to earn my USDF Bronze, Silver and two scores toward my Gold medal in dressage.

Fast-forward to when Allie and I first started working together in 2020, I had the good fortune to work with Jackie Zimmermann. Jackie has an incredible eye for figuring out what I needed to improve to help Allie transition to a dressage horse. (It’s usually about the rider, right?). She has a succinct way of explaining why something is happening and offering up ideas on how to fix it. Thank you, Jackie!

Highest level rider or competed: Intermediare I

Most interesting, fun or odd thing to ever happen to you when riding: Several years ago, while riding Allie in Caryn’s outdoor arena, we both noticed a young deer nibbling leaves on a nearby sapling. Allie, who has a really good brain, realized the deer was no big deal and redirected her attention back to our work. We were both concentrating on our spiral in/spiral out circle at the canter when suddenly the little deer came romping down the quarter line of the arena directly toward us, seeming to want to join in play with Allie. I halted Allie who now saw Bambi cantering toward her – and Bambi just kept coming! I thought I’d better try to redirect the deer, so I yelled, “Hey!” and waved one of my hands in the air so she would realize we weren’t another deer wanting to play. This got Bambi’s attention and she did a half circle and romped out of the arena, and back to her tree. Allie and I went back to work.

What’s something people don’t know about you?

In addition to having horse fever most of my life, I’ve always been a huge fan of live music: alt rock, punk, pop, some classic rock, some metal, R&B/funk/soul. Madison has always been a great place to hear live music, but during the late 70s and early 80s, Madison was home to a venue called Merlyn’s where you could see up and coming bands (like U2, Nirvana, Radiohead, The Go’s Go’s, Iggy Pop) before they became famous.



Mary “riding” at the Ft. Worth Stockyards while in Texas for the recent World Cup.

Pet Peeve:

“Manspreading”—men who sit next to me on airplanes, at concerts or other events, who take up half of my space.

What’s something you always have in your refrigerator?

Blueberries and yogurt, which I enjoy on my homemade granola every morning.

Favorite book or movie:

“Perestroika in Paris” by Jane Smiley. It’s the story about a racehorse named Paras (short for Perestroika) who escapes her stable and wanders into Paris, where she befriends a street-smart dog, a raven and ducks, eventually

forming an unlikely bond with a lonely young boy and his great-grandmother.

Favorite horse book or training book that gave you insight about riding:

“Centered Riding” by Sally Swift. When I first started riding dressage, this book was my bible, helping me visualize during the long process of changing my riding position from jumping to dressage.

Riding advice that really helped you: JJ Tate: “It’s all about the basics and geometry—no matter what level you’re training or competing at.”

“Dressage is the art of teaching the horse to carry you. Riding is the art of learning to be a good load to carry.”

- Richard Weiss

Calendar



USDF Events

USDF University

USDF Virtual Educator Series covers equine topics at no cost to you and you can join in from your own home.

May 12 - 8 p.m. ET

"The Most Common Show Ring Mistakes" with Joan Darnell and Jodi Lees

Register here:

https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/3217637336416/WN_yGASXIYxS4yzPEsaLuLm1g#/registration

USDF Book Club

June 17 - 8 p.m. ET

Join virtually to discuss books!

"Fur Mama" by Diana duPont

Co-hosts: Reese Koffler-Stanfield and Megan McIsaac

https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/6917731516020/WN_mAfUEUo-QNGz8bSZTFwdIA#/registration

Sept. 17-20

Region 2 Championships

Lamplight Equestrian Center,
Wayne, IL

Oct. 1-4

Region 4 Championships

National Equestrian Center
Lake St. Louis, MO

Oct. 29-Nov. 1

US Dressage Finals

World Equestrian Center
Wilmington, OH

WDEA Events

June 6-7

Eastern Chapter Schooling Show

Ozaukee County Fairgrounds
Cedarburg, WI

Other Events

Aug. 26-30

Festival of Champions

Lamplight Equestrian Center,
Wayne, IL



June Issue—Need Your Submissions

The next issue will feature the World Cup dressage and jumping event in Dallas/Ft. Worth. If you were there, send in your photos and thoughts about what you saw in the dressage and jumping competitions and the places you enjoyed outside of the World Cup venue. Send to newsletter@Wldressage.org.

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- Links to event results
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 - Training and techniques for riders and their mounts
 - Tack and saddle selection, fitting, maintenance
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 - Current news
- Submit articles or suggest topics for future articles
- Reader forum to respond to articles or create new topics
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With Thanks to Our 2026 Business Members!

Colt's Neck Equestrian Center - Andrea Schten

CountryView Equestrian Estates - Madeleine VonFrankenberg

JKK Dressur, LLC - Jesse Kassner

Lindinhof Equine Sports Zentrum - Megan McIsaac

Plum Lake Equestrian Center - Debra Stephenson

Riding in Harmony - Jessica Sims

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It's not too late to convert your current membership to a business membership.

Member Listings

INSTRUCTORS

Tracey Dikkers
W4835 Aspen Ct.
Wild Rose, WI 54984
traceydikkers@gmail.com
(608) 220-2628

USEF "r" dressage judge, USDF Bronze and Silver medals, many regional and national year-end awards in Arab and all-breeds divisions. Students have competed through FEI. Will travel. Haul-in lessons available in large indoor.

Jesse K. Kassner
DressurSPORT, llc
6333 Briarcliff Lane
Middleton, WI 53562
jesse@dressurport.com
kassner.j.k@gmail.com
(608) 358-1125
dressurport.com

Riding since 1984. Trained in U.S., UK and Germany from 1998-2011. Classical dressage instructor for beginner thru Grand Prix since 1994. Teaches classical and western dressage and dressage for eventers. Instruction focuses on anatomy and biomechanics of rider and horse as a pair. Will travel.

Jackie Luebke-Puetz
Grand Prix Farm
15034 Co. Rd. X
Kiel, WI 53042-9706
cvestor@aol.com
(920) 693-3367

Have taught riding for many years, ridden thru Prix St. Georges. Will teach thru Second Level. Will travel.

Megan McIsaac
Lindinhof Equine Sports Zentrum
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lindinhof.com

FEI trainer, USDF-certified instructor through 4th Level, 2014 national champion with Kingsley, USDF Gold, Silver, Bronze medalist, all USDF bars. Competed four horses at GP. Competed successfully at Dressage at Devon and West Coast Festival. Year-end USDF/USEF and WDCTA awards. 16+ years teaching experience. Students competed through GP, earned riding awards and medals. Travel for lessons and clinics.

Andrea Schten-Achtenhagen
Colt's Neck Equestrian Center
N76W36158 Saddlebrook Lane
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aschten2000@yahoo.com
(262) 470-4557

Background experience: Has worked with multiple Olympic trainers. Ridden through Grand Prix. USDF Gold, Silver and Bronze medals, plus multiple regional championships. Will teach Intro to Grand Prix. School horses available. Will travel.

Jessica Sims
Riding in Harmony LLC
413 E. Irving Ave.
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Member Listings

BUSINESS

Barn Besties

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<https://www.youtube.com/>

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Stephanie and Megan have created Barn Besties to build an online community. They provide videos on running and managing horse farms. Videos include building a facility, fencing, arena footing, equipment, barn tours and much more. Check out their YouTube channel.

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Caryn Vesperman

USEF/USDF "r" Judge

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(608) 455-2208

USDF Gold, Silver, Bronze medalist. Continuing education includes scribing at international levels with U.S. and foreign judges (including World Cup in Omaha), accepted into the "R" judge program, and currently competing two horses at FEI levels—both were unstarted and brought up the levels. Available for USEF/USDF-recognized dressage shows, eventing and schooling shows.*

BREEDERS

Jackie Luebke-Puetz

Grand Prix Farm

15034 Co. Rd. X

Kiel, WI 53042-9706

cvestor@aol.com

(920) 693-3367

Standing Section B Welsh stallion, Too Cute to Shoot, bay, 13.2 h, cuter than a bug's ear and several times qualified for USDF breeding championships. In 2018, was third in halter for Welsh Association.*