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Dressage at Devon 2014 Day 5: Featuring the Musical Freestyle

September 27, 2014 (Devon, PA) – Almost 50 horses competed in the FEI Intermediaire 1 Open CDI3 in the Dixon Oval today with the class running for most of the day under bright sunshine. Additional classes included the FEI Intermediaire “A”, the Young Rider Grand Prix in which young riders, ages 16-25 I compete and give us a glimpse of future top riders.

Alexandra Dvorak Follows in Her Father’s Footsteps

Alexandra Dvorak, from Hillsburgh, Ontario, rode to the top of Devon’s FEI Young Rider Grand Prix on Fling, a Westfalen gelding. Her father and trainer, Olympian Tom Dvorak, purchased Fling in Germany, intending to resell him. When it was time for Alexandra to graduate from a pony to a horse, however, they decided to keep him. “I love his personality, and he doesn’t have a mean bone in his body,” says Alexandra.

Her dressage career rose quickly from Juniors in 2008 to Grand Prix level this year. Of her experience at Devon she says, “it’s been a wonderful. The people competing here are the best of the best.” While she has put many long days in to

achieve her success, Alexandra is quick credit her father for his support. “He’s the greatest father and coach. No one wants me to succeed more.” And with that statement, Alexandra and her proud father come together for a big hug outside Fling’s stall.

Horse Ballet

Nowhere is the term “horse ballet” more appropriate than in the wonderful musical freestyle. Riders and their horses “dance” to music carefully chosen to match the horse’s own tempo and style and to show off the required movements. But picking the right music is a real challenge. Not only does it have to complement the horse’s movements, the rider has to really like the music – they’re going to be listening and riding to it – a lot!

According to the United States Dressage Foundation, the dressage musical freestyle is an artistic program created by the rider to present his or her horse to its best advantage in an artistic, musical context. It is judged according to technical execution (execution of compulsory movements) and artistic impression (harmony, choreography, degree of difficulty, musicality).

There are companies that develop custom music based on watching the pace and movements of a horse. But, at least at Dressage at Devon, most of the selections are familiar, engaging the audience on a whole new level. Rocky and Eye of the Tiger come to mind. Often, riders use a medley of music to get different tempos to allow their horse to show off.

This year, selections ranged from rock to country western and everything in between. And from our vantage point, they all look great so, we asked an expert.

What the Experts are Thinking

Often, people are fascinated by the movements of the horses, especially at the Grand Prix level. Those who want to deepen their understanding can rent personal receivers that enable them to follow the ‘Dressage with the Experts’ program. It provides real-time commentary about the rides enabling spectators to gain an appreciation of what the judges are looking for.

“Dressage is a horse-friendly sport with a concern for good training and good treatment. Nothing should look forced, the horse should appear happy and ready to work,” commented Johanna Gwinn, A USEF Senior dressage judge who has been judging for more than two decades and was one of the commentators at Dressage at Devon.

The Ladies Sweep the FEI Grand Prix Freestyle

Ashley Holzer and her bay mare, Tiva Nana, winner of Friday’s Grand Prix Qualifier, thrilled the crowd with their freestyle dressage performance that earned a score of 76.125. Their movements were challenging. For instance, they moved from canter to piaffe to passage without missing a beat of the epic, orchestral music. Apparently Ashley had made a last minute decision to enter the freestyle competition. She says that the electric atmosphere at Devon worried her mare a bit “but she is always willing to try anything as long as I set her up right. She is such a partner.”

Karen Pavicic and her gelding Don Daiquiri won second place with an energetic ride and a score of 73.375. She says, “Our experience at WEG gave us a lot of confidence.” Third place went to Catherine Haddad Staller and her chestnut gelding, Mane Stream Hotmail with a score of 72.5.

About Dressage at Devon

Dressage at Devon, the highest-rated international dressage competition held outside of Europe, combines world-class international dressage competition and one of the world’s few complete sport horse breed shows with the family fun of an International Fall Festival, featuring food and shopping for all tastes.



Alexandra Dvorak and Fling



Ashley Holzer and Tiva Nana - Winners of the Grand Prix Freestyle



Ashley Holzer and Tiva Nana



Boxholder Party Winners