
DRESSAGE CHAMPION HELEN LANGEHANENBERG IN THE PURSUIT OF PERFECTION

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THE MAGNIFICENT WORLD OF DRESSAGE IS ONE WHERE ELEGANCE AND BEAUTY MIX HARMONIOUSLY TOGETHER TO OFFER A PERFECT COMBINATION OF CONTROLLED POWER AND SUBTLETY IN MOVEMENT COMBINED WITH GRACE, STYLE AND CLASS. "THE PASSIONATE PURSUIT OF PERFECTION BY THE OBSESSIVELY IMPERFECT..." IS A SLOGAN THAT EVERY DRESSAGE RIDER SHOULD SPONTANEOUSLY REMEMBER EACH TIME HE/SHE MOUNTS HIS HORSE, AND ENTERS THE ARENA, AND, INDEED, MANY SHINING STARS AND QUEENS OF THE ARENA RIDING UNFORGETTABLE HORSES, DO. IN THIS HT INTERVIEW WITH OLYMPIC AND WORLD CHAMPION HELEN LANGEHANENBERG, SHE TALKS TO US ABOUT HER LIFE, HER RIDING CAREER AND HER TRAINING.

You are a star in the world of dressage; tell us about your beginnings? How did you discover dressage? How did it click? Who was behind the scene to help you discover the beauty of it?

I loved animals and my parents allowed me to take riding lessons. The more I could ride the more fun I had. I always liked dressage, but really, I started as a young girl just playing with ponies!

Dressage is a very hard discipline, it requires commitment, self-involvement, an iron will... how does all of this work into your day-to-day training routine?

I think it is my passion! I just love it. I do not think of a time or a place when I train, I simply somehow get rid of such thoughts.

They say "dressage is the passionate pursuit of

perfection". How would you comment to that? What are your anxieties, your fears, your expectations and your hopes?

Yes, I think that's true! I love to work on the small things to ensure that I make it all perfect. I hope my horses and I stay healthy and we can enjoy this sport many more years to come.

Talk to us about your partnership with Damon Hill. Is he your best horse so far? How many hours do you train him a day? What about his temperament. Does he like to work with you? How does he show it to you? There is a lot of fluidity and communication between you two. How did you reach that level....How many hours do you spend with him outside your training routine?

He is the best even though I don't train with him too much. He knows everything and wants to keep it fun.

He loves to get a lot attention and to be the centre of attention. I think he likes to work. If not, he would not do it in that easy and uncomplicated way. I try to make a game out of it. Don't take it too seriously. Just play!

How did this partnership start? Did you feel that he was going to become your best partner? How is his temperament?

When I first saw him I knew that's the best horse I ever saw! When I sat the first time on him it just felt so right. He is always willing to work.

How long have you been riding him? Is he being ridden by somebody else from time to time? How do you maintain his mental state of mind?

When he was five we won the Young Horses World Championships. Then he was trained by Ingrid Klimke. Then when he was 10 I started to ride him again.



Photo by Cymon Taylor

Ingrid Klimke and Klaus Balkenhol!

What does it require to become a champion?

To be focused, sequential, patient, to have realistic aim in the short and long run, and to stand up again after you have failed.

How long does it take to bring a horse to Grand Prix levels? Tell us about the routine, the discipline, the work, the coaching, all that is involved including the sacrifices and the duties in terms of your relation with your partner.

Normally, they cannot go with a good GP before 9 years. First, you have to train the movements, then bring it together one movement after the next and then make it perfect, easy and harmonious.

What is your number one "most glorious win"?

There are several, London 2012, the 2013 World Cup Final win and Herning 2013.

How do you mentally prepare before a big competition?

I study videos from really good previous rides and then replay the test in my mind until I have the perfect feeling.

Dressage is a very demanding discipline; how are you able to keep up your training with your private life?

I got married five and a half years ago... so while it is difficult to balance between training and my private life, my husband shares the same passion.

One last question, what would be your message to the thousands of dressage riders all over the world who dream to ride one day in an Olympic arena?

Believe in yourself and your dream. And step by step you can make it! 🐾

A best performing horse is a happy horse. How do you keep him happy?

By giving him fun at work, not exhausting him and taking him out to the fields.

They also say dressage is dancing with your partner. Can you describe your feelings when you are on Damon Hill? By the way, how well does he respond to Kur?

I think it is like dancing. We know each other perfectly! He loves the Kur especially going to music!

We understand that Klaus Balkenhol has been your trainer for quite some time. Balkenhol is a living legend in the world of dressage, three-time Olympic medalist, winner of an uncommon amount of

international prizes.... Please tell us more about your professional relation with him; his training approach, his personal impact on your daily training, and most of all, the benefits you derived from his coaching.

I am lucky to have been training with Klaus for 10 years now. He's the best! He has the perfect feeling for rider and horse and always knows how much he can ask without doing too much. He can really motivate horse and rider!

Are you preparing another horse? How many horses to you train every day?

We have a stable for training horses. It's our job. I ride between 10 to 12 horses a day.

Who were the most influential coaches in your career?

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