



DRESSAGE

IN-DEPTH WITH

OLGA SAFRONOVA

By Farah Rezeika

OLGA SAFRONOVA IS AN ACCOMPLISHED DRESSAGE RIDER KNOWN FOR HER DEEP CONNECTION WITH HORSES. HER TRAINING METHODS EMPHASIZE LOVE, PATIENCE, AND UNDERSTANDING. DESPITE FACING CHALLENGES RELATED TO RELOCATION AND CITIZENSHIP CHANGES, OLGA OVERCAME THEM AND QUALIFIED FOR THE OLYMPIC GAMES IN PARIS. GET READY TO DIVE DEEP INTO THE WORLD OF EQUESTRIAN EXCELLENCE WITH THE CHAMPION OLGA SAFRONOVA!

Take us back to the very beginning. What are your earliest memories of being around horses and what sparked your desire to ride?

I first got on a horse before I was born. My mom is an equestrian coach. When she was pregnant with me, she was still riding for a few months. My mother told me that when I was first consciously put on a horse, I was about a year old, and she had to take me off the horse together with the saddle.

Can you tell us about your training methods and how you build such a deep connection with your horses?

It is a very long and difficult journey. I believe that only absolute love for the horse, time, patience, and a desire to learn can help a rider truly master this art. Horses have always come first in our family. I know everything about each of my horses. My mother taught me to take care of a horse, to be sure that I did everything to make a horse have a happy life.

If we talk about the trainings, I try to make them varied and interesting. I always start work with gymnastic exercises and do not do more than 2-3 elements during one training session.

You have such a deep bond with your horses. Can you tell us about the horses you currently own, their names, and their unique personalities?

The most important person in our family is, of course, **Sandro D Amour!** He is my absolute love, my soul, my friend, and my faithful partner! Very soon he will turn 16, and we have been together for almost 13 years. I bought him when he was 3 years old. *I owe it all to this unique horse!*

My other horse is 9-year-old Leo; he is a bright chestnut color, and he absolutely lives up to his name. He is a true lion! A hot, bright, strong, emotional, and very intelligent horse. He is very interesting to work with.

My youngest horse, a 4-year-old All-In, is a beautiful son of secret. I have had this horse for a year now, and he is one of the most talented young horses I have ever worked with.

Did you face any unexpected challenges throughout 2023? How did you overcome them and what did you learn from the experience?

2023 was the continuation of my story of forced relocation from Belarus and finally finishing all the procedures for changing my citizenship and returning to the sports arena. At the beginning of the year, I changed my sports federation to the Polish one and was able to compete again.

The experience of the last few years has taught me to accept the circumstances of life but never to give up. When I was denied the opportunity to compete at the Tokyo Olympics, I felt like



my life was on pause. But a quick move to a new country, new people around me who helped me a lot, and new opportunities to continue my sports career gave me back my confidence.

What was your proudest moment of 2023?

Sandro and I managed to become vice-champions of Poland, started competing, in international competitions, and got half of the qualification points for the Olympic Games in Paris.

What are your goals for 2024? Do you have any specific competitions or achievements in mind?

Of course, all goals and plans are now focused on Paris. My whole schedule and life now is focused on training, getting the second half of the qualification and of course getting on the team for the Olympic Games.

What is your favourite piece of advice you've ever received from another rider or mentor?

My coach, Irina Karacheva, always told me that if something doesn't work today, it will work tomorrow.

What originally drew you to dressage as your chosen equestrian discipline?

I genuinely enjoy working long and hard with horses. I enjoy it much more than even competing. When you can feel that long-awaited response from a horse, it is a feeling incomparable to anything else.

Before choosing dressage, did you explore other riding styles?

Yes, sure! I was a show jumping rider until I was 19. When I was 16, I even participated in a junior eventing competition. At some point, I had the opportunity to try dressage, then Sandro came into my life, and then I realized exactly what I was meant to do.

If you weren't a dressage rider, what do you think you'd be doing instead?

I would definitely be around horses. No matter where or by whom. Looking into those eyes and touching their soft noses is a must for me. Maybe I'd do music at the same time, like playing the piano, but I'm just sure I'd bring the piano to the stables in that case, too.

Looking further ahead, where do you see yourself and your dressage career in the coming years?

I hope that my level will rise. I would like to have even more talented horses, to train even more, and to compete in even bigger competitions. With every horse, every day I learn something new. 🐾