



Johannes & Marcus Ehning at Sportferde Ehning



MARCUS EHNING

TIMES OF PERFECTION

By Nada H. Abdelmoniem

MIGHTY GERMAN MARCUS EHNING CELEBRATED HIS 36TH BIRTHDAY ON APRIL 19TH ALONG WITH WINNING THE 2010 ROLEX FEI WORLD CUP AND BEING CROWNED JUMPING CHAMPION FOR THE THIRD CONSECUTIVE YEAR. IN THE PALEXPO ARENA IN GENEVA, SWITZERLAND, HE KEPT THE COOLEST HEAD DESPITE AN EARLY MISTAKE AND WON THROUGH WHEN THOSE AHEAD OF HIM FALTERED. AFTER WINNING A FEW ROLEX WATCHES, THE TIMES OF PERFECTION ROLL THE RED CARPET FOR THE CHAMPION WHO UNDOUBTEDLY WILL NOT CEASE KEEPING HIS NAME IN HISTORY BOOKS.



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Ehning, a very observant, tranquil and composed individual, also considered by many to be the greatest show jumping rider ever, and christened by many as the “German Gun”, makes winning seem exceptionally effortless when unquestionably it requires the hardest endeavours. So! How does the Olympic champion continue on staying on the top? Here is a Horse Times exclusive Q & A interview with Ehning on show jumping, his success, along with all what comes in between.

What can you tell us about your family?

I started to ride when I was about six or seven years old; I started with ponies and competed in pony classes although did not always have the fastest ponies! Not the fastest, but indeed fast enough to help me try winning the style classes. During that phase, I was German Champion and twice won the gold medal as a team member at the European Championships.

I was born second in a family of five who all share a passion for horses. My older sister Kirsten rides in her free time and my younger sister Karina has been my

stable manager for a very long time and still enjoys taking care of the stables. My third sister Conny also visits often and rides occasionally. The youngest family member happens to be my brother Johannes, who also competes internationally. I am married and a father to an almost one year old daughter Yula. I live with my family close to the stables and try to spend as much time as possible with them.

From previous events we see of you, we realise the tremendous development in your riding technique; how did that come about and who were the influential coaches that led to this difference?

I have always tried to watch as many good riders as I can. In the beginning I took classes in our local riding club and any trainer I had always paid attention to good dressage work. During pony riding times, my trainer was Lutz Merkel and when I started to compete as a junior, my

trainer was Fritz Ligges. In all the years to follow, I have developed my own style, but even to this day I watch riders and try and see what they do - and if it is effective I try to do it as well.

You are a world class rider; how do you manage to stay on top of the rankings?

I am very lucky that to have a few horses that I can ride in big classes. Consequently I can ride in many competitions and still give my Grand Prix horses the rest they need. To be consistently in the Top 10 in the world takes a lot of planning, a lot of travelling, very good horses, good sponsors and a very good team at home.

Do you think that mental toughness has to do with staying on top?

Mental toughness is a requirement for anyone who competes at the top level in any sport. I think that it is important to concentrate on your horse and on the course that is ahead of you. Your horse

needs to be well schooled and responsive to the aids as to be able to jump the very technical courses of today.

Do you recommend any type of mental training to maintain mental sharpness and toughness?

All I can say is that the experiences I have acquired over the years are what help me more than anything else.

Which wins and horses were the closest to your heart?

The gold medal at the Sydney Olympics is at the top of this list. The three World Cup wins are certainly also among that list. Winning the Grand Prix of Aachen is something every rider dreams of; I was very happy when I won it with the only nine year old mare Noltes Küchengirl.

Which sponsors made a learning point in your career, and who are your most important sponsors today?



▲ Riding Plot Blue during the 2010 WC Final, Ehning believes that one's horse needs to be well schooled and responsive to the aids as to be able to jump very technical courses

Sandro Boy Ehning chooses careful horses that have scope, but most importantly horses that have plenty of "heart"



Early on, a friend of the family helped us with the horses, and he is still part-owner of 'Anka' and 'Fiona' to this day. Over the years more sponsors have come on board. Sony Ericsson was my main sponsor for many years. Now I have the Nolte Company as my main Sponsor as well as Passier, Veredus, Königs, GPA and Pavo.

How do you choose a good/suitable horse for yourself? What attracts you to a specific horse?

That is different from horse to horse. I have had many different types of horses that were successful in the past. They need to be careful and have scope but most importantly is the "heart" or behaviour of the horse. What they all need to have is ultimately the willingness to jump. My brother and I have young horses in the stables at home, and horses with those attributes are the ones that we keep. I try to improve them and let them grow with the sport.

What drives you to keep on winning?

I try to ride every round the best way I can. I want to give the horses a good experience and also push them to get better. Every horse has their own long-term plan and I enjoy the process. Winning is the ultimate reward for my work with the horses. 