

THE CENTAUR

Gone to Gladstone!

Disabled rider Matt Trott Triumphs in Colorado Springs

With the name "Trott," you'd imagine that the riding part comes easily. But nothing comes easily for Matt Trott, a 34-year old man who suffers from Friedreich's Ataxia, a degenerative neuro-muscular disease that is slowly robbing him of muscular control.

Seven years ago, Matt became wheelchair-bound and thought he'd never walk again. One year ago, he got new legs - four of them.

Matt was among 14 riders from across the USA who participated in a special clinic held last May at the Penrose-Norris Events Center in Colorado Springs.

Hosted by the Colorado Springs Dressage Association, the event kicked off with a two day clinic with U.S. Paralympic Equestrian Team coach Jerry Schwartz. Following the clinic, the riders competed in a schooling show as part of the CSDA's "Dressage at the Peak" event.

"We wanted to do this for disabled riders throughout the country, but especially for our local riders," said Jane McBride, who worked alongside RMDS president Heather Petersen to make the event happen. "It was especially worthwhile having

Paralympic Coach Jerry Schwartz here, watching riders he might not otherwise have seen."

Trott feels that the benefit of disabled rider programs such as this are inestimable.

"No one can explain what it is like to walk. It was as though I had forgotten," said the Herndon, Va., resident. "Riding reminded me of what it was like to move with legs. It's cool."

Cool. Like Matt. Were you to see him only on horseback, you wouldn't know he was disabled.

While he doesn't have a ramrod straight seat (not uncommon for a training level rider), he rode with a beaming smile that instantly won him the support of the crowd and the judges.

Probably the most enthusiastic person in the audience, however, was his trainer Dada Suvak. Originally from Osijek, Croatia, Suvak is an FEI-level riding instructor as well as a therapeutic instructor. Suvak works with the extremely active Lift Me Up! riding program in Great Falls, Va., and made the long trip to help Matt.

continued on page 2



Matt Trott

In This Issue...

Going to Gladstone!.....cover
Series "Classic Art of Riding" ..cover
Night Under the Lights.....2
First Show Jitters8
News: Steiner Clinic at CHP9
Horses & Investing.....10

Regular Features...

President's Thoughts.....5
Editor's Scoop.....5
Trainer Talk.....6
Calendar.....16-17
Judges, TDs, instructors.....21
Omnibus corrections.....21
Chapter news22
Classifieds24



IF IT IS THE RIDER'S GOAL TO PRESENT THE HORSE IN BRILLIANT WAYS, THE RIDER NEEDS TO BE COMPLETELY FREE OF MANIPULATING THE HORSE WITH THE FORCE OF THE BIT - XENOPHON, 430 B.C.

Presenting "Thoughts About the Classic Art of Riding Over the Course of Time: The Development of the Classic Art of Riding," by Chevalier Ralf Schmitzer. (page 15)

In this and the next few issues of *The Centaur*, it is our good fortune to present a series of articles by German riding instructor Ralf Schmitzer. In this series, Schmitzer examines the development of Classical Dressage. It is our hope that you will enjoy this well-thought out examination of classic European riding as exemplified by the great schools of "haute ecole," that have set the standards for horsemanship across centuries. - *editor*.

Disabled Riders Clinic (cont.)

Little did either of them know that he would earn the top score in his class and qualify to participate in a special clinic among fellow Paralympic dressage riders at the United States Equestrian Team Foundation's Dressage Festival of Champions in Gladstone, N.J., held June 15-20.

"I have to see what all this means," said Trott upon learning that he would be riding among and learning from the country's best riders in Gladstone. "It's cool - and a lot closer to home than Colorado."

Fortunately, he didn't have to bring a horse to the Rocky Mountains. Trott and the other riders relied on mounts borrowed from CSDA members and local therapeutic riding centers. Trott's horse, Sprocket, a "Nebraska Warmblood" (draft horse cross) was on loan from the Whispering Winds Farm of Black Forest, Colo.

Not all the riders were relative newcomers to the show scene. Another top-placing contestant, Jonathan Wentz, 15, of Dallas, Texas, has been riding nearly his entire life.

A sufferer of cerebral palsy, Wentz said the clinic was a great opportunity to meet

and encourage fellow riders.

"The coach [Jerry Schwartz] was very good. Very facilitating," said Wentz, who normally competes at training level in



In a class by himself, rider Jonathan Wentz.

USDF-sanctioned shows. "It was nice meeting other riders and hooking up with them."

Like Trott, Wentz sees great benefit in programs such as this one put on by Colorado Springs chapter.

"It was really helpful to me. And it encourages other riders with disabilities," he remarked. "I know, for me, riding is the thing that keeps me going. If I had not started riding, I probably wouldn't be walking right now."

Wentz also sees shows like this one in Colorado Springs as a springboard to greater goals.

"In 2012, I want to be competing at the Paralympic Games in London," he said.

London? For riders like Trott, Wentz and the rest, there seems to be no goal too distant - and they're getting there with help from their four-legged partners.

Congratulations to Matt, Jonathan, Meghan Shannon, Kim Decker, Fiona Larsen, Wendy Fryke and Sheryl Gardner, qualifiers for the USET Paralympic training session.

Article and photos by Gavin Ehringer.

CSDA's "A Night Under The Lights" A Shining Success

The Colorado Springs Dressage Association hosted its annual RMDS/USDF/USEF recognized show on May 20-21 at Norris Penrose Event Center. On Saturday, in parallel with the regular show, there was a morning of competition for riders with disabilities judged by Paralympic judge Anita Owen. Four new riders were selected to go to Gladstone, N.J., this year to train with Team USA. CSDA and the riders wish to thank the wonderful folks who loaned horses for the clinic and competition.

Dressage at the Peak annually includes NAYRA and Young Horse qualifying classes. The Evening-Under-the-Lights competition and demonstrations, as always, were the highlights of the event. Sarah Martin delivered an informative and entertaining narrative explaining dressage with rider Jennifer Diamond demonstrating various movements aboard Polaris. Sheryl Gardner, a CA rider with a disability, rode Prince Yiyi QT ("Joe," Heather Petersen's horse) in



Show stars Frances Carbonelle & Teo.

an FEI musical freestyle and received a score of 71.25! Joan Clay, on Chatham, won the Halloh perpetual trophy in Prix St.

Georges. Frances Carbonelle gave a thrilling demonstration on her Arab-Holsteiner cross. "Teo" bowed and performed a Spanish walk to end their performance. Their ride brought a wonderful conclusion to the evening. Afterward, Frances welcomed the crowd to pet her horse and ask questions.

CSDA expresses their heartfelt thanks to all the class sponsors, volunteers, riders and staff who made this event possible. Katie Reeves, the stable manager, did an amazing job as did Judy Carnick, the volunteer coordinator. Helen Slate and John Stevenson worked tirelessly in the barns with the horses, riders and volunteers. Many thanks to the show's Gold and Silver sponsors: American Competition for Riders with Disabilities, The Clarion Hotel, Experience Colorado Springs at Pikes Peak Visitor's Center, Intermountain Rural Electric Association, Mountain View Electric Association, Norris Penrose Event Center and North American Riding for the Handicapped. Also, Jane McBride & Heather Petersen, Show Management & Board; Simone Windeler & Jean Patton, organizing board.

Article by Jane McBride, CSDA. Photo, Gavin Ehringer.