

Joanne Coleman top-seeded equestrian

Joanne Coleman, a resident of Birdsboro, received the U.S. Dressage Federation's Horse of the Year Award Reserve Champion for the Fourth Level competition while riding Joeri, her 10-year-old Dutch Warmblood (Sultan x Etifia). The team holds the number one ranking in the United States for Fourth Level Dressage amateur competition. Early this year Coleman was awarded the Dara Lynn Shwark Memorial Trophy at Dressage at Devon, the most prestigious dressage show in North America. She and her horse also clinched first place for her Fourth Level ride. "Winning that Fourth Level class at dressage was definitely the highlight of my year, if not my entire life," said Coleman. "I was actually more nervous about the awards presentation and the victory gallop than I was about the winning ride. I live a few towns away and as a kid I dreamed of showing here. To win is a fantasy."

Though the winner's circle of dressage had become a friend to

Coleman in 2000, she was a complete stranger to the world of dressage until 1996. Ever since watching the Lippizanner Stallions of Vienna performance at the Academy of Music in 1979, dressage enthralled Coleman. She craved it as a hunter/jumper rider with her horse, The Triumph, but the concept alluded both her and her mount. "After working with international Grand Prix rider Suzanne van Cuyk, I gained the clarity to basic dressage that had formerly been enigmatic shadows. Let's just say I never returned to the jumper ring," recalled Coleman. Formerly the Director of Development at Kathy Wickline Casting, a leading Philadelphia-based casting company for film, TV and commercials, and a freelance journalist, Coleman has merged business with passion as a professional rider and dressage trainer. "You'll only be as good as your horse, but the opposite is true also. A good horse, if not handled properly can sink to the level of the

rider," stated Coleman. She mentions that riding dressage grew out of military training for horses that were engaged in close quarters in battle in order that they could move adroitly. "It's a strength and skill issue. If a horse can feel a fly on itself, it can feel the weight shift and balance of the rider," said Coleman in an effort to show how a horse could read or misinterpret the rider's signals. In an 11 step hierarchy of levels of competition, the Fourth level is the beginning of the upper levels of dressage competition, which climaxes at the Grand Prix. The dress of the rider is also taken from the military. However, Coleman is not sure how the top hat became part of the dressage rider's attire. Coleman feels her rapid rise to international level of competition is founded in having a great trainer, a good horse, her dedication and proclivity to the sport, as well as understanding horse psychology.



Joanne Coleman

Something to Ponder

"The only way to discover the limits of the possibilities is to go beyond them into the impossible."

- Arthur C. Clarke

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