

Dressage WA Newsletter

MARCH 2016

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The competitions are starting to come up thick and fast but it is always good to think about ways that you can help your sport. We must remember that we are all ambassadors for dressage and horse sport, and the future direction is up to us. How can you contribute?

In this edition we meet Kelly Brown. Would you like to add something to the newsletter? Contact us at www.dressagewa.org.

Message from the DWA Chair - Gill Botten

I do hope everyone is back enthused and training their horses, despite some of the awful hot days we have had. It seems as if there have been many days with only a couple of hours in which to comfortably train and that was always at the crack of dawn!

I spent the weekend judging in Albany and would encourage all judges to travel to the regions – great hospitality, well run competitions and it is always refreshing to see another set of horses come down the centre line.

Congratulations are due to Jackie Lancaster as she kicked off the year with a very smooth running midweek dressage too.

DWA has many plans for this year and we are hoping to include a Young Rider Championship event. We welcome Stephanie Munro who has been co-opted onto the DWA committee as the pony representative and to assist with the YR portfolio for this year.

Thought for the month:

Gill Botten (Chair DWA)





Dressage Western Australia Committee Members

Chair - Gill Botten
Vice Chair - Dwight Pedlow
Treasurer - Dinah Fleming

Finance/Treasury - Dinah Fleming
DWA budget management, DDF accounts, purchase orders and payments

Issue of Information – Rebecca DeVries
Website and Facebook

Correspondence - Gill Botten/Jo Yacopetti
Minutes, Agendas, incoming and outgoing correspondence.

Business/Strategic Planning - Dwight Pedlow

Sponsorship – Rebecca De Vries

Events – Working Parties

Club Liaison – Marjory Stanger

Pony Representative – Steph Munro

Official Liaison - Elaine Greene
Judges, Stewards, liaising with other disciplines, national issues.

High Performance - Gill Botten

EA/EWA - Gill Botten
liaising with EWA Board and CEO, ADC etc.

Riders Representative - Tracy Spackman
Includes downgrading applications, Rider's forum etc.

Performance Trophies/Awards – Dwight Pedlow/Val Mayger

DWA Newsletter - Suzanne Simons

Para Equestrian – Val Mayger

Young and Junior Rider Rep – Natalie Sakich/Steph Munro

Meet dressage rider Kelly Brown

Kelly and Elouera Rhapsody are dancing together at medium level with their sights set firmly on Grand Prix. Kelly's smart and sensible approach to training has helped a sensitive horse achieve some great results but the best is yet to come.



Tell us about Elouera Rhapsody. My horse Pollyanna (Elouera Rhapsody) is an 11 year old 16 hh warmblood mare by Elouera Ramjet D (Jetset D x Clifton Court Loren) out of Calcarra Modesty (Barrabadeen Fortune x Barrabadeen Lorna Mac Williams). I bought her when she was 18 months old and have broken her in and trained her myself. She is currently training Advanced and competing Medium level.

I lost my last dressage horse to colic in 2005 and spent some time looking for a new prospect. I was a student at the time and had limited funds so I was looking for a young warmblood with potential and decent breeding when I met Polly. She was a shy little thing who kept her cards close to her



chest and wanted you to earn her trust which I liked about her. She was in a paddock with another filly, who was also for sale, and the other one was right up in anyone's face and wanting attention. But Polly just stood back and waited for you to approach her and she wanted to suss you out before giving it all away. I liked that about her and we got on well from day one.

Polly is the smartest horse I have ever had, she remembers everything I teach her and catches on amazingly quickly. I once spent an afternoon teaching her to lift her foot up to shake hands like a dog and gave her treats when she did it. To this day if I forget to give her treats she is there lifting her leg up waiting for her carrot!

She loves people and is a very vocal and communicative horse, always speaks her mind!

I am lucky to have had such a talented horse for so many years and to have gone the whole journey together from breaking to advanced and hopefully FEI. I work as an Emergency Department doctor and deal with high amounts of stress every day and my horse is the thing that keeps me sane and grounded. She means the world to me!

What has been the key to her training? While Polly is very smart and catches on to things quickly, she also uses that intelligence to predict what you're going to ask her and anticipates everything. If you're doing half pass to the long side you of course must want a flying change before the corner...or you just did a walk pirouette left so one to the right must be coming soon or we just finished the free walk and you have picked up the reins so there must be an upward transition soon so she'll get excited and ready. So the biggest challenge in training her is keeping her guessing and mixing things up – stopping her from anticipating every step and always thinking she knows what you want! But there is no secret to advancing horses in dressage. You need to ride a lot and you need good coaches who work well with you and your horse.

What are you riding and long term goals? This year I am focusing on tension. With Polly's nature to anticipate comes a great deal of anxiety and my focus this year is to work on tension to improve our scores but most importantly to build more relaxation into the work so that it's more enjoyable for horse and rider and so that our relationship gets stronger and stronger. Long term goals are to get to Grand Prix with any horse but I would love to do it with Polly to complete the story. I think she can get there if she becomes more relaxed.



How did you start out in riding and dressage? My mum had horses and so when I was a kid I got my first pony when I was 3 and a half. I loved horses and everything related to horses and spent my days after school riding in the hills with friends and my brother. I did Pony Club and used to love eventing and games and went through pony after pony but when I was 16 I had the opportunity to ride a very nice dressage horse and fell in love with the sport, I then got my first "dressage" mare when I was 16 and I haven't looked back. She taught me a lot about riding and also about relationships with horses. I got addicted to that side of dressage, the ability to communicate with these amazing creatures and teach them things without words, and the fact that they want to learn with us. I think it's magic.



Who has been your biggest influence? We all have our heroes growing up, I used to watch Badminton and the Dressage World Cup – had all the VHS videos – can still remember the music to Anky's famous ride on Bonfire in 1996. But I would have to say the biggest influence in the way I approach horse training would be Carl Hester. He promotes the idea of the "happy athlete" and works on softness and tries to eliminate tension. I think he's probably the best trainer in the world and has trained one of the best riders – Charlotte Dujardin who is also amazing and inspiring.



How could dressage in WA be improved?

I have to say I have been impressed with the improvement in WA dressage over the last few years. I went to the Stephen Clarke clinic and I have to take my hat off to the Judges Task Force for organising such a great, world class, clinic here in WA. I would love to see more clinics like this in WA especially when this was so well attended which means that we can make these sorts of events viable here. We have some fantastic horses and riders here in WA but the thing we can't change – how isolated we are – works against us.

From the Judge's Box

By Equestrian Australia

Q: How do I become a dressage judge?

The rules that govern the National Officiating Accreditation Scheme (NOAS) are incorporated into the Equestrian Australia (EA) current Dressage Competition Rules and Procedures (current rules). Note: Rules are usually updated on 1 January of each year. The rulebook may be obtained by the following methods:

Electronic (free of charge):

- ☐ downloaded from the EA website at www.equestrian.org.au

Printed (from EA National Office or State Branch):

- ☐ Call the National office on (02) 8762 7777 and request via phone
- ☐ Call your State Branch (contacts on last page) and request via phone

The steps to becoming an H Level (Probationary) National Dressage Judge are:

You must be:

- ☐ at least 17 years of age



- ☐ a current EA member of at least Supporter category
- ☐ complete the application form
- ☐ attend an EA approved G-level seminar
- ☐ complete the current G level open rule book test (ORBT) with a pass mark of at least 90%
- ☐ shadow judge one entire Preliminary and one entire Novice competition; or two entire Novice competitions with at least 10 horses in each competition using an appointed Mentor – can be any type of event as long as a current mentor is judging i.e. could be Eventing or Closed Club event
- ☐ ☐ shadow judging assessment form to be completed by the JE/Mentor on each occasion and forwarded to the State Dressage Authority (SDA)

Note: The required Seminar and ORBT must be completed and passed before undertaking the Shadow Judging

Seminars are usually arranged by State Dressage Judges Committee or an Equestrian Australia Dressage Club. Please get in touch with your local EA Club if you are not an EA member. The State EA Branch can assist here.

Once you have completed all of the requirements above and you have been approved by the State Judges Committee, your name will be placed on the Judges list as an G (Preliminary) level judge and you will be able to judge Official Preliminary as the 2nd or 3rd judge with another judge of at least F level, Participation Preliminary (on your own) and Participation Novice (recommended with another F level judge or higher).

Q : What is the NOAS code of conduct for accredited dressage judges?

Accredited Dressage Judges should adhere to the following NOAS Code of Conduct. As in all equestrian sports, judges must:

- ☐ make their decisions having regard for the welfare of the horse above the interests of any others involved
- ☐ have an open and friendly attitude towards all competitors while being careful not to show familiarity towards those competing
- ☐ be aware that they are responsible for setting and maintaining the image and standards of dressage both in the competition arena and away from it and that, as an ambassador for dressage, they should conduct themselves with dignity, honesty and good manners, especially in difficult situations
- ☐ treat requests from competitors to explain their decisions as an opportunity to assist the competitor to improve their performance
- ☐ honour a commitment to judge and if unforeseen circumstances prevent this, endeavour to help the organisers to find a replacement
- ☐ maintain an objective and fair mind towards all competitors which includes:
 - ☐ not taking into account anything known about riders, horses or past performances
 - ☐ guarding against conflicts of interest and avoiding judging in situations in which they have a close personal or professional relationship with a competitor or owner
- ☐ ensure to the best of their ability that the same conditions apply to all competitors
- ☐ know and understand the scale of marks and ensure that their comments and marks are related
- ☐ maintain the same standard for all competitors within a competition and at all events



- ☐ be in possession of a current Dressage Rule Book together with any amendments
- ☐ know the rules and be prepared to co-ordinate their personal opinion with the principles of the FEI and the EA
- ☐ aim to have a thorough knowledge of the correct training of the dressage horse and understand the requirements of the test they are to judge

Note: This Code of Conduct can be found at:

http://www.equestrian.org.au/site/equestrian/national/downloads/2005/Governance/era_policies/COC_Officials.pdf

Q : What makes a good judge?

As a judge you have to be highly organised, yet flexible. You have to be able to focus, make decisions quickly, and be confident of the training you have received and knowledge you have acquired as a judge. You must possess diplomacy, tact and common sense. You have to be able to recognise and acknowledge mistakes you may make whilst judging and also be able to diffuse a volatile situation.

You are part of a team and if you are the Chief Judge, you have to lead that team. You must be approachable by riders and coaches. You must also act professionally in relation to your judging. As a judge, you most probably have a greater impact on the sport than riding coaches!

As a judge you must be able to perform the three S's: **SEE** **SAY** **SCORE**

Q : What are the demands required of a dressage judge?

As a judge you must train yourself to have the following qualities:

- ☐ Absolute objectivity and impartiality, free of personal bias/opinion, but be humble and sympathetic.
- ☐ The ability to see; be able to distinguish and to compare performances consistently from the first to the last horse in a competition, finding the correct rankings in giving the marks.

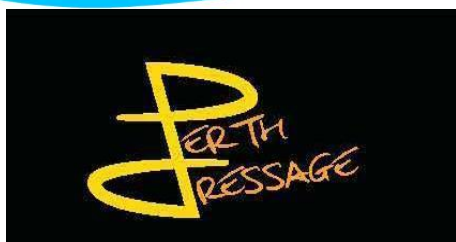
Today, when competitions last much longer than in the past, it is important for the judges to be:

- ☐ mentally alert to be able to concentrate for long periods of time;
- ☐ physically fit; and
- ☐ be able to be consistent and fair from the beginning to the end of the competition

The judge must have a thorough knowledge of dressage theory as well as practical dressage training. The Training Scale underpins all that we do when judging.

Judges must be able to recognise BASIC QUALITIES and, therefore, MAIN FAULTS that originate from an incorrect training program. They should be able to differentiate between faults due to momentary unfitness or a careless mistake. They should, be able to distinguish the difference between significant and insignificant faults.

It is very helpful if a dressage judge has trained horses themselves and taken part as a competitor. This increases a judge's empathy and understanding and may help to guide a rider so that future problems can be avoided.



Perth Dressage Club Young Dressage Horse and Pony Competition 7 February 2016

By Beverley Leonard

On February 7th Perth Dressage Club held the first of two single round National Qualifying Young Dressage Horse and Pony Competitions. The competition was run in the morning despite the threat of an impossibly hot day. All riders and horses managed very well, with iced water available at the Gear Check station. All tests were finished by 10am while the temperature was still well within the bounds of the 'Hot Weather' guidelines.

Competitors all rode the single round FEI Qualifying Tests with two accredited YDH judges Wendy Barker and Hannie Byrne officiating, and, pleasingly, all achieved a qualifying score of over 65%.

Rider Name	Horse Name	Score	Place
Qualifier FEI Young Horse test for 4 YO			
Tanita Rutherford	BENSON'S BELINA	70.20	1
Ron Fleming	EVERTON CHURCHILL	69.00	2
Dinah Fleming	HOLLINGROVE FELICIANO	66.40	3
PONY class Qualifier FEI Young Horse test for 5YO			
Alex Devenish-krauth	BROOKEVALLEY MYRDDIN	67.80	1
PONY class Qualifier EA Test for 6YO ponies			
Brittany Porter	LEEDALE KRISTOV	68.60	1
PONY class Qualifier FEI Young Horse test for 4YO			
Tanita Rutherford	DEVERON DI MOJO	70.00	1



L-R Brittany Porter winner of 6 year old Pony class on Leedale Kristov, Tanita Rutherford rode Deveron Di Mojo to win the 4 year old Pony and also rode Benson's Belina to win the 4 year old Horse class. Alex Devenish pictured with Brookevalley Myrddin winners of the 5 year old Pony Class.



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Steward's Corner

By Janet Reid

Did you know....

- Rule 1.15.8 (a) Horses/Ponies must be aged 3 years or over (natural birthday) to compete in Dressage.
- Rule 1.15.8 (b) Horses/Ponies must be aged 5 years or over to be eligible to compete in Para Dressage.
- Refer to Rule 1.15.8 (c) for the calculation of the age of Horses/Ponies born in the Northern Hemisphere.
- Rule 2.8 (e) Coats: bright colours such as red, orange, pink, yellow, lime green, purple and wide contrast stripes and multi-coloured coats are not permitted.
- Rule 2.10 (c): a crupper may be worn by ponies.
- Rule 2.16.1 (a): it is not compulsory for horses to be shod.
- Rule 3.12 (d): 24 hours prior to the event starting, a horse/pony may only be ridden by its nominated rider on the competition grounds. However, a groom mounted in the saddle, wearing prescribed safety helmet and boots, may walk the horse/pony on a long rein only.
- Rule 3.12 (g): only horses/ponies entered in the event are permitted to use the warm-up area.
- Rule 3.12 (h): any horse/pony on the grounds that is not entered in the event is not permitted in the warm-up area (either ridden or led) until after the completion of competitions for that day.

Leather 'Bits' of any design or contour (with or without inner cable) are "Not Permitted" in Dressage.

Refer to EA Dressage Rule 2.11.1.3.



Fully Flexible 'Bits' of any design, type or contour (without inner cable) are "Not Permitted" in Dressage.

Refer to EA Dressage Rule 2.11.1.3(b).





Etiquette for Warm-Up Area (Refer to Equestrian Australia Dressage Rules 2016 - Annexure L.10.2)

As there are many horses warming up in a restricted area it is important that all riders have knowledge of the etiquette required in group riding. This ensures safe riding and achieves harmony in busy areas:

- a) safety is paramount and a collision should be avoided at all times
- b) before entering the warm-up area make sure the gateway and immediate track are clear
- c) riders should pass left shoulder to left shoulder when on the track
- d) when not on the outside track (e.g. on a diagonal line), riders should give way to horses on their left
- e) the more progressive gait has priority on the track
- f) halt should not be on the track
- g) walk should not be on the track and does not have right of way
- h) trot has priority over walk
- i) canter has priority over trot
- j) lateral work has priority over all paces
- k) when circling, anticipate your return to the track so as to not stop the flow of other riders
- l) mounting, dismounting and gear adjustment should be done off the track
- m) consideration should be given to behaviour of other horses in the arena that may upset your horse
- n) it may be necessary if your horse is upsetting others to leave the area
- o) if a horse is upsetting the majority, an Official should be sought with a view to requesting that horse's removal for safety's sake.

Common sense in the warm-up area.....

- The final "warm-up" area is only for use by competitors preparing for an impending dressage test. It is the area you ride in immediately before entering the competition arena.
- Do not take a horse (either mounted or in-hand) into the warm-up area if it is not competing.
- No lunging in the warm-up area – riding has priority.
- Sometimes only the next two or three competitors are permitted in the final warm-up area. Others will be advised to use other schooling areas away from the final warm-up and competition arena.
- Coaches are to remain on the outside of the warm-up area, and preferably use head-phones when communicating with their pupils.
- Keep your voice down. Remember that the sounds you make (clicking, growling, yelling!) may help your horse, but could have an adverse effect on other horses.
- Be careful how you use your whip – other horses may react more enthusiastically than your own!
- Keep a distance and avoid riding too close to another horse.
- Look where you are going! When turning, check your "rear view" first.
- If your horse is having "behavioural problems", move the horse to a quiet area, or inner track, or possibly leave the warm-up area, so as not to upset other horses.
- Likewise, if you see another horse misbehaving, stay away and if you have to ride near it, do so quietly.
- If a rider falls off or there is a loose horse, you should halt until the situation is under control.
- Listen and abide by the instructions of the Steward/Official.
- Be considerate of others at all times. Everyone has equal right in the warm up area.
- Above all, use your common sense and make it a safe and pleasant environment for everyone.



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My Road to Rio By Sharon Jarvis

Every four years, you get four and half minutes to show the world you are the best. Four and a half minutes to show the hours and hours of training you have put into yourself and your horse, two bodies working as one. Your mission, to guide the horse through what would be the equivalent to a gymnastic floor routine combined with a ballet dance. Graceful and accurate yet powerful, strong and elastic.

The Olympic Games have the three different disciplines whereas the Paralympic Games only include dressage. The Olympic Games, open for anyone good enough. The Paralympic Games are for those athletes good enough with a physical or vision impairment. Athletes are put into grades according to their impairment so that similar impairments compete together, making it an as even playing field as possible. In equestrian there are 5 different grades 1a, 1b, 2, 3 and 4. Grade 1a being the most impairment and grade 4 the least. I compete in grade 3. Interestingly the 'para' part of Paralympics does not stand for "paraplegic" or "paralysed", it stands for "parallel", meaning that the athletes get the same opportunities to compete the same as Olympians. And trust me there is nothing spared, the games are amazing, the only thing that is different is the crowds are smaller that come and watch but all the pomp and ceremony is still there, nothing less.



How do I come about being eligible? I had bone cancer when I was 7. I had a Ewing's Sarcoma in my left femur. I was treated with chemotherapy and radiation therapy as well as surgery. As a result I am very grateful to say the doctors saved my leg from amputation but it did get left with limited range of motion and strength from my hip down. As well as this, I also have some slight limitations in my lower right leg from having my growth plates stapled in my right knee while I was still growing as I had ended up with a 6 cm difference in my leg length. While all of this was happening, the lasting implications of all of this were not really thought about because everyone was just happy I was still alive! The hardest thing for me during this time was that I was not able to do what I loved, horse riding, for the following 6 years.



Sharon and Ceasy competing at Boneo Park

Fast forward a lot of years filled with pony club, showing, eventing and a bit of dressage and I am at a competition one day and I am spotted getting on my horse on the wrong side, as I do as I cannot get on from the correct side. And I am asked if I had ever considered trying for the Paralympics. Well, I was so shocked that someone saw me as having that much of a disability I cried my whole way home from the comp. But what I realised the next day was, what an amazing opportunity this was, to represent my country doing what I love. So I have grabbed it with both hands and run!

The following year I competed at the World Championships for Para-Dressage that were held in Hartpury England and then onto the Paralympics the following year in 2008, although the games were held in Beijing, the horse events were held in Hong Kong. All competitions since 2004 have been own horse competitions meaning you have to take your own horse, so flying around the world with your best friend is something pretty special. The Games really blew me away; the standard of horses and riders is incredible. One of Australia's best dressage horses at the time Victory Salute was ridden by Georgia Bruce a grade 4 rider, only! Managed winning Bronze! Two actually. These games gave me a huge insight into the difference between winning a medal and not. I (according to me) came the worst place possible, 4th, there is nothing for 4th! I might as well have come last! But what this did do was give me the incredible burning desire to keep going and try for that medal.

The World Equestrian Games were two years on and for the first time Para was going to be included with all the other disciplines. So the focus shifted to there. A lot can happen in 2 years and dealing with the sudden death of my father was quiet devastating but made me more focused and determined than ever. And, as they say the rest is history....coming home with two bronze medals really was amazing, seeing the Australian flag rise up as you are standing on the podium was truly something I will never forget.

As you know, in this game of riding it takes two, you and the horse, and you are only ever as good as the horse under you. Unfortunately, just months before the London Paralympics I made the heartbreaking decision to retire my ever faithful partner Applewood Odoardo. We had been managing some issues with him and I could not guarantee he would still be sound at the end of the trip. He deserved to finish at the top of his game and he had done so much for me that he deserved the right thing to be done by him. He is still happily retired at the family farm in Donnybrook.

Now the easy thing to do would be to hang up the high performance competition boots and take an easy way in life but I still have this burning desire in me to go for that medal. Now trust me, I have tried to flick the



switch off but it just keeps switching back on! So I will keep on trying! Finding a potential international para horse is no easy task. Now the level of tests that I am required to ride in grade 3 has the movements from elementary dressage for the Team and Individual test and medium for the freestyle. But the horses way of going needs to be that of an advanced - Prix St George level horse. The tests are also quite tricky with the quickness of the transitions and also the layout of the tests. The marking of the test also does not allow for any mistakes with many individual marks for movements.

So the search to find a suitable horse began, as my family and I were no longer in a financial position to buy something ourselves I had the help of good friends, Jade Moody and her father Alan. We searched Australia high and low with no success. During this time I had been lucky enough to ride the then Narbethong Equestrian Park/Kate Barton owned Lord Larmarque and after I had been riding him for a year and a half the opportunity to purchase him came up. Knowing where he was at and the possibility that he may not be ready for a Rio campaign but loving his personality and the bond we then had, everything ended up falling into place for his purchase for the Moody's and I.

In conversation with EA High Performance towards the end of 2014 and questioning Rio plans I was given an opportunity through the Winning Edge program for EA to help facilitate a syndication of a potential Paralympic horse. Knowing Lord Larmarque may not be ready in time I decided to do what I had done with other exciting opportunities in my life, weigh up all the pros and cons. I decided, like most other people, that I had two ways you could deal with it, take a few spoonful's of cement so you are tough enough when the critics try and get you and saddle up and enjoy the ride, or you could run far away from the opportunity because the responsibility of it is just far too scary. I decided to saddle up and enjoy the ride!

Ceasy (Cc) came back to WA from Holland towards the end of May. She is now owned by a syndicate of people, though I have her at my expense. A combination of good dutch blood with both Ferro and Jazz in her breeding, she is a 17 hh black, KWPN mare. After her arrival we set about getting to know each other and attended our first open competition towards the end July having a win in the medium class.

The second half of 2015 presented some challenges for me. At the end of July I suffered a fracture in my 'bad' leg. No I didn't fall off a horse! It actually happened while coaching at Capel Pony Club. I just turned and felt my leg go funny. The doctors decided to leave it to see if it would heal but due to the radiation therapy I had had as a child the bone is basically dead. So after 10 weeks it was decided that surgery to insert a femoral nail would be the best option. The surgeon was able to use the latest technology with a special shape and coating to hope for the best result. I had now been off horses for three months. Luckily my horses had remained in training thanks to some very good friends.



Sharon and M'liss Henry at Claremont Therapeutic Riding Centre



Surgery took place just 6 weeks before the start of the first selection event for the Australia Para-Equestrian Dressage Team taking place in Werribee, Victoria. The decision was made to send the horses to NSW where my coach from there, Rozzie Ryan, could help prepare them while I recovered from surgery. A normal recovery would be 4-6 weeks, I was allowed back on riding after 3.

My check up after surgery was 3 weeks and 1 day to the day. Now my surgeon had said if all went to plan I would be able to get on a horse after this. Well I had already decided that it had gone to plan so I pre-arranged my first ride for immediately after his appointment! Now I had some very lovely offers from friends that I could use their horse to get on but I was quiet apprehensive about it all really so I called upon someone who has a great deal of expertise in this area of helping people get on a horse after Injuries, who better than the legendary M'liss Henry at the Claremont Therapeutic Riding Centre. Well thankfully my appointment with the surgeon went to plan and he was very happy with how the leg looked on x-ray and there was even some bone growing where they had put the fragments in the hole that was there. So off I went riding! Well actually I think it could be better defined as sitting on a horse and the horse taking me for a ride! M'liss was brilliant, she just led me around until I had had enough. I can't tell you all the crazy emotions that went through my head that day. So happy to be on top, but incredibly stiff and sore and I thought "oh my god am I really going to be able to pull this off?" with the competition in three weeks and I was just struggling to walk on a horse! Bit by bit it started to happen. I went to the CTRC a further five times over the next week and under the watchful eye of M'liss by my last ride I had walk, trot, canter and a small bit of leg yield and shoulder in happening. The horses were brilliant and looked after me as I was still struggling with the idea of what I was doing but I was not about to give up. Next thing to do was get on a plane and re unite with my horses that were in training with Rozzie. Rozzie had coached me in 2010 to help me win my medals at WEG, so it made sense to go back training with her again.

It was a bit of a nerve wracking thing to do, turning up to prepare for a competition, The Saddleworld Dressage Festival in Werribee, the first of the Australian Selection Events for the Rio Paralympics not even knowing if you could ride long enough to get through a test let alone the warm up beforehand! Rozzie remained training the horses for me and then at the end of each ride I would hop on each of them for 5 minutes with just a little walk, trot, canter and then built this up to where I would run through and practice the tests I would have to ride at the competition. I was still getting used to the different feeling that my leg was presenting and trying to work out what was the now 'normal' feeling was or if my leg was trying to tell me it did not like something. It didn't take long to work out it did not like any twisting yet so lunging my own horses was out of the question so I was very grateful to the people who work there for helping me out when I needed. I still could not actually do up my own riding boot on my new leg so they were also a great help for this. There were celebrations in the tack room the day I actually finally did my boot up myself! I only had a week and a half since arriving to get myself sorted enough to be able to make the trip down the Werribee for the competition, the pressure was on!

There is a very important factor when competing at major events and that is having a very good groom to look after the horse, organise you and have everything spot on for you and your horse to enter the arena in excellent physical and mental preparation. This is the reason I flew Emma Bardot over to help me at the Dressage Festival. Emma and I go way back and she is great with my horses and can deal with me and my little OCD's at competitions! Not only was Emma grooming for me she was also driving the horses and I from Ryan's near Newcastle all the way down to Werribee.

Dressage Festival is one of my favourite events in Australia. I don't know what it is about it but I always enjoy it and this year was no exception. Both horses had travelled down well. Bug (Lord Larmarque) found it all a bit too hard to contain his excitement in his stable and kicked up his heels and unfortunately next morning was sore so the decision to scratch him was made, so disappointing as he was working great. Luckily it was only because his shoe had shifted on his hoof that had made him sore and was soon corrected. Although this was disappointing it did give me more of a chance to focus on Cc. Usually I do not lunge my horses very much in their work but as I was still not riding my full amount much of Cc's warmup was on the lunge with me just hoping on in time to have a walk, trot, canter and then ride my test. I was very pleased and relieved to just get through and finish my first test, the Grade 3 Team Test. I was very happy to find out I had won it too! The next day was the Individual Championship test. Now Werribee can be a bit famous for its weather, known as 'Werribee Weather' it can be hot, and blowing, or wet and wild, or just plain freezing! Well Werribee decided it should turn it on! Blowing a gale, I was lucky not to get blown off Cc! We started our test fine but the wind was



really going off and just as I came around onto the short side at A the arena gate blew right onto the track in front of us! Well it was a quick 180 degree turn from Cc and I! Some quick thinking and turn back around, go to the inside of the gate which was right where I needed to make a halt and rein back! Cc did so well to stand next to the gate that had just tried to hit her! I was so proud of how she tried to not be scared, especially as I could feel her heart beating! I then went off down the other end of the arena for the next movements of the test, luckily while I was down the other end, an official came running into the arena and removed the gate out of the way as it was directly where I needed to ride down the centreline for the next 3 movements. So I was very happy just to get through the rest of the test and Cc was a bit on her toes after the gate debacle. The score reflected this and we came in 3rd place. So that day was another to add to the experiences list! I have never had that happen before!! All I can actually say is that all the work we did with Cc desensitising with Jess Manson and Bec Thomas while I was out of action came in very handy! We had a day off from competition on the Saturday although our day was full of talks about Rio plans and what to expect and how selections work etc. Sunday was Freestyle competition day. Everything should be planned and prepared to a T, well I went into my test, not having ever ridden the test on Cc nor had I ever ridden her to the music! I knew the test and the music as it had been prepared a couple of years earlier for another horse I rode! But as we had not had time to actually make Cc her own due to my limited time on her we thought we would just give it a go! I could not believe it as I was riding it. I had time to think to myself, "wow this is actually working"! I really enjoyed the test and was stoked to come first with over 73% Imagine what will happen when we actually have one that is properly designed for her!

Boneo Park CPEDI*** was held on the 20th to 22nd January. This event is the biggest Para event of the year as it is the only International Para event for the year and was the only chance riders had to qualify for the Paralympics in Australia. To be eligible for Paralympic Selection (IPC ruling) a horse/rider combination must gain over 60% at a 3* or above event. Now this is easy in Europe as there are many throughout the year but this is the only chance in Australia! So there were a total of 27 combinations taking part, there were also riders from New Zealand and Singapore taking part. This was also an important competition for Australia as this was the chance Australia had to Qualify for a team spot at Rio. Australia needed to post the higher team score against New Zealand in order to gain the team a spot in the competition in Rio. Four Riders were selected to be in the Australian team for this and I was lucky enough to be one of them along with Katie Umback, Joann Formosa and Victoria Davies. Our scores from the Team Test and the Individual Championship test are added together to gain our team score. Ceasy was really going well with still more in the tank. She produced a super first test and scored a 71.9% just off our target score of 72.021% and a win! Bug did not score as well as he could but I had not competed on him since July so we were a bit out of match practice. The next day our friend, the wind, had picked up a bit which did put the wind up Ceasy a bit! But it really did make her come alive a bit more and I really did discover the extra power there! A little tense but some super moments for a 72.3% and a very close win. I could not have been more pleased for Ceasy. Though horses have got to be one of the greatest levelers, Bug decided it was not his day and I didn't get to show off his great work that he had been doing, as much as he was not naughty, his mind was just elsewhere, but some days boy will just be boys and that was one of those days. The Friday was Freestyle day and since the Dressage Festival freestyle had worked ok we decided to keep it. The Freestyle was in the indoor arena and Ceasy and I had a couple of communication errors unfortunately so missed top spot but came 2nd on a very respectable 73%. The really important part was that Australia had beaten New Zealand in the Teams competition and earns a team spot of 4 riders at the Rio Paralympics! Not only that but I was part of an Australian Team that produced the highest team score for Australia ever!

So that was the end of part one of the campaign. Emma, the horses and I pulled out to make the drive home across the Nullarbor early on the Sunday morning. The long drive provides plenty of time for assessing, planning, contemplating and organising for the next part of the campaign. Planning logistics to make it happen! This first part though would not have happened if it was not for amazing sponsors, supporters, the Wally Foreman Scholarship, owners, friends and family. Thank you all. As it currently stands I'm ranked 3rd in Australia according to selection policy. Australia will take a team of 4 riders. The next selection event takes place in Sydney 7-9 April at the Sydney CDI, that same weekend is the first selection event in Europe for European based Australian combinations will take place. They then have three more events that take place through to the 22nd May. I will then know if I have made the team. There are about 9 combinations contesting the events over there. So there is a long way to go until I know if I have made the team. But until then I will focus on the job at hand and train hard and head back east again on the 16th March to get some more



training in with Rozzie before the competition and then ride for all I've got at Sydney CDI! And then the day after CDI, drive back home across the Nullarbor again and keep training like I am heading to Rio!!

I'd like to thank those who have already supported my fundraising efforts to help make this Paralympic campaign happen. There are more events coming up if anyone is interested being involved in any way.

Sharon and Ceasy at the indoor arena familiarisation at Dressage Festival at Werribee

www.dressagewa.org