

Houston Dressage Society Spring Classic I & II CPEDI3* Kicks-Off at the Great Southwest Equestrian Center

RELEASE: April 27, 2012

AUTHOR/ADMINISTRATOR: Lindsay McCall for USPEA

Katy, TX - April 26, 2012-The inaugural day of the Houston Dressage Society Spring Classic I & II CPEDI3* kicked off with the FEI Para-Equestrian Jog. Fifteen horse and rider combinations stepped forward to be evaluated under FEI Veterinarian Dr. Mike Tomlinson and Technical Delegate Carlos Lopes, FEI "4*", FEI PE "5*" (POR). Every Para-Equestrian horse passed the veterinary check securing each of their times for Friday's Team Test competition. During the jog, equestrians showcased their best turnout and their efforts were rewarded. A \$100 gift certificate to Horse of Course was given to the Best Overall Presentation at the Jog. Canadian and Grade Ia rider Jody Schloss and horse Inspector Rebus earned the award which was donated by Susan Peacock. The Houston Dressage Society (HDS) Spring Classic I & II CPEDI3*, sponsored by The COR Group, is one of the last competitions for United States individuals to qualify for the 2012 USEF Paralympics Selection Trials in June. With the prestigious show grounds and FEI Ground Jury, this is a favorable location for the United States and Canadian competitors to gain additional international experience before the London Paralympics. Running simultaneously with the CPEDI3* will be the CDI3* and CDI1* sponsored by North Texas Equestrian Center and \$10,000 HDS Dressage Derby.

Gaining additional international experience is important to United States Grade Ia Para-Equestrian Donna Ponessa (New Windsor, NY). As a competitor, she has excelled in the Para-Dressage ring. Her journey has gone from being diagnosed with a rare form of Multiple Sclerosis called Devic Disease, to being one of the world's top wheelchair tennis players, and now becoming one of the top United States Para-Equestrians. Donna is energized and delighted for this last opportunity to show before Selection Trials at the Houston Dressage Society CPEDI3*. Donna will be riding Dr. Michele Miles' horse Silvano for the three days of competition. Ponessa commented, "Just a month ago I came to Texas to try Silvano and now I am riding this wonderful horse and it continues to get better every day. On Wednesday, I was a little intimidated by him because he is a World Cup Show Jumper. Today, I felt more comfortable and I am looking forward to the Team Test on Friday."

Although Donna has two competitive horses at home in New York she has been delighted to ride Silvano this weekend. "We are leaving no stone unturned in the search for the most appropriate horse for my needs. Riding Silvano has been great especially with my coach Wes Dunham who has stuck by me and has learned the art of the Para-Equestrian discipline right beside me. I would also like to thank Sue and Kevin Niblo, Marshall & Sterling Insurance, Custom Saddlery, and of course Kai Handt who connected us with these awesome horses and made this whole trip possible. Lastly, thank you to Dr. Michele Miles who has allowed me to borrow her brilliant horse Silvano.

Also riding Silvano this weekend is Houston Dressage Society member and outstanding United States Para-Equestrian athlete Jonathan Wentz (Wylie, TX). Jonathan is looking forward to riding on his home turf at the Great Southwest Equestrian Center. Wentz will be riding NTEC Jabriel and sharing the mount Silvano during the weekend events. "Silvano is definitely a school master type of horse which is a change from my other two horses." smiled Wentz. "With three horses that have achieved great scores it is hard to choose among them but that is why we brought two horses to Houston and left NTEC Richter Scale back at home. At the Florida CPEDI3* in January Richter and Gabe (NTEC Jabriel) alternated each day both earning the top scores in the country. In Houston we are looking to see who can handle international pressure at an intense competition."

With the constant support of Kai Handt from the North Texas Equestrian Center (NTEC) Jon has been able to accomplish all types of goals. Wentz agreed, "Kai and Rachel from NTEC have been amazing over these last few years. I am also grateful to the Houston Dressage Society, The COR Group, and Dr. Michele Miles." This was the first CPEDI3* in Houston and the location and venue has made the show extraordinary.



Chef d'Equipe Missy Ranshausen and Lateran (Lindsay Y. McCall)



Jody Schloss and Inspector Rebus 2012 won the Overall Best Presentation at the Houston Dressage Society CPEDI3* FEI JOG (Lindsay Y McCall)

Competitors at the CPEDI3* will include hometown Para-Equestrian and 2011 USEF Para-Equestrian National Champion Grade Ib rider Jonathan Wentz (Wylie, TX). In Grade II will be 15 year-old Sydney Collier (Ann Arbor, Michigan) who will not be able to qualify due to her not reaching her 16th birthday before the London Paralympics. Collier has recently excelled in multiple international competitions traveling to Florida and California. Grade II rider Kim Jones (Georgetown, South Carolina) who is a veteran Para-Equestrian is looking forward to competing in her last CPEDI3* before the Selection Trials. Rounding out the Grade II division will be Gold and Silver Medal Para-Dressage rider and Four-Star Parelli Professional from Canada, Lauren Barwick. Californian Barbara Adside, and young Para-Equestrian Sydney Collier (Ann Arbor, MI). Wendy Fryke of Parker, Colorado will be showcasing her Grade III tests and Iana Gonzalez (San Diego, CA) and Jennifer Baker will round out the Grade IV competition from Loveland, Ohio.

Each of the Para-Equestrian athletes have amazing stories to tell and have achieved much success despite the many physical challenges they incur in everyday life. The range of disabilities and diagnoses include Multiple Sclerosis, limb loss, Lupus, Cerebral Palsy, brain and spinal cord injuries, and many other diagnoses. Due to the range of disabilities, Para-Equestrians are divided into five grade levels including Grade Ia, Ib, II, III, and IV. Grade Ia is the most severely impaired while Grade IV is the least impaired. Each grade competes alongside riders that have comparable inabilities. The Grades are not determined on skill level but are determined by an international classification process. Classifications are performed at each international competition by trained physical therapists or physicians who perform strength, range of motion and/or coordination tests on the athletes to assess their functional ability and approve them for adaptive equipment. Adaptive equipment is allowed as needed such as modified saddles, additional whips, rubber bands, looped reins and other aids to help compensate for a rider's disability.

To compare each Para-Equestrian Test to able-bodied Dressage levels Grade 1a is equivalent to Introductory Level, Grade 1b is equivalent to Training Level, Grade II is equivalent to First Level, Grade III is equivalent to Second Level and Grade IV is equivalent to Third Level. Competitions continue to be made possible for riders in each of the Grades through sponsorship and large financial dedication.

Without the generosity of sponsors, trainers, assistants, show managers, and owners the discipline of Para-Equestrian would not be possible. Many of the riders are unable to bring their own horses to each competition due to the logistics and distances that the horses many have to travel. Although there are multiple owners to be recognized Andrea Hart of Katy, TX has graciously provided her talented horse Nicolai to 15 year-old Sydney Collier and Olympian Courtney King-Dye. Due to Sydney's birthday she is not eligible to participate at the 2012 Paralympics. However, her dedication to gaining as much knowledge and experience as she can before the next World Equestrian Games has propelled her to top scores in multiple CPEDI3*. Each of these rider's goals may seem far apart but they both are looking to achieve their best scores at the HDS Spring Classic I & II. Courtney King-Dye has recently joined the ranks as a Para-Dressage rider and is hoping to earn her top scores for the 2012 Paralympics Selection Trials. Both riders are grateful for this opportunity. Collier commented, "I think this horse is amazing. He has a super adaptable mind set, looks beautiful, and has a wonderful personality. These qualities make him a great horse for both Courtney and I to ride. It has been so amazing to ride with Courtney. To have Lendon Gray warm-up the same horse that you are riding is really cool. Courtney is one of the funniest people I have ever met and it is nice to see her taking her situation one step at a time. You can truly see how hard she has been working and I am grateful to be able to share her first Para-Equestrian CDI with her. I am also appreciative of Nicolai's owner, Andrea Hart, trainer Rebekah Wesatzke, my mom and family, the many sponsors that are helping to put on this horse show and the multiple sponsors that have helped me along my way. I am looking forward to this weekend's tests under the large indoor at the Great Southwest Equestrian Center.

Friday's competition begins at 8:00 a.m. with the Team Tests followed by Saturday's Individual Test, and Sunday's Freestyle competition. Para-Equestrians will battle for high marks under international Ground Jury Kathy Amos-Jacob (FRA), David Schmutz (USA), Kristi Wysocki (USA), and Carlos Lopes (POR).

Schedule CPEDI3* Team Test Competition Friday April 27, 2012

Time	Name of Horse	Name of Rider	Country	Grade
8:00 a.m.	Isleno Arm	Iana Gonzalez	USA	Grade IV
8:25 a.m.	Lateran	Wendy Fryke	USA	Grade III
8:33 a.m.	Nicolai	Sydney Collier	USA	Grade II
8:41 a.m.	Madoc Dylan	Kim Jones	USA	Grade II
8:49 a.m.	Off to Paris	Lauren Barwick	CAN	Grade II
8:57 a.m.	NTEC Manchada	Barbara Adside	USA	Grade II
9:05 a.m.	Silvano	Jonathan Wentz	USA	Grade Ib
9:13 a.m.	VPRH Pegasus vom Niehaus-HOF	Laura Goldman	USA	Grade Ia
9:56 a.m.	Inspector Rebus	Jody Schloss	USA	Grade Ia
10:04 a.m.	Nicolai	Courtney King-Dye	USA	Grade Ia
10:12 a.m.	Silvano	Donna Ponessa	USA	Grade Ia
10:20 a.m.	NTEC Jabriel	Jonathan Wentz	USA	Grade Ib
10:28 a.m.	NTEC Manchada	Laura Goldman	USA	Grade Ia
10:55 a.m.	Farol	Iana Gonzalez	USA	Grade IV

11:03 a.m., Rondo Del Rey, Jennifer Baker, USA, Grade IV

For more information about the Spring Classic I and II CPEDI3* Hosted by Houston Dressage Society please visit www.HoustonDressageSociety.org. To view the prize list or show results please visit www.ShowSecretary.com or contact the Show Secretary Susan Peacock phone or email susan@showsecretary.com.