

### ***Steffen Peters reigns as king of California dressage.***

*by Marie Sebastian with Megan Mc Gee*

The 2017 Del Mar National put an exclamation point on Steffen Peters' reign as the king of California Dressage. Competing on three different mounts owned by Akiko Yamazaki's Four Winds Farm, Olympian and World Cup Champion Steffen Peters took home the first place honors in all his CDI and US Equestrian Selection classes and won some First Level classes just for good measure.



Steffen started out Friday, winning the CDI\* Prix St Georges, sponsored by Jen and Bruce Hlavacek, on Bailarino, the flashy Oldenburg gelding (72.982%). The San Diegan's success continued in the CDI-W Grand Prix, a US Equestrian Selection for the 2017 Dressage National Championship and 2018 World Cup Finals, sponsored by the Beverly J. Gepfer Foundation. Riding the ever-popular Rosamunde and just back from the recent World Cup Finals in Omaha, the pair earned the blue with a 69.660%. Steffen won again with Bailarino again on Saturday afternoon in the Intermediaire I (73.202%).

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In front of a live crowd of close to 3,000 and with live streaming world-wide during the Adequan Evening of Musical Freestyles on Saturday evening; Peters claimed the G-2 Software Solutions Grand Prix Freestyle title with Rosamunde (76.225%). Riding to music that included tunes from Coldplay and Rolling Stones, he and the 10-year-old Rheinlander mare rocked the house. This is the seventh Del Mar Grand Prix Freestyle victory for Steffen; Ravel (2010-2011), Legolas 92 (2012-2014-2016).

Steffen's success continued in the national show as he won First Level classes with the stunning six-year-old son of his retired World Cup Finals Champion Ravel. Galeno Gimli, also owned by Four Winds Farm, and the spitting image of his sire, secured the First Level High Point honors (77.778%) as well.

### Depth of Talent

While the Del Mar National highlighted Steffen Peters' dominance in Dressage, it also showcased the depth of talent continuing to grow. Having recently turned over the ride on his 2016 Olympic partner Legolas 92 to his long-time protégé Dawn White-O'Connor, she gamely finished second in the Friday's CDI-W Grand Prix (69.120%). Jan Ebeling of Moorpark, CA rode the Vantage Equestrian Groups FRH Rassolini to the third place honors (66.860%) followed closely by Kimberly McGrath on Winslow with 66.820%. Top five were rounded out by Terri Rocovich on Uiver with a 64.840%. Jan went on to take third place in the GP Freestyle behind Kimberly McGrath (Yucaipa) on Winslow and Dawn won the Sunday's Grand Prix Special.

Other big winners included husband and wife duo, David Blake and Rebecca Rigdon from Cardiff, CA. David won the USEF/Markel Developing Horse Prix St. Georges, sponsored by Four Winds Farm and the Fourth Level High Point (69.338%) on Pippa Bird's stunning black mare, Heide Spirit, and the USEF/Markel 4-Year-Old on Fendi WT, a Holsteiner mare, owned by Melanie Pai. Rebecca was second to her husband in this class riding Tiffany Mahoney's IN XS,

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and on her own Rheinlander mare, La Fariah, second to Steffen in the CDI1\* Prix St. Geroges and Intermediaire I, and first in Sunday's Intermediaire I Freestyle. For her efforts Rebecca won the Rubino Bellissimo Perpetual trophy, sponsored by Holly Bergay. The Young Horse divisions in both the National and CDI were sponsored by Shuttler Stables of Arizona. Their Hannoverian gelding, Sir Amour earned a 69.400% and the CDI 6-Year-Old Preliminary blue ribbon and top honors.



Another local favorite Nick Wagman (San Diego) won his Intermediaire II class riding the Dutch Warmblood gelding, Zenith, owned by Beverly Gepfer. The pair went on to win the FEI Freestyle TOC in the Adequan Evening of Musical Freestyles with a score of 69.750%. Nick's music was designed by his husband's nephew and was tailor made specifically for the horse. He garnered another first in the Developing PSG on Elizabeth Keadle's Dutch gelding, Ferrano.



### Farewell Sundayboy

But it wasn't all work at the Del Mar National: The audience was wowed by a special exhibition Freestyle by Anna Buffini (San Diego) and her self-described "best friend," Sundayboy. Showing the 18-year-old gelding in his final performance before stepping down from International competition, and performing to a medley of Neil Diamond tunes originally performed by Anna's coach, Gunter Seidel, she added an emotional moment to the evening.

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The Victorian Roses Ladies Riding Society added unique flair bringing some of the judges and sponsors in by carriage and then at intermission performing a drill that included carriages, carts, horses and mules. Capping off the evening was an exhibition Pas de Deux at the Grand Prix level, performed by Joy Rothe and Sarah Pinney riding the full brother and sister, Rohan and Rolex. The 'Dancing Duo' performed a brand new routine to the delight of the hundreds of local fans that have followed the pair's journey.

Friday night took a whole different look at dressage. To celebrate her 60th birthday, FEI Judge and USEF Youth Coach, Charlotte Bredahl put together an "International Judges Forum." But this was not like anything we have seen before. Judges were Olympians Robert Dover, Steffen Peters, Christine Traurig, Guenter Seidel and Jan Ebeling. Sitting behind them was the Supervisory Panel of 5\* judges, Raphael Saleh, Libby McMullen and Maria Colliander. The demo riders (on foot) were FEI judges, Jane Weatherwax, Bill Warren and Natacha Waddell and riders David Blake, Heidi Gaian, Cassidy Gallman and Marie Medosi. Charlotte gave demo riders directions on movements to perform and errors to make for judge's feedback. For some it may be hard to imagine, but amidst the seriousness of world class competition, there was a some laughing at dressage by those that know the sport best.