

2008 A Year for Family Focus and a Season of Training

Well known on the international Grand Prix dressage circuit, Suzanne Dansby-Phelps has found the time to reorganize and focus on some new goals. This accomplished competitor has been long or short listed for the USET dressage team for the past seven years. In 2006 she was a US team alternate in Germany for the World Equestrian Games. A familiar face on the Grand Prix dressage circuit, Suzanne has taken this opportunity to reorganize in 2008 and focus on some new goals. And they start at home.

Suzanne and her beau, Brooks Bollman, returned from a trip to the Florida Keys, engaged! Plans for the wedding are being made in between training and show schedules. They will unite their two families and Suzanne will maintain her training schedule. Conrad Schumacher will be coming to the United States to train Suzanne regularly. This joyful occasion will have Suzanne staying in Atlanta this winter season and focusing on family, her oncoming wedding and advancing her youngest star, Rower BE.

While Suzanne is centered on new riding and training goals this winter, her famous Grand Prix partner, Cooper, is back in action under going rehabilitation after stem cell surgery last fall. He has been in training, but was not yet ready for this year's Florida winter circuit. Suzanne may enter him in the Raleigh CDI, but her first priority is Cooper's fitness and well-being. "If he is at 110% in April, we may show in May and then go from there, step by step," said Suzanne, "Only time will tell. Right now it is just great to be riding and training him every day again."

Meanwhile, Kasper, Cooper's talented Grand Prix stablemate, will continue his training while he is offered for sale. And Suzanne is also concentrating her focus on Rower BE, who is progressing quickly and will likely make his FEI level debut this fall in the Prix St. Georges.

When Suzanne debuted her young Rhinelander gelding, Rower BE, in mid-summer 2007, he earned top scores from some of the sport's most respectable judges. On his first trip to the show ring, Rower BE scored a 73.243% and won his Second Level Test 4 class. Two shows later, he followed this performance by winning both his Second Level classes with scores in the 70's at the Poplar Place Farm Dressage Show held in Hamilton, Georgia. This time Rower BE had the highest score at the show, a 78.810% from judge, Linda Zang, which gave him a decisive win in the Second Level Test 4 class. This talented young horse's average score for 2007 was 72 + %!!!

Suzanne is also excited to have time to spend with her extended family of riding students. "I really love teaching and helping to develop riders and their horses," she said. Suzanne's students had a banner year in 2007 and she hopes to help them continue their winning ways this year.

Another big change in Suzanne's life is the departure of Thiana Hannigan, the "groom she couldn't live without." Thiana returned to her home in New Zealand to spend time with her family. "Thiana is like a daughter to me," said Suzanne. "She loved and cared for my horses like they were her own. I shall miss her sense of humor and her work ethic." Thiana left for her homeland with many good wishes from Dancing Horse Farm in her wake.

After communicating over several months via emails in an extensive interview process, Suzanne has hired a new working student, Kim Schisler, who begins working with her in April at Applewood Farm, in Alpharetta, Georgia, where Suzanne has re-located her horses and her DHF Dressage crew. Kim spends her time training, teaching and constantly striving to achieve her goals as an FEI level competitor.

With all this and wedding plans to be made, Dansby-Phelps has a summer of fun, farm and family in front of her. “ I am focused on my riding and training goals,” explains Suzanne, “but I am also grateful for the opportunity to enjoy life with my new family.” Congratulations to the happy couple!

Photo: Happy Together. L to Right Brooks' children, Mark and Laura, fiancé Brooks, bride to be, Suzanne, William and Elizabeth in front!