

A Few Minutes with Elizabeth Ball

By Christina Beal

Elizabeth Ball is a successful dressage trainer and international competitor. Elizabeth was a member of the 1995 Pan Am Silver Medal Team on her own Bolshoj. She has had continued success winning numerous USDF horse of the year titles and more recently she competed in the Collecting Gates Farm/USEF National Intermediaire I Championships. Elizabeth currently operates a training barn where she rides and teaches, in Rancho Santa Fe, CA.

Sidelines: Who have been your most significant mentor(s) in the sport of dressage? And how have they influenced your training and riding philosophy?

EB: I began riding with Lilo Fore at the age of sixteen. She was a major influence on my riding. I learned so much from her including the fundamentals of dressage, the importance of correct basics, and to be very considerate of the horses. As a member of USET, I was very fortunate to also work with several clinicians through the years including Harry Boldt, Reiner Klimke and Klaus Balkenhol. My second mentor in dressage is Guenter Seidel. I started working with him about seven years ago when I moved to Southern California. It was a natural choice for me to work with Guenter, given his amazing talent as rider and trainer. Plus, we developed a wonderful friendship as members of the 1995 Pan Am team. Both Lilo and Guenter emphasize the importance of excellent basics, along with constant awareness of the rider's seat and position, and how, for better and worse, it influences the horse. Also, they taught me that we must look at ourselves to better improve the horse, while always keeping the horse's basic thoroughness as the highest priority. Guenter has extensive international experience and knowledge about developing Grand Prix horses. He demands much from me and the horses, but always in a calm, clear, and fair way. I learned from both of them to become passionate about very correct basics, for the horse and rider. It's in this way that harmony and brilliance are possible.

Sidelines: Who have been the most important horses in your career?

EB: The first horse that was most important in my career was Bolshoj. Lilo and I found him as a three year old in Europe. He was an amazing horse with a super temperament and was my dear friend. I trained him through all the levels; he was the first Grand Prix horse that I developed from the start. Bolshoj and I were members of the 1995 Pan Am Silver Medal Team in Buenos Aires, Argentina. I learned from him that a horse will try so incredibly hard for its rider, even beyond its natural ability, when trained with compassion.

Confidant is another very memorable horse. He is a gorgeous little black stallion, with so much character and exuberance in his work. I purchased him when he was starting his changes, and trained him through Grand Prix. Since then, several of my students have enjoyed riding him. Raphael, whom I bred and trained to Grand Prix, was also very influential in my career, especially given his conformational challenges. We had to be very creative in our training strategies to successfully reach GP. Both



Elizabeth Ball on Orion at the Selection Trials

Photo by Christina Beal

Confidant and Raphael won the USDF Intermediate II Horse of the Year title. De la Frontera, owned by the Glass', and Orion, owned by Eckstein Farm, LLC, are two other delightful horses that I have had the opportunity to train and compete. They are both wonderfully talented and generous horses that have allowed me to gain much confidence and relaxation while competing this past season.

Sidelines: Can you tell us about the horses you currently own and/or are currently working with?

EB: Currently I have a seven year old Sandro Hit gelding named Soubirous. We purchased him last winter from Europe where Guenter found him for me. He is a very bright and intelligent horse who is always eager to work, as well as a very lovely mover. I have shown him a couple of times just to get him out and to experience things. He did 2nd level a couple months ago and received a 76%. We will be showing him 4th level in a few weeks and are planning on doing the developing horse PSG with

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