

DRESSAGE TODAY

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EXTRA

*Johann
Hinnemann
on Submission*

Tips from
Top Dressage
Grooms

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FROM THE DRESSAGE TODAY ARCHIVES

SUBMISSION is the GOAL at Every Level

Johann Hinnemann welcomes Adequan USDF FEI-level Trainers Conference attendees to his inner circle.

*Story and photos by
Kim F. Miller*

Germany's Johann Hinnemann offered attendees of the 2018 Adequan® U.S. Dressage Federation FEI Trainers Conference in Del Mar, California, a glimpse into his training philosophies. With Steffen Peters and Kathleen Raine among the demo riders and Christine Traurig as Hinnemann's assistant and translator, the event had a family feel. The rest of the demo riders and the mostly upper-level trainers watching and participating in post-ride discussions got a two-day immersion in Hinnemann's methods. A former coach of the German, Dutch and Canadian teams, the German *Reitmeister* is a sought-after instructor and continues to ride, breed and develop young horses in Germany and California.

"Submission is the most important goal in every stage of training," Hinnemann began at the Feb.

6-7 conference held at the Del Mar Fairgrounds. "A supple horse is not necessarily a submissive horse. But a submissive horse is for sure supple." He defined a submissive horse as one who "does everything you ask from behind to front, front to behind, left to right and right to left." He emphasized transitions because they are exercises that teach obedience while building suppleness.

Hinnemann described the horse's intelligence and willingness to work as "inside suppleness," and stressed that it was as critical as physical suppleness for success at every level. The opening halt on centerline and immediate trot that follows in most dressage tests showcase the rider's ability to attain the highest degree of mental and physical suppleness. "First, the horse trusts us to stand there, then he goes immediately into the trot. That's a point where we can show how good our training is. That is the art of all riding."

Young Horses: Culture and Telling Tails

Hinnemann first learned to gauge young-horse suitability from his grandfather, who worked with the family's horses at their home farm in Germany. "Every year, one or two youngsters were gone quickly after being brought in from the fields, and



German dressage trainer Johann Hinnemann finished each day riding his client's horse, Dark Dynamic, a Grand Prix veteran owned by U25 rider Sarah Runge. A student of his in Germany, she and the 15-year-old Hannoverian by Don Vino came to California for the Adequan West Coast Dressage Festival that surrounded the conference.

one year I asked him why they were sold so fast. 'They had no culture,' he told me. If they stepped on his feet in the barn aisle or something, they were gone."

The conference began with two 4-year-olds, Raine's Westfalian gelding Figaro and Emily Miles' Rheinland stallion Sole Mio. Both embodied the clinician's most preferred young-horse traits: intelligence and culture. It's a look in the eye and the face indicating "there's something going on between the ears," Hinnemann explained. He likes "an open eye with a trustful look. It's a window to the horse's character and temperament and to how he connects to people."

The two 4-year-olds received strong praise. "They carry their riders happily, wait for their riders and listen to



“I’m into intelligence,” said Hinnemann when asked about his favorite traits in a young horse. The 4-year-old Rheinlander stallion Sole Mio embodied that and another trait, culture—a willingness to listen to and work happily with his rider Emily Miles. Sole Mio is owned by breeder Leslie Waterman.

them. They have inside [mental] balance. They’re not against anything and they try to work for us.”

After culture and intelligence comes overall impression and rhythmic basic gaits. A working hind leg and suppleness through the body are among the desirable characteristics of a horse that’s “naturally closed up” in his body. At the same time, ground-covering strides are good, too. A short cannon bone in the hind leg is a preferred conformational trait because it enables the horse to bend more in the hock.

A longer body is appealing. “If there’s more distance between the ribs, it’s easier for them to bend through the rib cage.” That’s key to lateral suppleness, as was demonstrated later in the clinic as the older horses learned or refined zig-zag half passes. He prefers a shorter neck because that’s easier to control and col-

lect, especially for an amateur rider, and a smooth, relatively flat back with a place to put the saddle.

The tail plays a role in Hinnemann’s analysis. “I never bought a horse without touching the tail to find out about its thickness,” he said. “I like a big, thick tail. The theory behind that is that most of the time if there’s not much hair or bone going into the back, you cannot expect much in the middle of the spine, so there’s not much room for muscles. I want to see a strong enough bridge to carry me.”

Questions from attendees were a big part of the conference and an early example was, “If you had to choose between a good trot and a good canter, which would it be?” Hinnemann wanted “both,” of course, but chooses canter if needed. A good canter usually goes with a good walk.

Secondly, there’s that “second trot” that didn’t exist in the German master’s early days. “When Reiner Klimke’s Ahlerich won the 1984 Olympic Games, his normal working trot was like a carriage horse,” Hinnemann recalled. “Today, breeding has developed the ability of the trot, and as trainers we have learned to work more with it. Even with a young horse, at 5 or 6, we can develop the muscles and train the horse in a way that does not at all go against classical training. I had a horse who trotted for a 5, but once he learned the passage, he trotted quite nicely.” Much of that work to improve the trot is done at the canter, Hinnemann noted.

Another reason to prioritize canter quality in a young horse is that the gait makes up about 35 percent of upper-level tests, Hinnemann estimated. “And, especially at my age, I go more to the canter than the trot!”

The ideal starting process at his home stable, Krüsterhoff in Voerde, Germany, begins when homebreds come to the training stable at 2½ years of age to “play



Kathleen Raine and 4-year-old Figaro, a Westfalian by Fürstenball, exemplified the culture and intelligence Hinnemann likes in a young horse. Figaro also has a short cannon bone, which helps a horse bend more in the hock.

around with them." They are saddled, longed, groomed and taught to lead and load into the trailer, everything except riding, and they spend their days outdoors. Intense training sessions at any age are limited to 20 to 30 minutes, coupled with as much active, light-contact walking as possible and maximum time spent freely moving in pastures or turnout. Hinnemann shared several instances of horses greatly improving their fitness, relaxation and "inside suppleness" by more time spent walking and simply being out of their stalls.

The idea of brief intervals of intense training was applied to horses of all ages and experience during the conference. Whether introducing or refining a movement, riders were coached to maintain it for just a few strides before moving out in a relaxed, yet forward stride.

Canter Depart

Among the thousands of transitions executed during the weekend, the canter depart received the lion's share of attention. Peters shared his experience

Tack Talk

Germany's Johann Hinnemann is not a fan of a few new-fangled things in the sport. Short girths and saddle blocks that lock the rider into place are among them.

Of short girths, he questioned how it's possible to maintain the saddle's centered position on the horse's back when the rider must lean over so far to adjust it. During his riding demonstration, he summoned help from the ground to adjust his horse's girth.

Hinnemann said he loves his own Passier saddle that "was invented just after the First World War." He wondered aloud, "Is it possible to buy a normal saddle anymore?" By "normal," he meant a saddle that allows the rider enough room to move as needed to get and maintain his balance, rather than be "just stuck in the saddle."

He acknowledged the young riders in his yard are very happy with their modern saddles. He also shared the results of a visit from a saddle fitter determining which saddles needed reflocking and where they needed it. "He had a blanket and a big computer and, putting the blanket on each horse, the computer showed where it needed to be restuffed. He tested 15 saddles and, at the end, I said, let's try my old model. It was the best and there was nothing wrong with it!"



Hinnemann liked Lehua Custer’s 8-year-old KWPN, F.J. Ramzes, and while he expressed his loyalty to German-bred horses, he offered Custer his cell-phone number “in case [she] wanted to get rid of that one [horse].”

getting Hinnemann’s help with the passage–canter transition during his heyday with Ravel, who was “tricky” about that transition. “Jo said everything from the Grand Prix is working,” Peters relayed. “It’s the Training Level transitions we’ve got to work on.” And this was when Peters and Ravel were at their Aachen-winning peak.

With that in mind, Hinnemann demonstrated how he trains the canter depart in young horses, the first of several exercises that require the understep and power of the inside hind leg. “The canter depart is the most important aid we have to teach. When we do a double pirouette, every stride is a canter depart aid and this is where we start.”

Trotting on a circle, Raine and Miles were coached to cue the canter just as they reached the rail, then come back

down to the trot and repeat the canter depart at the same spot on the next revolution. Precision is a big part of Hinnemann’s teaching, and cueing the canter depart at the same place repeatedly is a simple, clear way to teach and reinforce the aids to the horse. The next step was walk–canter transitions, requested with the same aids and at the same spot where the circle track hit the rail. Working in both directions, “I like to stay on that exercise until the horse learns it 100 percent,” Hinnemann said.

Walk–canter and canter–walk transitions were used in every session, often in the midst of flying-changes work and to calm the horse or build his confidence by returning to something he knows well. In the downward transition from canter or trot to walk, however, “don’t [give] the reins immediately,” Hinnemann stressed.

“Too often, that happens and the horse thinks ‘Oh, now the walk.’ His back, belly and head go down.” He coached continuing 10 to 15 meters with contact and active walk aids to establish that as habit. “That way you don’t even have to think about it in the test.”

Push in Downward Transitions

Working with more experienced horses, Hinnemann emphasized that, “You push more in a downward transition than in a forward transition. I learned that from [German dressage legend] Georg Theodorescu and have always kept that sentence in mind.” A related idea is that “you have to passage into piaffe and piaffe into passage,” said Hinnemann, all toward producing the quick step needed for high-level work. “You have to have your horse in front of your leg so you can push.”

The goal is a feeling Hinnemann described as a basic principal of training. “It’s when you push from behind into

the bit and there is a reaction because the impulsion is coming from behind,” he said. “The hand is quiet, the withers come high and the horse is sensitive to the bit.” Contact is maintained, the horse’s hindquarters are underneath him and his back and withers are high. When Hinnemann requested Traurig’s help articulating the idea, she described it as “difficult terminology.” Traurig defined the sensation in her December 2016 *Dressage Today* article titled “Pushing Away from the Bit.” At the conference, she said, “It’s when the horse is pushed from a driving aid to the restraint of contact. It’s that moment of reaction when the desire to go to the bit is there coupled with a high degree of respect for the contact.”

These ideas were put to practice as California-based dressage trainer David Wightman prepped for the pirouette with the 8-year-old Hanoverian gelding Silberpfeil, who has competed to Developing Horse Prix

St. Georges. Seeking to take impulsion into collection and collection back into impulsion, Hinnemann first had Wightman do simple changes, canter-walk, on the diagonal to reinforce the canter aids, then progress to three flying changes on the diagonal, focusing on controlling the quality of canter strides between each change rather than the number of strides in between. After the third change, Hinnemann asked for extended canter to set a forward frame of mind, then to come back through the short side. The next step was a medium, then extended, canter on the diagonal with a simple change at the rail. The idea is to get the horse coming back by himself so the rider can push more because the horse knows he needs to come back on his own.

Wightman next did a few diagonals with three-tempis with walk breaks

on the short end. “A lot of horses [hold] their breath during changes,” Hinnemann noted. “A walk break in between shows them they’ve done well and educates them how to breathe.”

They finished the first day’s work by cantering down centerline, collecting into a pirouette canter for a few strides without turning, resuming a working canter, then collecting again for another few strides of pirouette canter in the other half of the centerline, again without turning into an actual partial pirouette. They were working on getting Silberpfeil to sit and improve collection in canter to prep for pirouette.

The next day, Hinnemann observed that Silberpfeil’s canter was rounder and more through. They parlayed that in-front-the-leg work into the day’s trot focus, producing half-steps that begin

“You push more in a downward transition than in a forward transition. —Georg Theodorescu

piaffe and passage work. Hinnemann noted a common mistake with horses who have a naturally big trot. “People want to develop the big trot. Then it’s difficult to bring it back because they have this big, strong muscle and it’s hard to get it back. So we do half-steps: always piaffe before passage. It’s the idea that in the end you will put them together.”

Gait Quality

Peters, who was 17 when he first started riding with Hinnemann, rode a 6-year-old Rheinlander stallion, Demetrios, during the conference. Hinnemann noted that the stallion had his sire’s (Diamond Hit) natural gift for piaffe and passage. He complimented the uphill impression and self-carriage and predicted that the young stallion’s slightly “high behind” frame would balance out as he aged and developed more muscle. To build Demetrios’

natural attributes, Hinnemann told Peters to focus on getting the horse’s nose out more, developing more reach in the front legs and a trot with more elevation and power. “Concentrating on that will develop the muscles and strength needed for passage later,” he said.

With Peters alternating between collected, working and extended trots, Hinnemann explained that the collected trot should have elevation and enough ground cover for the hind hoof to nearly reach the imprint of the front hoof. The working trot should have a bit of overstep and the extended trot “as much as possible.”

In one of several anecdotes from dressage’s history, Hinnemann said that ground coverage has always been an important element of gait quality, but measuring methods have evolved. Approx-

mately 25 years ago, Germany’s *Bundeschampionate* for young horses required them to maintain certain ground coverage

of the gaits: 350 meters at the walk, 750 meters trotting and 1,500 meters at canter, each in three minutes. Prior to that, Grand Prix tests had time limits, all in order to encourage horses to cover the ground nicely.

Peters and Demetrios moved on to exercises to build more leg crossing in half-pass. When introducing the movement, Hinnemann said horses are most comfortable starting at the centerline and moving toward the rail. In a confirmed half-pass, the horse is slightly flexed in the direction of travel. However, he told Peters to begin like a leg yield, keeping the horse straight in his body and weighting his outside seat bone to help the horse maintain balance and rhythm while crossing his legs over. It’s gymnastic work that needs to develop step by step as the shoulder frees up and creates more reach and freedom.



Steffen Peters rides Demetrios, a 6-year-old Rheinlander stallion who has his sire, Diamond Hit's, natural carriage and an uphill impression. Goals included getting the horse's nose out more, developing more reach in the front legs and a trot with more elevation and power.

Play Time

Hinnemann often talked about “playing” with the horse, and the idea was clearly demonstrated in groundwork with the mare D’Rosa, a 10-year-old Danish Warmblood that Raine trains and competes for client Four Roses Farm. Competing at Intermediaire I, the mare has become “much more through and obedient, and I think it’s a result of us playing with her collection and obedience with more difficult exercises.”

The in-hand equipment involved side reins and an extra rein secured near the pommel to counter the mare’s habit of dropping her head too low. Hinnemann’s secret weapon was having a helper (Raine) stand near D’Rosa’s head to reward with sugar at just the right moment. Too often, the reward, either a pat or treat, is too late, so “we reward them for stopping,” he said. Prompting piaffe steps with verbal cues and light taps of a longe whip, Hinnemann focused on two or three steps at a time, then rest and a sugar. At 10, the mare is strong enough to do a half-length of the

court, but he emphasized keeping the work low pressure. Piaffe and passage steps were mixed with halts in which whip touches reminded her to stand square and stay there.

Having learned it from “[his] friends at the school in Vienna,” groundwork is a regular part of Hinnemann’s training routine and simpler than it is often portrayed. “People talk so much about the masters of hand work,” he said. “It’s just playing around with horses. It gives you a connection to the horse, you find out how he reacts and it’s a

good, smooth step into the difficult exercises.” On Day 2, for example, he used a longe whip to lightly touch each leg while D’Rosa stood in place. The goal was to get her to lift and hold each leg while breathing without stepping forward, setting the stage for doing the same in piaffe.

In the End

“I hope we’ve given you a little view inside the kitchen of our inner circle,” said Hinnemann at the end. “It has to be fun for the horse, and we’ve tried to show you how much fun we have with our horses, teaching them and training them. We love the work and we do not do anything with cruelty. Where cruelty starts, intelligence finishes.” 🇩🇪



Germany’s **Johann Hinnemann** was awarded the rare title of *Reitmeister* (master rider) in 1996 and he has served as coach for the German national team (with Klaus Balkenhol), the Dutch national team and the Canadian Olympic squad. Steffen Peters and Christine Traurig are among the American Olympians he has coached along with two-time alternate Kathleen Raine. He continues to breed and train horses at his farm in Germany and spends several months a year at Hinnemann Farm’s base in Southern California. There his son, Stephan, and daughter-in-law, Natalie Hamilton-Hinnemann, operate a training, sales and young-horse development program.

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THE LOOK OF A CHAMPION

The world's top grooms share their experiences of working with equine superstars and some secrets for success.

By Jennifer M. Keeler

For dressage enthusiasts, there may be no sight more breathtaking than a stunning Grand Prix horse and rider passing effortlessly down centerline at a major international championship. But it's the countless hours of work and worry behind the scenes by devoted grooms that help make that happen. What does it take to keep elite equine athletes like Valegro and Legolas happy, healthy and performing at their best both at home and on the road? *Dressage Today* spoke with four top grooms from around the world to get a sneak peek at their work behind the scenes as well as share some of their tips for success with your own horses. Following are thoughts from Great Britain's Alan Davies, America's Eddie Garcia, the Netherlands' Vanessa Ruiter and Germany's Carmen Thiemann.

Know Your Horse

Alan Davies is the ever-present guardian and friend of the dressage horses ridden by Olympians Charlotte Dujardin and Carl Hester in Gloucestershire, Great Britain, including international superstar Valegro, Uthopia, Nip Tuck and Wanadoo as well as several up-and-coming youngsters. Known for the immaculate turnout and care of these mounts, who are constantly under the spotlight of dressage

Countless hours of work and worry behind the scenes by devoted grooms help make the magic happen in the spotlight. Here, U.S. Olympian Steffen Peters follows his groom, Eddie Garcia, and mount, Legolas, into the warm-up arena.

superstardom, Davies was nominated for the 2014 FEI award for best groom.

DT: What are your job responsibilities?

Davies: I have an apartment above the stables so I am always close to the horses, and I am responsible for the day-to-day care of all the Grand Prix horses that are here at the barn. I am in charge of all veterinary and shoeing details, and I have to organize travel details for all competitions. I drive the horses and take care of their needs while getting to all the major competitions here and in Europe and manage everything for the horses at the show for both Carl and Charlotte.



Amd Bronkhorst - Amd.nl

Valegro's groom, Alan Davies, celebrates with British Olympian Charlotte Dujardin. Davies has developed a huge bond with Valegro during their travels around the world. "I love the way he trusts me to put him on planes, trains, boats or whatever and never questions anything," he says of the horse.

DT: How long have you been in this position?

Davies: Six years ago Carl asked me to take four horses to Vindauban in the south of France for a two-week show. It was Valegro's first international competition. I was supposed to just do the one show, but I wasn't allowed to leave, and I'm still here.

DT: Do you have a favorite horse that you care for?

Davies: I hate to talk about favorites because I love and respect all my charges for varying reasons. Obviously, I have developed a huge bond with Valegro. We have been all over the world together, and I love the way he trusts me to put him on planes, trains, boats or whatever and never questions anything. Uthopia is a beautiful stallion in looks and temperament and has never taken offense at being in Valegro's shadow. Nip Tuck is the rising star and is very different from the others: He is quite insecure and needs a lot of reassurance. I've watched him grow in confidence and become a star in his own right and I

really admire him for all he has achieved so far.

DT: What's a typical day like for you?

Davies: A normal day starts at 6 a.m. with feeding and haying and mucking out. I usually get on Valegro at 7:30 a.m. and give him a short hack before he works in the arena with Charlotte and Carl. I will cool him off after his workout by either hacking in the fields or on the roads and then I'll wash him off and he will go in the paddock for an hour while I prepare another horse to be ridden. Afternoons are spent walking the horses, sorting out equipment for shows, and I take Valegro and Uthopia to the water treadmill twice a week to make sure they are super fit to cope with their competitions. I feed at 5 p.m. and check that they have their legs banadaged, have the correct blankets on for the night, et cetera.

DT: What do you like best about your job?

Davies: I love all aspects of my job! I love being with the horses, and I think

I have a really important job keeping them fit, happy and well, so to see them progress and represent our country and win medals makes me so proud.

DT: What is the most challenging part of your work?

Davies: Trying to keep the horses' lives as normal as possible. They have become global celebrities and people want to get near them all the time, but they need time to be themselves and be horses.

DT: Does that celebrity status bring extra pressure for you?

Davies: Yes, that also brings a bit more pressure on me to keep them at their peak. There is a lot of expectation on these horses and they are in my care. Because I take care of both Carl's and Charlotte's horses, it means I have to get half the British team to the championships to represent their country. Luckily I've been doing this job a long time, so I try not to let it bother me and keep everything as relaxed and normal for the horses as possible.

DT: Do you enjoy all of the traveling?

Davies: I love all aspects of traveling. Each show has its challenges, but I look at it as another adventure with my best friends, and we head off and deal with whatever might meet us. Sometimes I might have to find overnight stabling en route or may even have to reroute, but I have a lot of friends on the circuit now so we always help each other out.

DT: What is your most memorable competition?

Davies: Obviously, grooming at the Olympics is, of course, a very memorable time. I was at the Sydney Olympics in 2000 and that was an incredible experience, and London was fantastic, too. It was so well organized but there was a lot of pressure and expectation on the team. Luckily we

did it and it was actually quite a relief leaving Greenwich Park.

DT: What grooming tips can you share for helping your horses look their best?

Davies: To keep the horses at their peak and looking their best there is a combination of factors. Good feeding is very important, and I like to make sure I give them a good rubdown with a rubber curry comb at least once a day. I think it's good for their coats and it helps circulation and is great for massaging the muscles, too. I like to keep their skin moisturized with baby oil as well. I use baby oil as a finishing touch for that glistening look on the face and it also helps moisturize the skin to keep it soft and prevent any sores from occurring. I apply it by soaking an old tea towel and then wiping gently around the muzzle and face area. I also wipe it over the quarters before I do quarter marks as it helps keep the hair in place. If applied sparingly it doesn't attract dust.

DT: We have lots of debate in the U.S. about how to care for horses' tails.

What do you do—brush or no brush on a daily basis?

Davies: I wash Valegro's tail at least twice a week and spray it with detangler every day. I use only a big-toothed comb to comb through once a day and the rest of the time I just remove any shavings with my fingers. I never use a brush.

DT: What advice would you have for someone thinking of pursuing a job as a professional groom?

Davies: The best advice is to always be ready to learn. Get as much experience as possible and always be open-minded. There are always new things to learn from other grooms, vets and farriers. I have friends in all disciplines and we are always swapping ideas.

DT: If you were to share one secret of success with horse owners for helping horses



Eddie Garcia, pictured with Rosamunde, has worked as Peters' groom for the last 10 years. While he admits that traveling can be hard, taking him away from his family, he says he loves what he does. "I love the horses! This is my passion."

Jennifer Keeler

look and feel great, what would it be?

Davies: I don't think there are any hidden secrets for keeping horses looking and feeling great. But I think the most important thing in my job is to get to know your horse. I love spending time with them so that I know what they like and what they don't like and what routine suits them best. Then you can help them feel in top form.

A Serious Commitment

For 10 years, Jose Eduardo (Eddie) Garcia Luna, of Escondido, California, has been entrusted with Steffen and Shannon Peters' stable of dressage champions, including Ravel, Weltino's Magic, Legolas 92 and new superstar, Rosamunde. With an ever-present smile and above-and-beyond attitude, Garcia is not only a

critical member of Team USA but also a mentor for other grooms, and as a result was presented with the 2015 FEI award for best groom.

DT: What's a typical day like for you?

Garcia: Steffen likes to ride early, so my day starts before 6 a.m. because I take care of the morning feeding. I directly care for six horses, and first up is getting Legolas ready—Steffen always rides him first. After all the riding is done, the tack and equipment are cleaned and some horses go on the treadmill while others are walked. We do have help—a crew that cleans the stalls—so I can focus on taking care of the horses. At home, all the grooms work five days a week and we

take turns working on the weekends.

DT: What do you enjoy most about your job and what is most challenging?

Garcia: I love the horses! This is my passion. I grew up with Western horses in a small town, so I've loved them from the start. The shows are tough because there's so much more focus at a competition. I make a detailed list for every show to make sure I have exactly what I need because otherwise you could fly halfway around the world and not have something you need and no way to get it.

DT: Do you feel additional pressure as the groom for such high-profile horses?

Garcia: Sometimes I think about it, but one of the things I like best about working for Steffen is that he's the best about not letting you feel pressure. He's always very relaxed and he encourages everyone around him to be the same way—"Take your time and don't worry."

It's very different from other people I've worked with before. He's not someone who demands that everything be perfect all the time because, in reality, it's not possible.

DT: Do you enjoy all of the traveling to competitions?

Garcia: I do enjoy traveling, but it's difficult to be away from my family. I have a wife and two young children, aged 9 and 5, at home, so it's hard to leave. But they understand that this is my job and this is what I love.

DT: What is the most memorable competition where you worked as a groom?

Garcia: I think the Pan Am Games in 2011 in Guadalajara, Mexico, when Steffen won three gold medals. I remember that another rider put the pressure on with a big score right before he entered the arena, and Steffen and Magic went in



Arnd Bronkhorst - Arnd.nl

Vanessa Ruiter has worked for more than 12 years as a professional groom for Holland's top-ranked dressage rider, Edward Gal. She accompanied Totilas on his first plane ride and cared for him at the 2010 World Equestrian Games in Kentucky.

there and had to really go for it. It was an incredible feeling!

DT: Do you have a favorite product or grooming tool that you use?

Garcia: My grooming equipment is pretty standard. There's no secret in using good brushes and equipment. I really like using the rubber curry hand mitt, but I don't just use it in the standard circular motion. I also use it with a firm stroke in the direction of the hair. It pulls the hair and the oil out to the surface for more shine. I like to use some baby oil before they go in the ring: a little on their faces

and chests to make them shine. I also use fly spray on a towel and wipe it over them for even more shine.

DT: How do you care for your horses' tails?

Garcia: I wouldn't brush the tail without using a good detangler or you'll for sure break the hairs. I also don't shampoo their tails too often.

DT: What advice would you have for someone who is considering a job like yours?

Garcia: Take some time to learn not only how to properly groom a horse but what's involved in being a groom at this level. It's quite a commitment.



Arnd Bronkhorst - Arnd.nl

Ruiter says a groom has to have a big heart for horses and be willing to give up a big part of his or her normal life. "Horses take a lot of time and care, you work many hours a week and you're going to be tired and think, Is this really worth it? But, yes, it is when you see your 'child' in the arena giving his best."

DT: If you were to share one secret of success with horse owners, what would it be?

Garcia: Take your time when grooming. I see a lot of people in a hurry, and I think you have to be patient. No shortcuts. Putting in the time not only makes the horses look good, but they feel good spending time with you.

Pride in Horse and Rider

One of the lucky few to live and work closely with dressage legend Totilas, Vanessa Ruiter has worked for more than 12 years as a professional groom for Holland's top-ranked dressage rider Edward

Gal, at the Glock Horse Performance Center (GHPC) in Oosterbeek, the Netherlands, traveling with the team around the world for major international competitions including Olympics, World Equestrian Games and World Cup Finals.

DT: Which horses do you care for and do you have a favorite?

Ruiter: At home we have a team of grooms and we take care of all the horses. At shows, I always take care of everyone. In general, I love all the horses, of course, but there are always the really special ones that will steal your heart, and they're all different and special in their own way. Glock's Undercover is a very special and goofy horse. He's always happy and very social. Glock's Voice always makes a lot of noise, but he always wants to cuddle when you are in his box. He is very sweet. Two of my other favorites are Interfloor Next One, who is 20 years old now. It was always so much fun to take him to shows all around the

world. I'm so happy that he can go in the field at the GHPC to have a well-deserved retirement and finally he can just eat as much as he wants. My other huge crush is Risky Business, as I've known him the longest. He is still a stallion and sometimes acts like a 3 year old. He's 25. He is the king of the stables, and I really adore him.

DT: What's a typical day like for you?

Ruiter: We always try to have the same schedule for the horses every day so that they know when they are going to be ridden or put in the field or on the walker or aquatrainer or hand-walked, and we make sure that they will always have some rest hours in between activity. All the horses at the GHPC get out of their stalls to do something three times a day, and everyone goes out in the field or paddock. We start at 7:30 in the morning with feeding pellets and hay, and Edward is riding his first horse around 8. Before he gets on we walk them a bit in the are-



For more than two decades, Carmen Thiemann (right) has worked with the Klimke dressage dynasty—first with dressage master Reiner Klimke and now with his daughter, Ingrid (left).

Horst Streitferdt

na for a little warm-up. When Edward is finished, he will take the saddle off and we will walk them by hand for the cooling down, then they are washed and they can dry under a solarium or hair dryer. At noon they get fed again and the horses who got ridden early are going in to the walker for some more exercising. Mid-afternoon we are starting with the last round of taking all 34 horses out for the last time that day. Luckily we work with a team of eight or nine grooms each day. At 4:30 the horses get their pellets again, and the last feeding of the day is around 7:30 p.m. with hay and mash.

DT: What do you enjoy most about your job and what is most challenging?

Ruiter: Sometimes you have bad days, but then you see the goofy, sweet face of Glock's Undercover and your bad day is over because you *have* to smile. It always makes my day. The biggest challenge is keeping all the horses fit and happy. They have to feel good, and that's the most important so they can be happy athletes.

DT: Do you feel additional pressure as

the groom for such high-profile horses?

Ruiter: Of course! I give my all for them. I make sure that they have or get anything they want or need. That's my calling, so that's what I want to do.

DT: What is the most memorable competition where you worked as a groom?

Ruiter: There are a few special memories—the 2010 World Equestrian Games in Kentucky, where we won three gold medals. That was also the first flight (via airplane) for Totilas. Also the 2012 London Olympics, where Glock's Undercover won team bronze and ninth individually. That was really amazing because not only was it my first Olympics but also because we had had him for only a few months and he did so well. I had such a fantastic time there. Everybody was nice, and it was awesome to see Charlotte Dujardin win her gold medals. I have many good memories also from Lingh, Gribaldi, Ravel, Sистер and, of course, Totilas. Now we have so many wonderful Glock horses, so hopefully many new memories will still be to come.

DT: Do you have a favorite product or grooming tool that you use?

Ruiter: I think it's important to bathe the horse with a really good shampoo, and what also really helps are good-quality brushes. I like brushes with long hairs that are not too hard and not too soft. For the face I prefer a very soft brush that's almost fluffy. As a finishing touch I take a towel to take the last of any dust off and make them even shinier.

DT: What advice would you have for someone thinking of pursuing a job like yours?

Ruiter: You have to have a big heart for horses and be willing to give up a big part of your normal life. Horses take a lot of time and care, you work many

hours a week and you're going to be tired and think, *Is this really worth it?* But, yes, it is when you see your "child" in the arena giving his best. Then you will forget everything and the only thing you can think about is how proud you are of your horse and rider.

DT: If you were to share one secret of success with horse owners, what would it be?

Ruiter: The secret is to just love them with your whole heart. Make them happy and keep them happy.

More Than a Job

For more than two decades, Carmen Thiemann has been an integral part of the legendary Klimke dressage dynasty. She currently works as head groom and stable manager for Ingrid Klimke in Münster, Germany, home to Olympic-level eventing mounts as well as rising international dressage star Dresden Mann. In 2013, she was presented with the FEI Best Groom Award.

DT: How long have you been working



Some days we go out cantering on the hills, other days are jumping schools or dressage training. Generally we start at 7 a.m. to feed and turn out. All the horses go out in the fields for hours, and we think that's part of why they stay so happy. We like to let them be horses. Then we start riding. Others

Thiemann says prospective grooms need to know that it's not a job for everyone. "You can't be looking at your watch, and you have to be willing to work hard every day, even Sundays. You have to have your heart in it."

will be longed. Then we bring the ones who were out in and start again for the afternoon.

DT: What do you enjoy most about your job and what is

most challenging?

Thiemann: The horses! I love being close to them and I also love working outdoors. I couldn't work in an office all day. I also enjoy all the wonderful people I get to work with. I think the most challenging thing is to get everything to come together at the right moment fitness-wise—having a horse in the right physical condition at the right time to perform his best.

DT: Do you feel additional pressure as the groom for such high-profile horses?

Thiemann: I don't allow myself to think about it, because if I think about it then I'll start to worry. You have to be confident in what you're doing and that you know best for your horses. If I think about anything bad that might happen, then it will happen.

DT: Do you enjoy all of the traveling to competitions?

Thiemann: I really do enjoy the traveling because at the shows it's like a big family and I enjoy seeing new places and learning new things from others. But I also love working at home, especially bringing the youngsters along. I wouldn't ever be disappointed to stay at home.

DT: What is the most memorable competition where you worked as a groom?

Thiemann: Our first Olympics in Sydney (2000) was special, as it was the first Olympics for both Ingrid and me, and I loved Australia. London (2012) was also a wonderful atmosphere. On the flip side, I also enjoy some of our local shows that have really unique atmospheres to them.

DT: Do you have a favorite product or grooming tool that you use?

Thiemann: I think it's so important to curry them really well. It gets the dirt off but it's also good for the skin and muscles. Of course, grooming only goes so far without the horses having good food. They have to feel good from the inside out.

DT: How do you care for your horses' tails?

Thiemann: We don't brush our horses' tails because all of our horses go outside and roll in the mud. If we were to brush them without washing them, it would damage the hair. So for a normal day, we pick out the straw from the tails and leave them as they are and just wash for shows and special occasions. We keep them very natural.

DT: What advice would you have for someone thinking of pursuing a job like yours?

Thiemann: It's a really hard job, and you have to really love horses. You can't be looking at your watch, and you have to be willing to work hard every day, even Sundays. It's not for everyone. You can't just look at this as a job—you have to have your heart in it. 🐾

with Ingrid?

Thiemann: I started working for her father, Reiner Klimke, in 1990 when I was right out of school. When Ingrid started her own yard in 1998 she asked me if I'd like to come with her, so I did. That was our start together. It's been a long time, but it's still a lot of fun and I love working with her.

DT: Which horses do you care for and do you have a favorite?

Thiemann: We have 15 horses on the farm and I help care for all of them. We have student grooms who help. They are studying and working toward their German *Bereiter* certification. They stay with us for three years at a time and then can take a test at the end to get their license, so we're helping teach the next generation of horsemen and women.

DT: What's a typical day like for you?

Thiemann: There's really no "typical" day because every day's a little different.

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