

Stephanie Bedford - FEI Junior Dressage Rider

Stephanie Bedford is a junior dressage rider who knows all about how much hard work it takes to make dreams come true. Currently living in Acworth, GA, she competes in the United States Dressage Federation's (USDF) Region 3. Stephanie has qualified to compete in both the North American Junior Championship (NAJC) in Lexington, KY in July and the Festival of Champions National Championship in Gladstone, NJ in August. A very competitive region for equestrian sports, Region 3 spans the Southeastern United States including Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Tennessee and South Carolina. With such a large horse community, qualifying for either championship is quite an accomplishment. Only four riders are invited to ride and represent Region 3 on the Junior Team. Qualifying for the Festival of Champions is no small feat either; only the top 12 riders in the country are invited to compete for the national title.

Currently ranked 1st in Region 3 and 3rd in the nation, Stephanie never dreamed that she would be riding in the FEI Junior Championships. She fell in love with the sport of dressage even before she found her current mount. An 18 year old Honors graduate from Harrison High School in Acworth, GA, Stephanie is the oldest member of the Region 3 Team with the youngest horse. Wählen is a seven-year old US Hanoverian gelding by Wonderful, a Weltmeyer line, who was locally bred in Georgia. Stephanie and her mother purchased Wählen when he was a colt barely 90 days under saddle and Stephanie, then 13, has been his trainer and rider.



In 2007, Stephanie rode Wählen, then four years old, in the Training Level Jr/Yr Region 3 Championships Earning Reserve Champion with a score of 69%. Early in 2008, they earned the Jr/Yr High Score, at the Greater Atlanta Dressage Southern with a score of 71.3%. In spring 2009 Stephanie found her current trainer, Jason Canton, and with his help qualified for Second Level Jr/Yr Region 3 Championships. "We spent the summer really going back to lay the foundation for the upper level work," said Stephanie. "The training scale is a huge part of what I work on every day. Because I normally work with Jason only a few times a month it is important to have the basics of relaxation and obedience in place so the movement can come through." Late in 2009 the pair re-entered competition at Third Level where Stephanie earned her Bronze Medal at the age of 17; Wählen was just six years old.

This season Stephanie and Jason felt they were ready for the FEI Junior level so Stephanie and Wählen hit the competition circuit in March at the Southern Comfort Horse Show in Aiken, SC. They earned an average score of 65.793% placing 6th in the US and 1st in Region 3. "I was so proud of him," Stephanie recalls. "That was the moment I truly believed we could qualify for NAJC and Gladstone. I always dream big, and this is the first step in my Olympic dream." The rest of her season has followed along the same vein, culminating at the May Poplar Place

Dressage Show in Hamilton, GA. Stephanie and Wählen made a clean sweep of all three FEI Junior classes including a 69.474% for the Junior Individual Test and a 69.250% for the Junior Freestyle, for which she choreographed and did the music herself. In addition, Stephanie was awarded Reserve Champion for Freestyles and FEI High Point.



Stephanie credits her success to her mentor, inspiration, and trainer, Jason Canton, who “inspires [her] everyday to work harder and never settle for anything less than [her] best”. Based in Alpharetta, GA, at Applewood Farm, Jason is the kind of trainer committed to classical training of both the horse and rider and her scores reflect this attention to detail. Jason has taken Stephanie under his wing as his working student.

Stephanie has her Olympic path mapped out. Next year she plans to compete for the Young Rider Championships, both in the United States and internationally. After Young Riders, she will take the next step to compete for the Young Adult Brentina Cup and soon after make the leap into Grand Prix on the international stage. Stephanie has always been determined to ride in the Olympics, representing the United States some day! She has the commitment that shows in her

six day a week training schedule and her constant thirst for knowledge of dressage theory. Stephanie journals her training in her online blog at www.passagethroughtime.wordpress.com.

Stephanie is currently looking for sponsors to help finance her championship dreams. For many would-be Dressage Olympians, the down side of the sport is the incredible expense. It is estimated to cost between \$750,000 and one million dollars to get one horse and rider team to the Olympics. The Georgia Equestrian Foundation has selected Stephanie as an up and coming rider. The foundation’s mission is to underwrite the training of individuals exhibiting extraordinary talent in the sport of dressage. Individuals and corporations can make tax-deductible contributions to the foundation in an effort to support future Olympic competitors from Region 3. All proceeds from the foundation go directly to selected students for training, equipment, travel and equine needs. All sponsorship offers and contributions are greatly appreciated. To donate, please send your contribution to:



Georgia Equestrian Foundation, c/o David Gower
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