

Get to know Sponsored Dressage Rider: Sarah Denham. From Andalusians and Equine Nutrition to Tempi & Everything In-Between.

Longtime Dressage rider & trainer, Sarah discusses the ins and outs of life as a dedicated horse woman.



Q How long have you been riding?

A I started riding when I was 9 years old, so... 23 years now!

Q Is your family involved in horses too?

A. No! They joke all the time that they have no idea where I got it from.

Q. What discipline(s) did you start riding and how old were you?

A. I started at a general lesson barn that was close to our house. They taught beginners in Western and English that focused on a hunter type program. When I was 12 I moved to a dressage barn and was immediately hooked.

Q. What made you choose the disciplines you train, and compete in?

A. I was in love with dressage from the time I was 12. I had a one track mind for it from the start!

Q .Who helped you acquire the skills for dressage?

A. The dressage barn that I started in is owned by dressage trainer, Marie Morgan. Marie gave me a great start. Even at just 13 years old she let me work, cleaning tack and grooming to earn extra lessons and rides. It evolved into a working student position that I kept until I moved for college. I never had my own horse, so Marie gave me great opportunities to ride a lot of different horses. At the time I was majorly jealous of all the kids with their own horses, but as a professional now I am extremely grateful for the early opportunity to learn on and eventually help train a very wide variety of horses. With nearly 40 horses in her program, it was a super start. When I was 15 I started taking regular clinics with Debbie Bowman, a Grand Prix trainer and USDF Instructor Certification faculty member. Debbie is phenomenal and I learned a huge amount from her. Later, when I moved to Virginia I had the opportunity to keep two horses in Debbie's barn and work with her continuously. It was a huge opportunity and a phenomenal education, not just as a rider but an overall horsewoman.

Q. If you could clinic or train with any top rider who would it be?

A. Well, I would love to be back in Debbie's barn again. I look up to her a great deal. I would also jump at the chance to work with Lilo Fore, Cindy Sydnor or Micheal Barisone.

Q. If there was another discipline I could try it would be:

A. Eventing! I spent 2012 trying my hand at Beginner Novice. I love to gallop horses, so cross country is really a thrill. Turns out the jumps are not my favorite part though!

Q. A breed of horse I have not ridden but would love to is:

A. Tough question! I think I would love the chance to bring along a Spanish horse, PRE, in dressage. They are different from warmbloods, but still exceptional dressage horses. I have a half Andalusian in training now and really enjoy his temperament.

Q. How many horse shows do you attend a year?

A. Well, I attend more than I care to count up! I teach a lot of event riders, and they are always on the road! I don't compete as much as some people, so I ride in maybe 4-5 competitions a year.

Q. How many horses are you currently training and competing with now?

A. Currently I have 4 horses in training, with room for 2 more this spring. I am planning to actively compete 3 of them this year. I also am a co-owner and dressage trainer for an upper level event horse my good friend Laura Welsh competes.

Q. How would you describe the “characters” of these horses.

A. Hah! I have a bit of a goof troop. Furio, who is owned by Michelle Coleman DVM, is a 17 year old Danish warmblood working back up to Prix St George after several years out of real work. He is very workmanlike in the ring and a little bit reserved in the barn. He is like the quiet trickster, you figure he is a dependable solid citizen and then he reaches over and pulls your ball cap off your head! I co-own Florian, an 11 year old Oldenburg gelding, with Phillipine Brooke of Orlando, Florida. Florian is a complete Labrador in the barn. He is absolutely an in your pocket cuddle bug. Under saddle he is a power house and definitely a very hot ride. I've enjoyed earning his trust to help him finally start to shine after spending most of his life as pasture puff. Rolling Stone VT is a 4 year old Oldenburg gelding, and I think he may be the most intelligent horse I've ever known. "Rahlee" loves people and learns everything you challenge him with in a day flat. Finally, Whimiscal is the queen mare of the barn. Whimsy is running Intermediate level eventing this year with Laura Welsh. She came to me as a barely broke 5 year old who was skittish and withdrawn. She now fully lives up to her "Princess" nick name.

Q. What has been some of your most memorable past accomplishments?

A. Definitely earning my Master's in Equine Biomechanics and also my USDF Bronze Medal. Then there are the things like the first time I got really good passage, and the first time I got a line of clean tempi changes on a horse I trained myself. I love the training accomplishments with horses more than any accolades.

Q. What are your goals for the future?

A. I want to earn my USDF Silver medal in 2013, and eventually also my Gold. I don't have any Olympic aspirations, but I would like to be nationally competitive at Grand Prix. I think the newly introduced USDF national championships will also be a part of my goals in the future.

Q. What other pets do you own?

A. I have 3 dogs. Jax, a German Shorthaired Pointer, Cassie, a pound princess and a black and tan mini dachshund, Guinness Stout, who is the Denali Sporthorses horse show dog extraordinaire. I also have 2 barn cats, Copper and Komikaze. "Kahzi" earns his name daily by attempting to get me killed while I'm riding!

Q. When not riding what are your other hobbies?

A. Hah! Well, I love photography and have managed to get a horse picture or two published. I mostly just enjoy spending non-horsie time with my awesome husband, Shay.

Q. How did you hear about Triple Crown feeds?

When I was in graduate school at Virginia Tech, I had my rescued thoroughbred gelding, Denali, with me. He was 22, and the first winter there was really hard on him. Every single other Equine graduate student was studying for their PhD's in equine nutrition. They ALL fed their own horses Triple Crown feeds and recommended the Senior and Forages for Denali. Within a month, the changes in Denali were amazing. I had never seen my old man look so incredible. I have been a devout customer since then, and have used Complete, Lite, 30%, and Safe Starch all with excellent results. Triple Crown feed makes undeniable and always impressive changes in every horse that comes into my barn and gets started on them.

Q. What TC feed products do you use?

A. Currently Triple Crown Complete and I supplement with Triple Crown Rice Bran Oil for the upper level horses.