



## INTERVIEW WITH DRESSAGE RIDER BRITTA PEDERSEN

WORDS: FRANCESCA NAVIN PHOTOS: LISA POTTER

**Getting back in the saddle after a serious fall is enough of an achievement. Britta Pedersen went a few steps further and is now a force to be reckoned with in the dressage arena. We caught up with her to hear about what she has been up to and what she has planned next.**

**Show Circuit:** After your fall from 'OTHELLO' in November 2006, did you ever think you would be back on a horse again?

**BP:** I was in and out of hospital for six months following a rotational fall during the cross-country phase of a horse trial, but I was always determined to get back in the saddle no matter what. I remember telling my partner and mum as much in the first week whilst still in the intensive care unit. I got back on OTHELLO in May the following year and it was like I had never left the saddle.

**SC:** Do you think you'll make a return to eventing at any point?

**BP:** There is no reason that I couldn't event as I have made a full recovery. However, I just don't want to tempt fate. I feel like a cat with nine lives that's used up a fair few of them! I really enjoyed my dressage before the accident and always used to compete during the off season in the Winter Dressage Series, so I'm now relishing the chance to focus on it more intensely. For me dressage is where sport meets a form of art.

**SC:** Tell us about your current horses? Are you still riding ADELPHI?

**BP:** Yes, I still have ADELPHI, my two star event horse. He'll come out at Open Medium next year. He has been fantastic as he has

moved into the new discipline so easily. His dressage has always been his strong phase so it definitely hasn't been a struggle to focus purely on that area.

**SC:** We hear that you have a new one as well... When did he arrive and how are things going with him?

**BP:** Yes, I am a very lucky girl and have a beautiful Dutch import called UPENDO or 'Ubby' to his close friends. I found him when I went to train with Leonie Bramall for five weeks in Germany last winter, along with good friends Andrea Banks and Casey Johnson. I looked at a few horses in Germany but didn't find anything that stole my heart. So I went over to Holland whilst visiting family in Denmark and sat on about thirty horses in three days. I actually tried him on the first day and immediately fell in love.

He has a very strong affectionate personality, his paces are incredible and he tries his heart out for you. His conformation is also absolutely outstanding, he's naturally built so uphill, he gives you the feeling of a V8 when you put your foot down - bliss. He was competing at Open-Medium level when I tried him and had his first Prix St George start a few weeks before he left for New Zealand. I have been taking things slowly with him but due to my own determination managed to qualify him for the Horse of the Year Show in March. I was thrilled with how he coped. He really rose to the occasion, the more atmosphere the better! We won the warm-up test on the first day in the Open Medium and then won

the Musical Freestyle on the final day with a test choreographed and put together for me by the amazing Kris Hughes.

**SC:** You have recently set up a new equestrian business. Can you tell us a little about that?

**BP:** Peak Park Performance Horses is based in Waimauku, west of Auckland, and was only firmly established fairly recently. I train a few horses for other people and do some teaching on the side. I am also a qualified physiotherapist and work four days a week at the elite Flexa Clinic, owned and directed by Murray Hing, on Auckland's North Shore.

**SC:** Are you looking for new rides and sponsors at the moment?

**BP:** I don't have a sponsor right now but am open to the idea of representing a business when I'm out competing. The biggest thing it would help me with is furthering my training with my coach, Leonie Bramall, who has an absolute wealth of knowledge. I am a passionate person, and feel that with a competitive sponsor I would be able to push the boundaries and add value to a hard working team. I feel that I would represent a company well, and am determined to keep climbing the ladder.

As far as having more rides, I feel that I am currently committed to the team that I am working with, but would be open to working with quality youngsters to bring on using Leonie's training approach.

**SC:** What do you like so much about Leonie's approach?

**BP:** For me her training is focused around establishing a solid foundation and getting the basics correct. I used to think that the 'tricks' were the hard part, but if we don't have the basics of the training scale correct then the 'tricks' are hard. Once you have the horse truly working through not only longitudinally but also laterally through its body it's amazing how it all comes together. She is also very good at refining the rider's seat, and teaching the correct use of the aids to create a well balanced horse and rider

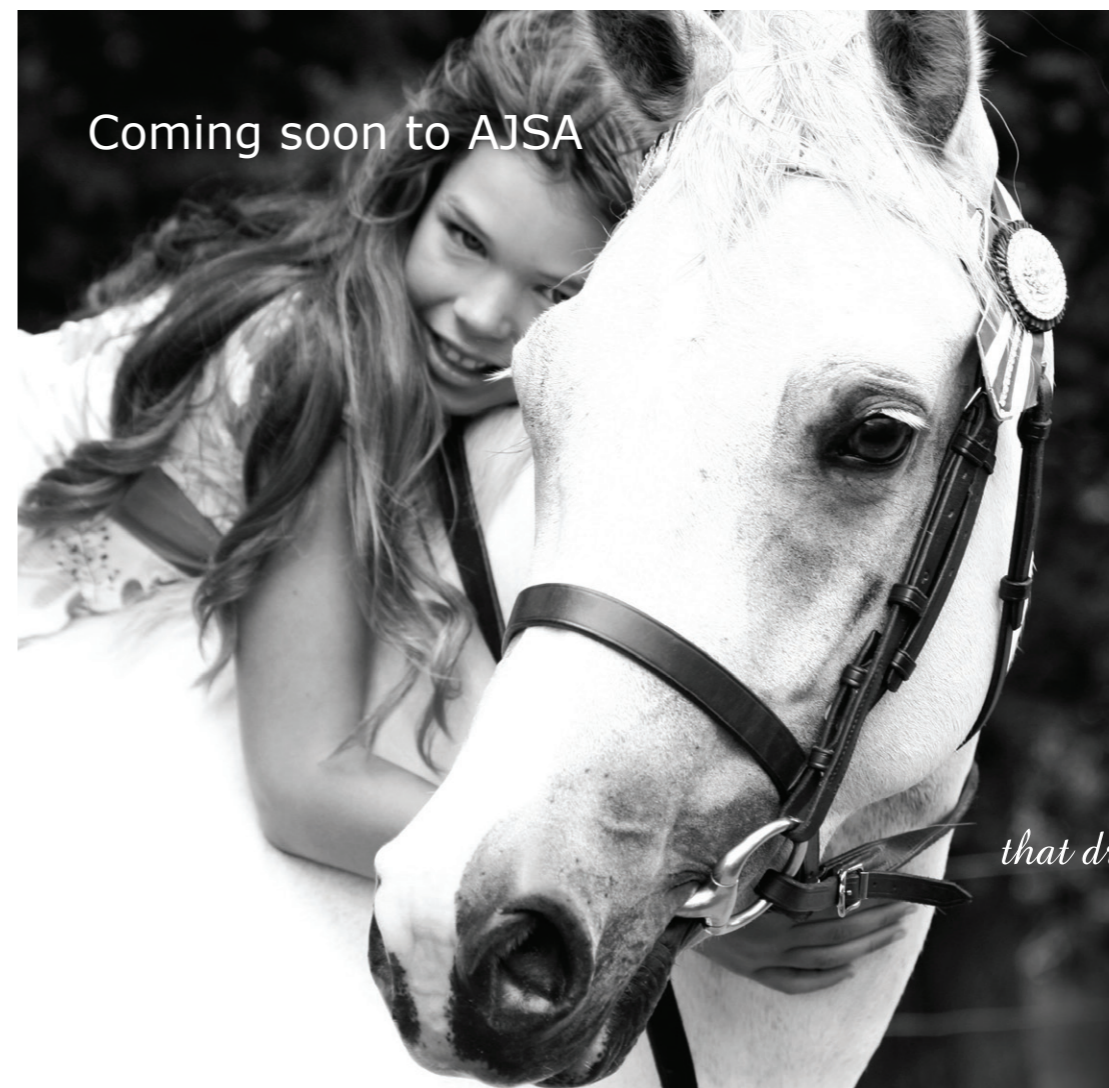
that work in harmony together. Leonie has an exceptional eye and at times I think that she must have x-ray vision because she knows exactly what mistakes my outside leg is making. I've learned an awful lot from her and am excited about the future ahead under her guidance. I think what defines the difference between a great and an exceptional coach is also having the ability to be a mentor and Leonie is all of the above for me.

**SC:** How have you found the New Zealand Dressage community? Have they been welcoming?

**BP:** I did worry at first that I would be something of a third wheel because I was an eventer coming into the dressage world. However most people have been nothing but encouraging, supportive and truly lovely. I've made some really strong bonds and some lifelong friends. I think due to the nature of our training, most of which is by ourselves on a daily basis, we tend to forget the importance of team work and supporting each other. At the end of the day the pinnacle of equestrian sport, such as representing your country at Olympic or World Championships, is done as a team. Imagine how much more we would be able to achieve if we all looked out for one-another.

**SC:** What are your plans for the winter and next year?

**BP:** All of my horses had 2 weeks off after Horse of the Year, a well deserved break for them to just be horses and play in the fields. They have since been back in training and schooling will continue over the winter months, with a bit of time out here and there for me to head down to the ski fields and enjoy some snow action. I will be consolidating training with UPENDO over winter with the aim of coming out at Advanced level next season, with hopefully a few Prix St George starts towards the end of the season. Last season was fantastic but I'm really looking forward to taking my own riding and the training of my horses even further over the coming months. It's a very exciting time!



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