



# WAYNE WILLIAMS

– SYDNEY CDI\*\*\* – LISA PORTER REPORTS...

**The best performed Kiwi rider at the Sydney CDI\*\*\* is perhaps the least known – in New Zealand at least. Wayne Williams and his lovely HOLSTEIN PARK COMEDIAN are familiar faces in Australia, yet to most New Zealanders he is just ‘that nice bloke’ who often accompanies Auckland equestrian Andrea Bank to her major shows.**

New Zealand born and raised, Wayne is fiercely loyal to his homeland, despite the fact he has been based in Australia for 11 years. He has represented New Zealand on several occasions, and this year’s success marks his third time competing under the Kiwi flag at the prestigious Sydney CDI\*\*\*. He has never finished lower than in the top five, a commendable achievement considering the class field that the event attracts. While a number of fellow Kiwi riders were dogged with bad luck, Wayne’s success started before the competition even began, his immaculate presentation winning him the Best Turned Out Male in the trot up.

Coming out all guns blazing, he then bravely rode his third ever Intermediate II start with Comedian, finishing a commendable thirteenth in a field of 23 with 59%, less than two percent behind the vastly more experienced Jody Hartstone and WHISPER IV, who placed seventh on 61.63%. The top end of this field was well ahead, with Rachel SANNA and JAYBEEALABASTER the convincing winners with 67.73%, followed by Heath Ryan and REGARDEZ MOI on 64.63%. Proving their consistency, the pair then placed fifth in a strong field of contenders in both the Inter I (64.68%) and Intermediate Freestyle (67.55%). “I’m really pleased with how he went. He’s improving all the time and hopefully we’ll make the step up to Grand Prix very soon,” Wayne says.

From a completely non-horsey family, Wayne’s interest was originally sparked by nearby property in Titahi Bay with a paddock full of horses. “My parents finally bought me a pony when I was 13 and I did some pony club and eventing before developing a passion for dressage,” he recalls. “I trained with Christian Thiess originally and Andrea Raves was also an inspiration.” Wayne competed to about Novice level before deciding to expand his knowledge and when he was 24, set off for a sizeable stint in Europe.

“You have to believe in your own ability and dressage was what I wanted to do.”

He spent time in England, Switzerland and Frankfurt working for the likes of Herbert Rehbein, Thomas Diehl, Ferdi Eilberg and Reinhard Neilson before finally heading back ‘down under’ but opting to set up in Australia in 1998, which has since remained his base. “I am still a New Zealander but Australia is home for now. I’ve become too much of a sun lover to consider moving.”

The choice of Australia was something of a fluke. “When I was at Rehbein’s, there was an Australian girl working there and she suggested I set up in Australia. I had no visa to remain in Germany so decided to give that a go.” Eleven years later, Wayne is well established on a beautiful 14 acres and turn of the century farmhouse on the foothills of the Blue Mountains, just outside Sydney. His Italian/French inspired barn represents his other interest – a love of aesthetic design. He and partner Jeff Oliver are keen gardeners and the pair’s grounds reflect this passion.

The partnership between Wayne and his sole (at this stage) competition horse HOLSTEIN PARK COMEDIAN is obvious. Having owned the delightful bay since he was a 4 year old stallion, Wayne has experienced something of a roller coaster ride with the undeniably talented horse. “We’ve had a number of setbacks which is just the way it goes with horses and that has slowed up our progression somewhat, but at the moment he is really happy and healthy and the quality of his work reflects that.”

While the original plan was to stand COMEDIAN (CONTANGO II / MONOLASS) as a breeding stallion, Wayne decided to geld him after freezing some semen, as he was ‘far too lazy and unmotivated’. “Gelding him made a big difference to his temperament. He’s a lovely type. Obviously he doesn’t move like Totilas but he shows great ability for collection and now that we have ironed out some minor health issues he is so trainable. He’s very good at all of the movements he does and one of his greatest strengths is his consistency.”

The same could be said for Wayne. A calm quiet rider who shows plenty of consideration for his mount, the picture is harmonious and elegant. The pair work smoothly together with an obviously good relationship. It wasn’t always so, however. Wayne went through a period where riding COMEDIAN became ‘something of a chore’.

“It stopped being fun for a while. There didn’t seem anything obviously wrong with the horse but he became reluctant in his work and I thought about giving him to someone else to ride because it just wasn’t enjoyable.

“He’s always been a bit stubborn and it all just snowballed. It turned out to be related to the fact he had some minor problems and once we got those health issues sorted it made a huge difference. He is so much happier now and I am really enjoying riding him again.”

As well as sorting these health issues, which set the pair back about two years, Wayne and his yard were affected by the Equine Influenza, which knocked another six months off their progress. The silver lining, however, was that it introduced Wayne to Andrea Bank and one of his favourite horses, her black stallion DORINGCOURT.

When Andrea’s newly imported DORINGCOURT and WOODSBEE were stuck in Australia due to the EI travel restrictions, they ended up with Wayne, as they needed to be kept in a purple zone – an area which had already been affected by EI. Thus began a partnership between the pair, with Wayne full of praise for Andrea’s team of horses and her talent.

“DORINGCOURT is a beautiful horse. He has everything going for him and is going to be a good horse for New Zealand.”

When it comes to Wayne’s personal aspirations regards WEG or the Olympic Games, he notably down plays his own success. “I just train and do the best I can and see where it goes. I don’t sit down at the start of the year and decide that a certain big competition is my goal. I’ve learned with horses that you just train them as well as you can, keep them as healthy as you can and see what evolves from there.” He is also justifiably proud of the fact he has balance in his life, and while horses are a core part of that life, he says he is ‘not obsessed’. “It can become an obsession and I think it’s really important to have balance.”