

28th January, 2017

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REPORT ON RIDERS TOUR JANUARY 2017

This year a team of five riders came to my property to train and compete at two competitions.

The two shows we did were at Dannevirke on 6th – 8th January and World Cup show at Woodhill on 13th – 15th January.

I enjoy seeing the progress as the riders come back each year, and the improvement is very satisfying to me.

My observations from attending the show in Noumea last October is that there are now a lot more riders competing at a higher level and that they are progressing through the grading system. We are now seeing some very good tidy, effective and competitive riders and the standard of the horses is rising rapidly. I think this is the result of some good breeding programmes that are developing in NC and importing some proven show jumpers.

It shows that the coaching system is working correctly and the riders are getting informed and sound coaching.

Here is a brief resume of each of the riders:

Thibaut Damas: I welcome Thibaut back to NZ and I enjoy picking up again from where we left off last year. Thibaut has a good relationship with the other team riders and once again I enjoy working together with him. We do apply the same training principals which makes for good progress going forward. This year Thibaut rode a mare called Collina, who was imported from Germany two years ago. He did an excellent job on her as she has lost a lot of confidence with her usual rider, and Thibaut gave her a consistant ride which saw the mare improving every time he competed her. I was very pleased that Thibaut got the chance to compete in the main grass ring at the World Cup Show. This arena had a top international course designer and international standard equipment, and it was a good experience for Thibaut to compete at this level. He was competing at 1.35 level amongst some very good riders and he gave an excellent performance.

Charles Henri Brinon: Charles gave me a good surprise when I saw how his riding had improved over the past year. His riding has matured a lot and he has developed a much better understanding of the flatwork and how to make his horse more relaxed, soft and connected. He is learning to get the feel of how much contact he needs and when is the right time to apply it.

His horse Beluga was a paint gelding who has a particularly good jump, very careful and clean but is also very spooky. Charles understood this horse well and have him a very positive ride until he got over his spookiness. The horse needs a very strong and definat rider and Charles did this. He had some excellent results at Dannevirke taking 3rd place in 3 competitions that had over 120 riders competing. At Woodhill we stepped him up to a higher level and he did some very good rounds there also. The horse is new to 1.25 level, but they put in some very solid rounds. I would like to see Charles have a bit more control of his body over the fence and not throwing himself in front of the horses movement. With Charles good English, he was great at getting everyone organized and making sure that all arrangements were made and seeing that everything was done. He was great and was a big part in the success of the team.

Jolane Baldi: I always enjoy Jolane being part of the team, she is a delightful person and is a pleasure to have in the team. This year Jolane had to cope with more difficult horses, which was not always easy for her. The horse I originally had did not meet the standard I want so I was able to change her horse at short notice. This horse Magic Warrior needed a very forward and accurate ride and at times Jolane found this confusing. This horse was very different from the one she rides in NC, so she needed to adapt to a different concept. I think she has learned some good lessons from this and took my advice that even when things don't go well in the ring you must come out with a smile on your face and not take it personally and must think how it can be improved. Jolane accepted this and I was pleased to see her learn this lesson and come out of it in the correct way. Not an easy time for Jolane but good lessons learned and all part of building her strength mentally as a rider.

Laetitia Giovanelli: Laetitia's riding has improved a lot over the last few years and from the last time she was on the team. She is not so confident with her English to start with and as the time went by I was pleased to see her relax and open up with her confidence.

Laetitia was paired with a beautiful palomino called Mickey and she clicked with him right away. He was very well trained and although he had not had a lot of experience competing he did put in some very sound performances and had some good placings. Laetitia had a lot of confidence with this horse and was very competitive in the jump offs, asking some good questions. Her position is good and with more experience she will become a very good rider.

Marie Pandosy: I really admire Marie's riding. Her horse was a grey mare called Theia and Marie did such a good job on this horse. She had not had much flatwork and sometimes she was difficult in the warm up but Marie rode her in a very positive way that gave the horse a lot of confidence. They had some really good rounds and a couple of times had the winning time in the jump offs and were a bit unlucky to take the last rail, which cost her winning at least two classes. I think the horse has a lot of talent and was very pleased with the experience Marie gave it. Marie has an excellent eye and feel for the distance to the fence. She has good reactions and instincts to do the right thing at the right time. I really love my time working with Marie, she is always very polite and respectful. She is often looking for work to do to help everyone else.

All the riders were excellent with their care of the horses at home and at the competitions. They had the horses well groomed and turned out. They are very organized when they are packing the truck to go to the competition and when we return from the show. They are punctual for their classes and are always where they say they will be.

The team all work in together very well and share the work load. This team all seemed to get on well together and it was very successful under the guidance of Thibaut.

Thank you for once again the opportunity to train and work with these riders and the New Caledonia Equestrian Federation and I look forward to another tour in 2018.

Kind regards

Penny Stevenson