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ORSE OF THE YEAR . Intermediate II

a tie for a USDF Horse of the Year national title. Of the 40 horses qualng, Tracey Lert's Lexus and Charlene nmers's Phirst Solo—both, remarkably, t-bred—finished with the same median re of 68.293 percent. And both have I some at-the-show help from Olympian bie McDonald.

ert bought Lexus as a two-year-old from breeder, California's DG Bar Ranch, in '5. She'd recently lost a young horse to isture accident; at DG Bar for a show, told trainer Willy Arts she was lookfor another young horse to bring along, showed her two, both grays; she went ie to think about it, had them both vetthen brought her parents along when came back to decide. "My dad [Califor-Dressage Society president Peter Lert] purse is the analytical one; looking from eeder's point of view, he actually liked is a little more." But what clinched the

decision was that "my mom said, 'He's the one you ought to get because he's the one you're going to ride well. He has soul in his eyes.' OK," she laughs, "Mom chose the horse for me. Actually, I'd watched their behavior and had sort of come to that conclusion for myself,"

Lert left Lexus at DG Bar, "and the next spring Willy started him; he got about 30 days under his belt. Then I brought him home the following May and started poking along." She got some early help from Elizabeth Searle, but since then she's done most of her own training, though she works with Lilo Fore "as consistently as her judging and clinic schedule and my judging and clinic schedule will allow. She's three hours away from me, so it's not like a weekly thing. But she's been very positive; you always need to have an eye on the ground."

Lert says Lexus is "an interesting combination: He's a very gentle horse, very sweet horse. Riding, he's just a little looky and maybe a little lazy," although moving him up to I-II seems to have gotten him "a little less lazy, a little more interested, a little more energized."

A "lightbulb" experience for both of them happened at the Great American/ USDF Region 7 Championships in October, Lert says. "Debbie McDonald was at the show, and I asked her to help me; she schooled me one day and then helped me get him warmed up. And I rode my first I-II with no whip, and it was a test like I never would have thought he could do. It all sort of came together-all the work that Lilo and I had been doing, and then the help from Debbie, in that one package. He tripped around happily, putting out a maximum effort, and I was thinking, 'Oh, my, there really is a horse in here!' I came out and looked at Debbie, and she said, 'That's what you have to do!' It was a real eyeopener. Winning was just sort of the frosting on the cake."

Lexus

1993 gray 16.1-hand Dutch Warmblood gelding (Wanroij x Famous) Rider/owner: Tracey Lert, Soquel, CA

Phirst Solo

1988 16.2-hand bay Oldenburg mare (Pik Solo x Dumpty Will)
Rider: Jennifer Schrader, Spanaway, WA; owner: Charlene Summers, Eatonville, WA

Median score 68.293%; number competing: 40



y Lert and Lexus



HORSE OF THE YEAR . Intermediate II

Looking forward, Lert points out that Lexus is "still youngish for starting the Grand Prix," so they can take their time advancing; but already "I think the piaffe/passage is going to be one of his highlights. It's still at the formative stage; he just started it this year." She concludes, "So my mother was right. I'm never buying another horse without her OK!"

Phirst Solo entered owner Charlene Summers's life even earlier: "We bought her from Dr. Mary Giddens [chair of the Dutch Warmblood Studbook in North America], who bred her, when she was four months old." As a youngster, the filly showed in halter; "we took her up into Canada and all over the West Coast, and I'm not sure she was ever defeated."

With her first rider, Mike Etherly, Phirst Solo spent some time training at Steffen Peters's barn. Etherly took the mare up through Third Level, Summers says; next, Gwen Blake took her to Grand Prix. "Then Jennifer Schrader, who's my trainer now, was going to ride her in the Junior/Young Rider program; but what happened—it's unbelievable—at fourteen years old she

popped a splint" because a farrier had put her shoes on too far back. "By the time we figured out the problem, it was too late" for Young Riders; instead, Phirst Solo spent a year on maternity leave. "We line-bred her to her grandson, H. S. Wistar; he's been winning everywhere." The resulting foal, Summers says, is "gorgeous, and he's nearly two this year." (Phirst Solo's other offspring so far are by embryo transfer.)

Schrader, now 23, says that the mare "had a full eight months off, so I really didn't know if I was going to be able to get her back to Grand Prix; she hadn't done Grand Prix for two and a half years, since Gwen had ridden her, and it was my first season at Grand Prix. I started riding her in December, and we went to our first show in March; she got like a 65 and a 61: not anything great, but it was consistent, and every show we just got better and better. So I'm pretty proud of her-and I'm pretty proud of myself, too, that we could do it together. I really know her now, and she's kind of a mental ride; I know not to practice anything but stretchy circles and transitions in the warm-up to get a clean test; otherwise she tries too hard. Every time she goes across

the diagonal, she's sure I'm going to for one-tempis! I've had to learn to all of my own excitement really conta on her."

This year, Schrader hopes to show F Solo in California and "see if she can her own down there; I'm going to tak grandson as well (Wistar) and do the P I CDI; it'll be his second year." She a "He's a pretty cool guy; she really th her sensitive mind and sweet nature—si easy to train—in all her offspring."

Schrader, who worked with Gwen I through her teens, has recently had from Christian Garweg, a German tr. who "comes pretty consistently for a days every six weeks." And, like Tr Lert, last year she "trained at some o shows with Debbie McDonald, and I'r ing to try to do that again this year."

Schrader concludes, "I'm so blessi get to work with Charlene; I hope I working with her for many more y Every horse she breeds is just better the last!"

- D.J. C.

INTERMEDIATE II RESULTS

1.	PHIRST SOLO (Oldenburg), Summervale Farm, owner; Pik Solo, sire; Dumpty Will, dam; Mary Giddens, Mark Lyman, breeder 68.293%
	Dumpty Will, dam; Mary Gludens, Mark Lyman, Dreeder 06.29370
1.	LEXUS (Dutch Warmblood), Tracey Lert, owner; Wanroij, sire;
	Famous, dam; Tony De Groot, breeder
3	LASCAR (Dutch Warmblood), Joan Williams, owner; Rubinstein, sire;
	Korina dam: I. Ashton Moore, breeder
4	GIFTED BY NATURE (Canadian Hunter), Orrie De Caster, owner;
	Cozy's Commander, sire: dam not on file; breeder not on
	file
	SG. GUARDIAN (Swedish Warmblood), Christina Hewitt, owner;
5.	Trosé, sire; Gazelle, dam; breeder not on file
	Trose, sire; Gazelle, dalli, breeder not on me
6.	HAYDN (Dutch Warmblood), Kimberly Carter and Mark Carter, own-
	Postboyen sire Bianca, dam; C. Baltussen, preeder 04.07070
7	arcox (Uspowerian) Rossiter Galaska, owner; Armin, sire; Briones,
/-	dam; Elizabeth Cain, breeder
	LE CHEMINEE (Hanoverian cross), Sandi Chohany, owner;
7.	LE CHEMINEE (Hanoverlait Cross), Sandi Cristiany, 63 659%
	Collaborator, sire; Cappy, dam; Laura Powell, breeder 63.659%

9.	LEVIN (Dutch Warmblood), Christopher Hickey, owner; Ferro, si Zonia, dam; breeder not on file
	WINERGY (Hanoverian), Katie Hoefs, owner; World Cup I, sire; Grebina, dam; Schmoldt Claus, breeder
	ALIBABA (Danish Warmblood), Emmy Adwers and Brad Adwers, ers; Alibi, sire; Hjerter Dame, dam; Gunnar Faartoft, broader, 63
	FASHION (Danish Warmblood), Shirley Rector, owner; Fruehling Ea, dam; breeder not on file
13.	HONDO (Dutch Warmblood), Amy Bock, owner; Wieberoodnorsire; Ulette, dam; Richard Schmickrath, breeder
	Germeta, dam; breeder not on file;
15.	KRATU (Dutch Warmblood), Christina Baker, owner; Calimero, s Zilfia, dam; C. Bouman, breeder.