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YK Spotlight on Tessa Holloran

The Beginning

YK: How did you get started riding dressage?

TH: I was lucky to live next to Ten Broeck Farm and we would visit the horses almost every day. We became very good friends with Phil and Orintha Silva. When I was about 3 ½ Phil showed up one day on his trip back to Florida with a little Welsh and called my dad. He convinced him to buy my first pony, Little Miss K. For most of the time I was just learning with my mom, doing short stirrup and even some cross rails. But when I got older Orintha gave me lessons - she is a dressage trainer. We had Miss K for about 8 years and then we imported my Dutch mare "Beau" and that's when I got a bit more serious with dressage. So I think it was mostly about location and luck.

YK: How did you end up loving the Dutch Warmbloods in particular?

TH: Growing up at Ten Broeck Farm, I volunteered at many breed shows. I always loved Kathy Hickerson's horses from Majestic Gaits. I thought they were so well mannered, had great conformation, and were attractive movers. They often won a lot of awards. For a while, her stallion Navarone was there and I watched Colleen O'Connor-Dzik help train him. I also watched Liz Caron ride her stallion Schroeder, who produces beautiful Dutch horses, in the D4K Festival demo. And it just so happens he spent last winter with us at Hampton Green Farm during the WIT program working Grand Prix with Liz. I also love that the Dutch Warmbloods are successful jumpers. Tigger and his dad both had jumping careers before transitioning to dressage. It shows that the breed is so talented and able to excel in different disciplines. My first real Dutch love was Beau (Usela: Ronaldo x Sebecca) and I was really excited that her grandfather was the famous Rubenstein. She had so many of his wonderful traits.



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Tessa and Tigger - Photo Credit Anna King

YK: Any advice for our YK members who are just getting started in their riding careers?

TH: First, I would tell them to always believe that anything is possible. I never thought that at 13 years old I would have had so many opportunities, done so many shows, and travelled so much. I never thought I would be working regularly with Lendon Gray or have met 14 Olympic riders. It is really amazing. Next, I would tell them that it is a lot of hard work. I have been riding pretty much straight out 6 days a week for the last two years and probably 5 days a week before that. I'm also in public school fulltime so I have to get to the barn after school. I try to learn by auditing clinics and watching a lot

of online videos in addition to my lessons. Also, now that my horses have been working so hard and competing, there is a lot more grooming and

extra care to keep them healthy and sound. Stretching, hand walking, liniment baths and rub downs, icing, and those types of care all become very important. Also with the shows, there is a lot of extra preparation. Bathing, braiding, tack cleaning, packing, trailering, and cleaning stalls and the trailer. Stripping stalls is probably my least favorite. The last thing I would say is to enjoy everything, even when things go wrong be patient and don't get discouraged. Try to listen to all the instructors and teachers you can, and do your best to at least try what they tell you. Even if you think you know better, they have a lot more experience.

“Have goals but know that you might have to adjust them. Keep working hard, love your horses and enjoy the journey.”



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The Present

YK: How did you end up with your current Dutch Warmblood mount, Tigger?

TH: I felt like I was outgrowing Beau and wanted a horse that could teach me further up the levels. We didn't really have a set timeline, but my parents agreed we could start casually looking. Especially since I hadn't ridden a lot of different horses, I needed to get more feel for what was out there. I was very excited and spent a lot of time searching horses online. It turns out Tigger (Appielousos B: Kilgari x Solousa B) wasn't too far in Vermont. We showed his video to my trainers and then I tried him. I felt very attached to him from the beginning and was amazed at his talent. It seemed like I could learn so much from him and we could be together for a long time.

YK: Does he have any quirks or funny habits?

TH: He knows his name when I call him and will whinny back. He is also very affectionate and gives a lot of kisses. When he eats his grain he dunks his mouth in the water after almost every bite. He loves food, and will try to eat just about anything. Not always a good thing since he bit my new iPhone. Some of his favorite treats are bananas and granola bars.

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YK: You two participated in the D4K WIT program in Florida this winter - how was that?

TH: This is an unbelievable program in Wellington that requires a lot of hard work and gives you amazing opportunities to meet the very top names in dressage, audit fantastic trainers, and even watch international Olympians at the Global Dressage Festival. For me, it was also a great chance to spend some time with riders closer to my age. I was really glad to be with Lendon for such a long time as Tigger and I started out together. We do daily fitness, self-care for our horse, lessons 5 days a week, chores, lectures, field trips, written tests, and volunteering. Everyone must



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also interview someone during the program, thanks to WIT I got to spend an hour speaking to Alison Brock! The experience is intense for sure, every day starts at 6:30 a.m. and we finish around 4:30 p.m. Twice a month we trade mornings so we get a chance to sleep in. I also had to complete my regular schoolwork remotely. Very long days and tiring, but it is so worth every minute.



Tessa and Tigger - Photo Credit Jack LaTorre

YK: What were some of the most important things that you learned this winter?

TH: Since I had just gotten Tigger in early December, the winter was really about us getting to know each other. And we are still doing that. I ride very differently than he is used to and he is very different than Beau. His stride is much bigger and covers a lot more ground, so that was an adjustment for me in a lot of ways. I worked a lot on communication and trying to give him very clear aids. I am lucky that he is so good because he would cut me a lot of slack when he was confused. He is trained to a much higher level and I had lots of fun learning and trying new things.

The Future

YK: Huge congratulations on winning the Willy Arts Young Rider Grant! What are your goals for this year?

TH: Thank you, I was so excited when I found out. I have a lot of training planned, which will be very important since our relationship is so new. I'm happy to get guidance in helping me bring out the best in Tigger and will have my trainer Vinz Flores to also help with training rides so we all have a better understanding of things. I am hoping all goes well and I can work toward my competition goals. I plan to compete FEI Childrens this year and try to qualify again for Nationals at Lamplight. I'd also like to get my USDF Bronze medal since I only need two more scores. I am invited to the Dressage Seat Medal Finals where I hope to do well and then onto Region 8 Championships in September. At NEDA Fall I plan to do the



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breed show again and run him in the Amateur Handler and Dutch IBC class. And since my advice was to believe anything is possible, I would really love to find a way to return to Florida again in the winter.

YK: If YK members have questions or want to get in touch - what is the best way for them to contact you and/or follow all of your activities?

TH: It would be great if they wanted to follow my journey and message me on Facebook @teamholloran, or instagram at tessa_dressage and my website is www.tessaholloran.com