



Hart Extends Unbeaten Streak During Para Week

The four-time Paralympian Rebecca Hart (USA) added yet another blue ribbon to her trophy cabinet in the Grade III class during the final day of action in Perrigo CPEDI3* at AGDF. She recorded her third victory from three starts this week aboard Fortune 500, Rowan O'Riley's 13-year-old Oldenburg gelding by Fidertanz. The 38-year-old posted 75.611% — a full five percentage points clear of second-placed Meghan Beige (USA). They have now won five international classes in a row.

"We had a very successful and very busy week because I've been doing three horses through this entire CPEDI," explained Hart, who also competed her Tokyo Paralympic team bronze medalist El Corona Texel and brought her new horse, Floratina, to school. "I was happy with how everyone went and also how my body held up because I've never done that before."

Hart was born with a rare genetic disease called hereditary spastic paraplegia, which is a progressive impairment that causes muscle wasting and paralysis from the middle of the back down.

"I know 'Tex' and 'Moola' [Fortune 500] really well and I have an amazing support

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AGDF Times

LINDSAY BROCK
Editor

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Anna Buffini Earns Golden Ticket to World Cup™ Final

The USA's Anna Buffini's last-minute decision to bring FRH Davinia La Douce from San Diego, CA, to Florida to contest Friday night's IDA Development FEI World Cup™ Grand Prix Freestyle during AGDF 8 paid off handsomely. She claimed a coveted ticket to the World Cup™ Final in Omaha, NE, next month.

There are three starting spots allocated at the FEI World Cup™ Final to the North American League, and Steffen Peters and Alice Tarjan had already bagged the top two spots. Heading into the freestyle — the final North

America qualifier before the prestigious Final — it was neck and neck between Buffini and Sarah Tubman.

From second to go in the class, Tubman and First Apple put down a chunky score of 77.45%, and held the lead for more than two hours, until Buffini — second-to-last to go — pulled off a 78.28% test on her own FRH Davinia La Douce, which proved unassailable. Morgan Barbançon (FRA) rode Bolero into third with 77.41% from final draw — just 0.04 percentage points adrift of Tubman.

Buffini said, "It could have

been either of us — it was a battle to the end and she deserves to go just as much as I do. I'm very grateful to have the outcome that we did. It was a tricky ride, but in the past if we've had a tricky ride then the score wouldn't have turned out so well. Our partnership and the work we've put in together the last couple of years has really come together, so now even if the ride is a little tricky we can still come out with a solid test. She's a chestnut mare and they all come out a little bit different at every single show."

Buffini, 28, was grateful for the opportunity to ride in the atmospheric and electric stadium at AGDF as it served as valuable preparation for the cauldron-like setting at the Final, and she and FRH Davinia La Douce — a 16-year-old by Don Frederico — can carry this experience forward. She rode to an emotive Top Gun: Maverick compilation; she has seen the film eight times.

"I am glad we had this [tricky] ride because it's given us so many tricks and things we can do to prepare for Omaha, so it was a good preparation show," added Buffini, who trains with Olympic medalist Guenter Seidel, whom she credits for much of her success. "He's the reason I ride how I ride and I am who I am. He changed my life and I wouldn't



Continued on page 10

A New Derby Champion is Crowned

In the Palm Beach Derby 40th anniversary edition, it was youth to the fore during AGDF 8. The exciting knock-out contest pits riders head-to-head to ride a Prix St. Georges on an unfamiliar horse whom they are given just five minutes to get to know before tackling the test in the main arena.

This year, the ever popular class — which was sponsored by Buffalo Wild Wings — culminated in a tussle between 26-year-old Anna-Christina Abbelen (GER) and 23-year-old Benjamin Ebeling (USA). Both riders had emerged victorious from the semi-final knock-out rounds earlier in the day and stepped forward to contest the final under lights during the freestyle.

They both rode Helgstrand Dressage USA's nine-year-old Sezuan stallion Zidan-DN, and it was first-to-go

Abbelen who claimed the Howald Pferdekaemper memorial trophy with 72.426%. Ebeling made a valiant attempt to better the score, but when he missed the final change in the line of three-times and finished on 71.359%, he handed glory to Abbelen in her first ever Derby competition.

"It was really fun," she enthused. "This was a super nice horse and it's awesome that Helgstrand gave us such nice horses. It felt good and it was a fun atmosphere between us riders. In the five minutes, I tried to feel how Zidan does all the exercises and then push him to my aids, have him in front of my aids, soft in the contact and know how much I needed to touch the snaffle or the curb. It's quite cool to win in my first Derby experience and I hope I can be back here next year to defend my title."



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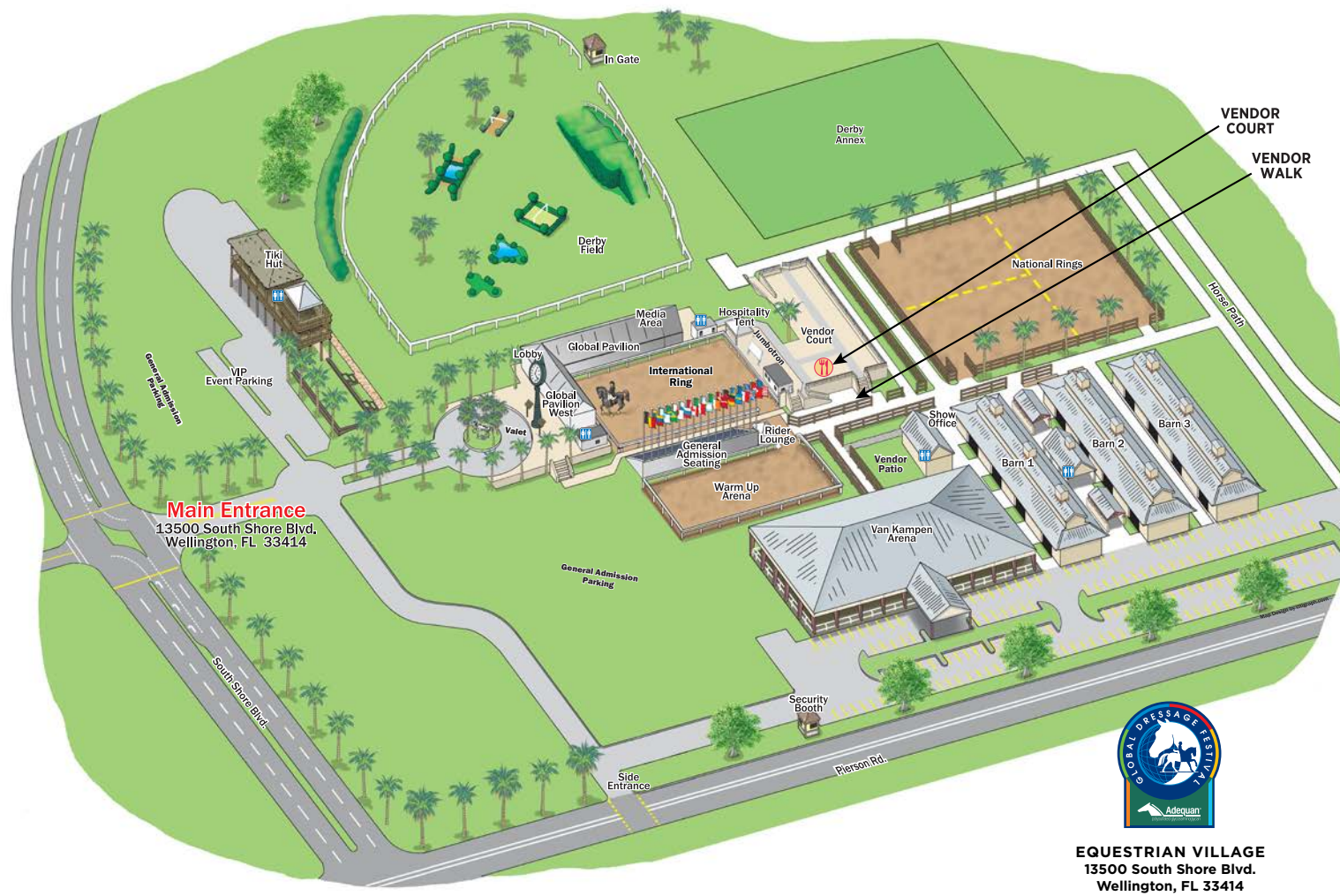


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Omega Alpha Healthy Horse Award winner Iria BRH. Pictured: Martha Stover aboard Iria BRH with Peggy Devens.



C U at X Tack X-Factor Award winner Tiago Ernesto. Pictured (L to R): Sarah Hoog presenting, Tiago Ernesto mounted on Hobbit Interagro with coach Adrienne Lyle.



N2 Sport Horse of the Week winner Nexolia Feodoro. Pictured (L to R): Adrienne Lyle and Sue Newell presenting to Vickie Lavoie's Nexolia Feodoro.



Performance Farms Adult Amateur Achievement Award winner Pamela Wildman mounted on Arami. Pictured (L to R): Pamela Wildman mounted on Arami with Rebecca Cowden.



Anna Buffini with FRH Davinia Douce was chosen by her peers to receive The People's Choice Award for her exemplary Horsemanship, Sportsmanship and Performance. The Award is sponsored by Illustrated Properties and was presented by Realtor Rodolfo Maya of the Maya Group.



The Zen Elite Award winner Betsy Steiner. Pictured: Endel Ots presenting The Zen Elite Award to Betsy Steiner aboard Swiss W.



Baden Spa BEST Award winner Lily Zilo. Pictured: Lily Zilo wins the Baden BEST for her winning CDI ride aboard Cesar De Massa.



Donato Farms Team Achievement Award winners Chris Von Martels and team. Pictured: Jessica Friedrich of Donato Farms presenting to Chris Von Martel, aboard Eclipse, with his with team.

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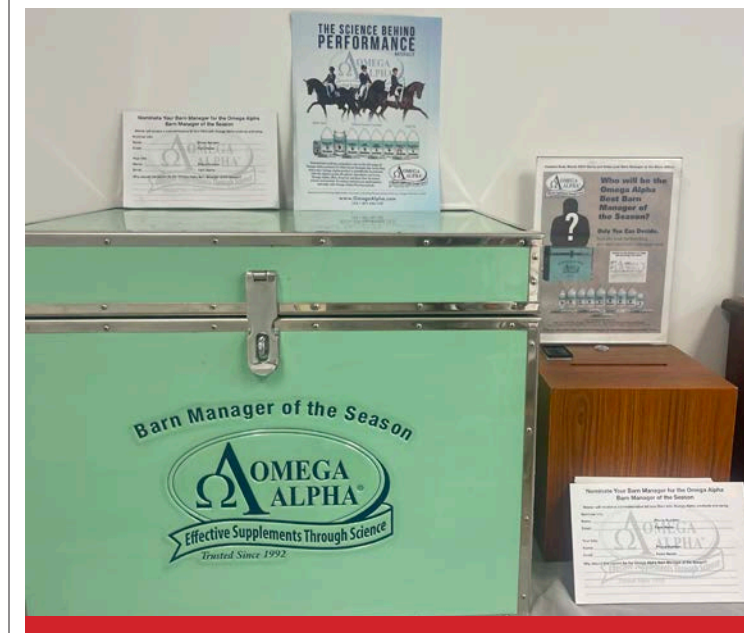
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system that rallied around me to help me pull off seven rides in the CDI atmosphere — I couldn't have done it without them," added the rider from Pennsylvania. She was grateful to show in the championship atmosphere offered in the main stadium at AGDF.

"This is one of the best arenas to get the exposure and experience needed for the top level CDIs because it's a lot with the enclosure, the stands and flowers," she explained. "It's fabulous to be able to bring the horses to the kind of environment that you'll see in the big championships."

Hart has her eye on the Paris 2024 Paralympics, with a European tour planned for the summer of this year.



In the Grade V, **Cynthia Screnci** (USA) also landed three wins in AGDF 9 riding her own and Volado Farms' 16-year-old Sir Chipoli, by Sir Donnerhall. The 55-year-old former jumper rider led the freestyle with 72.192%, despite using music and a floorplan designed for another horse. This extends the pair's unbeaten international streak to 18 tests.

On her transition from a jumper rider to para dressage, Screnci added, "I'm super competitive. Coming into dressage I thought 'I've got this, I'm a good rider.' The first two years were really humbling realizing how much I didn't know. The hard thing was going from competition where it was just about the speed and the rails, which I could manage because I'm a bit bold. This takes so much more communication and thought."

Screnci found Sir Chipoli through Paralympian Kate Shoemaker (USA), who herself contested the Grade IV freestyle, taking the class with 76.083% on her new horse, the 12-year-old Ghandi (Bojengel x Tuschinski). The 35-year-old, who has lesions that cause motor control dysfunction, muscle weakness and spasms on the right side of her body, won all three tests this week, all with scores north of 71% on the horse's international debut.



The 37-year-old Tokyo Paralympic gold medalist **Roxanne Trunnell** (USA) capped a high-scoring week with another personal



best to lay claim to the Grade I freestyle. She rode Lehua Custer's seven-year-old Oldenburg stallion Fortunato H2O (Floriscourt x Rascalino), to

77.711%, with a high score of 79.5% from the Portuguese judge Carlos Lopes, who was sitting at E.

The 25-year-old **Skylar Wroblewski** landed the title in the Grade II contest in her first ever international freestyle. She piloted Nicolas and Elizabeth de Lavalette's 16-year-old gelding Clarc (by Dream Catcher x Lord Sinclair) to 66.711%. Wroblewski, who has Cerebral Palsy, was riding in her second-ever CPED.

Anna Buffini To Compete at World Cup™ Final
continued from page 1



be here without him. He has so much wisdom to share and I try to take that into the arena."

The judge presiding from C, Clive Halsall (GBR), said, "These riders all came with the intention to do the very best they could. You could see the pressure was

on and they all wanted to win this class. We want to see good freestyles with risks, but you've always got to get that balance right with the harmony and difficulty. They really went for it and tried; they all had really good freestyles and good music."



RIDER SPOTLIGHT: Miriam Bacon

AGDF 2023 has seen impressive youth involvement in the CDI ring this season. This week, we showcase one of those rising CDI stars, **Miriam Bacon**. After her CDI debut in the Children's division at just 12 years old, Bacon has many more goals on the horizon.

Tell us about the partner you're competing with this season.

I am competing on my Hanoverian gelding Drambuie "Buie" (Damsey x Lauries Crusader). Buie and I just started riding together, so we are still getting to know each other. Buie has tons of personality and loves to make funny faces. His favorite pastimes are rolling in the mud and tearing up his coolers.

When and where did you start riding?

I've always been in love with horses and can't remember a time when I wasn't riding. I started taking riding lessons at

a hunter barn when I was five years old. I switched to dressage when I was eight and haven't looked back. I love it because of the precision and the challenge. I enjoy working hard on the details and seeing that work pay off.

This is your first season in Wellington; how do you like it?

This is my first time competing at Global or any CDI. It was also my first show on Buie. Meeting and competing alongside so many world-class riders has been an honor. It has been a dream come true, and I have learned so much from the experience.

If you had to spend the rest of your life doing one movement, what would it be and why?

My favorite movement is the extended trot. Buie's extended trot is super smooth, and I feel like I am floating on air. I am also really looking forward to learning piaffe, passage and canter pirouettes.

Who is your biggest inspiration?

Definitely my trainer Julio Mendoza. I met Julio when we were both in the warm-up ring at Tryon International Equestrian Center. I was only eight years old and riding my old hunter pony in Intro. Julio took the time to find me after the show to encourage me and tell me that I would be an amazing rider one day. That one moment meant the world to me. He has taught me so much both on and off my horses.

What are your goals for 2023 and beyond?

My first goal was to have a successful CDI debut on Buie in Wellington and to survive the famously intimidating stadium. My second goal is to compete in the Children's division at the U.S. Festival of Champions in August. I am also hopeful I can earn my USDF bronze medal, too.

I want to learn how to bring



young horses up through the levels and make my own Grand Prix horse one day. I also want to be known as the hardest working and nicest person in the barn, and to be supportive and encouraging to other riders, especially to children hoping to pursue dressage.



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