



Readers Write

International Dressage Trainer Teaches Riders to Have Fun!

Written by Tracy Underwood

Santa Rosa Equestrian Center (SREC) welcomes Swedish Dressage trainer, Erika Jansson as it's newest addition. Erika's love for horses and teaching shines through in her fun loving approach to Dressage. The results are happy horses that are eager to learn and happy riders that are enjoying their horses more than they thought possible.

Erika was formally educated in Sweden.

Unlike the United States, the European countries require many years of diligent study and training before you can call yourself a horse trainer. Erika attended the Horse College in Skara for two years. The curriculum consisted of equine science, nutrition, shoeing, breeding and bloodlines, and veterinary assistance. After graduating from the Horse College, she was accepted at the at Sweden's Flying National Stud stable management school. Her riding progressed under Sweden's top Dressage, Eventing, and Show Jumping trainers, including Finnish Olympian Kyra Kyrklund and Kyra's coach Richard White. Upon completion of her studies, Erika was the first Swedish rider invited to be an auction rider at the world famous Hannoverian Verband in Germany. Erika came to the United States in 1997 to be the private trainer for the Furth family at their Chalk Hill Winery Equestrian Center. While at Chalk Hill she frequently had the opportunity to train with Stefan Peters and Debbie McDonald. She continues to train horses for

the Furth family.

When Erika starts with a new horse and rider she has clients fill out a questionnaire about their horses and themselves. People sometimes forget to mention issues that may affect training so the questionnaire helps fill in the blanks. She also examines tack for proper fit. She likes to ride the horse initially so she can feel what the owners are experiencing. Horses often look different than they feel. Dressage riders, in particular, often get caught up in their strive for perfection and lose their perspective. She is often heard telling her students, "Dare to make a mistake," and "It's supposed to be fun!"



Erika uses cavalettis as one of her many teaching tools

Erika strives to keep lessons interesting for both the rider and the horse. She frequently uses poles, pylons, and other props to create exercises that are fun and motivating. Erika is a great believer in cross training. Many of her Dressage horses jump on a weekly basis. Sometimes she will lunge a horse over jumps. She doesn't require the jumps to be high, just enough to get their backs up. She also likes to get the horses out of the arena. Her favorite way to introduce horses to *passage* is outside the arena. She likes to have two horses riding up a hill, she will have the other horse and rider gallop up the hill while she is holding her horse back. She uses the energy the horse generates from wanting to catch up to the other horse and asks for *passage*, no whip or spur, just the horse's own energy.

Erika offers a fun strength building cavaletti clinic at SREC for horses of all disciplines. Riders are placed into groups of four based upon the size of their horse's stride. The riders start off by going over a couple of poles in a line and Erika keeps adding up to twenty-five poles. All the while the rider must keep the horse connected and manage the tempo. It is a very challenging and rewarding clinic. Upcoming clinics are scheduled for June 26, July 24, and August 28, 2011. Clinics are held at Santa Rosa Equestrian Center, LLC, 3184 Guerneville Road, Santa Rosa CA 95401. For more information about SREC visit www.srequestrian.com, or call (707) 566-0500. For more information about Erika or her clinics, please visit www.erikajansson.com, or to schedule a lesson contact her by phone at (707) 326-7612.

Tracy Underwood is a real estate attorney by profession. Tracy moved to Santa Rosa from Manhattan Beach, California in 2004 when she and Wesley Leckner purchased SREC. Tracy enjoys overseeing the day to day operations of SREC and European Pony School. She is very active in the local horse community, hosting several Dressage and jumper schooling shows. She is a Northern Regional Director of the California Dressage Society (CDS) as well as co-chair of the Sonoma chapter of CDS. Tracy can be reached at tracy@srequestrian.com.



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