

California Swede does much more than “get by” with a little help from her friends.

by Kim F. Miller • photos by: Anna Blomdahl

"I'll be back next Tuesday!" Mette Rosencrantz told her clients and friends on leaving Los Angeles for the USEF National Dressage Finals in Gladstone, NJ. That was in mid-May and as of mid-July, Mette and her equine partner, Marron, were still travelling -- half a world away in Europe.



She'd been happy to earn a berth at the National Championships, where she and Marron finished overall fifth at Grand Prix, just a hair's width of a score from a third place podium spot.

A native of Sweden, Mette has lived in the U.S. for 30 years and this marks her sixth time qualifying for the U.S. National Championships. Along with coaching horses and riders at all levels, she regularly competes and wins in CDIs and has long aspired to represent the U.S. internationally.

"I'm no spring chicken and I know that life is so fragile," Mette says. "You never know what tomorrow will bring, so you have to take the opportunities when you can." That was her impetus for returning to Gladstone, which she decided to do just a few weeks before the show. The Nations Cup invites, each issued separately, were happy surprises that came with the consequences of being away from her business for an extended period and accepting the sizeable expense of saying yes.

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Known as one of the happily hardest working trainers in the sport, Mette accepted the coveted invitations with the hope and belief that her clients and friends would firmly support her fulfilling the dream of riding under the U.S. flag in Europe.

She thought of USEF dressage coach Robert Dover's mantra that top riders need to measure their abilities on the biggest stages in order to challenge themselves, stay sharp and advance their knowledge. "He has a great philosophy that you can't sit home and think that you know how to do this," Mette shares. "You've got to get out there."

As of her first Nations Cup, the CDIO4* in Uggerhalne, Denmark, where the Americans finished fourth, Mette had zero regrets about making the trip and was looking forward to the next in Falsterbo, Sweden in mid-July. "It's a big thing," she said of her Nations Cup invitations. "It's really an honor to ride for the American flag."

It's an even bigger honor to do so in her native Sweden. As preparation for Falsterbo, Mette and Marron competed in a Swedish national show, where they won the Grand Prix. "When they announced my name, none of the younger people had a clue who I was," she recalls. "But when I was done, so many faces and old friends came to cheer me on. I felt so welcome having the Swedish and the American flag flying, and it was especially fun that we won the class!

"It's one thing when you leave your country and it's quite another to come back 30 years later and compete," she continues. The homecoming aspect of the national show was great, as was a main difference between competing there and in the U.S. "They pay out a lot of prize money and personal gifts," Mette explains. "I won \$2,000 at the last show, whereas in California, I might get a hoof pick!" Flowers are part of the prize giving ceremonies there and, at the Grand Prix level, the winner is interviewed by the local media.

Patience Pays Off

Although Mette has brought many horses along to the highest levels, this year's accomplishments are all the sweeter because of achieving them with Marron. She bought the now 17 year old Danish Warmblood four years ago and he had Grand Prix experience but was an extremely hot, spooky ride. That's why he was within her budget as a self-supported Grand

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Prix rider. “I wanted to see if I could turn him around, and there were times when I was afraid I could not make it. He had not shown that much when I got him and he was almost fried, with lots of anxiety.”

Patience was the key to earning his trust and rebuilding his confidence. “I was very black and white in that aspect,” Mette explains. “I don’t believe in punishing a horse that has lost a bit of his confidence.” Another key to her success with Marron was changing to a low-key warm-up routine before entering the competition court. “It’s almost like you have a mouse trap and, in the beginning, I rode him right into that trap. Now I’ve learned to go around the landmines.”

Travelling to New Jersey and then onto Europe and their many stops on that continent, Mette enjoyed an extra level of connection with Marron because she went everywhere with him. Planes, trucks, etc., plus providing all his care, including braiding and grooming. “We’re both very far from home, so we became very close. He’s my best friend.”

Having been a friend to many over the years, Mette is grateful to the friends who have helped make this surprise journey possible. In Sweden, for example, long time friends volunteered their stable and an extra apartment to house Mette and Marron between competitions there.

Clients, staff and sponsors back home have also made the trip possible. Chief among those is assistant trainer Anna Blomdahl. A fellow Swede and accomplished high level rider herself, Anna is holding down the fort at Mette Rosencrantz Dressage at the Mill Creek Equestrian Center in Topanga Canyon. She also brings Mette’s friends and fans along for the ride with reports and beautiful photos on the trainer’s social media platforms.

One of Mette’s supportive clients is young rider Veronica West, who was preparing for her second North American Junior Young Rider Championships as her coach headed off to her own international appearances. “She is a huge inspiration to me because I have seen her unwavering commitment, dedication, toughness and grit for the sport,” Veronica says. “These are attributes I greatly admire and hope to always maintain. It’s wonderful to see all the success Mette has achieved this past year. It really does show that hard work and dedication pay off!”

In making the most of this year’s hard-earned opportunities, Mette carries with her the dreams of her fellow American dressage riders. “I feel really privileged to be able to compete. I know how many good riders we have in America. Everybody is working and trying as hard as I do,” Mette reflects. “Sometimes you are lucky to get on a journey that takes you a little further than the rest. Without all the friends, sponsors and supporters I’ve had cheering me on, this could

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have been a little lonely. I am really humbled and thankful to my support team – even people who've just been nice to me. At the end of that day, that's what is most important: friends.”

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