

Girl Power at WEG

Friday's individual dressage competition was exciting enough, but it also gave us something for the future. And, while we're at it, let's hear it for the much maligned chestnut warmblood mare.

I was thrilled to see Laura Graves on the medal podium again after her team silver Saturday, but I also thoroughly enjoyed contemplating the future that includes two exciting and endearing mares: Red mare Bella Rose was the picture of composure for Isabell Werth to win gold, clearly waxing the competition. She is 14 but looks like she has a lot of good dressage miles in her. And a lot of 10s.

Isabell knew Bella Rose was going to be full of power from the first trot extension, despite the heat and humidity in Tryon. Turning onto the diagonal after the first halt, Isabell said to herself, "Wow, she wants to go!"

As many times as Isabell Werth has been on the top of medal podium at Olympics, WEGs and World Cups, she was clearly thrilled by this victory. She had tears rolling down her face right after her ride and again as the German national anthem was played.

I love the big beautiful mare ears on Charlotte Dujardin's Mount St. John Freestyle, who is only 9 years old, the youngest horse in the competition. Charlotte said this was only Freestyle's third ever Grand Prix Special test.

"She upped her game and took it on," said Charlotte. "When she's stronger and more confident I'm going to give Isabell a run for her money."

The rest of the seven riders in the final draw were all men, with Charlotte just edging out Sonke Rothenberger of Germany for the podium. Another exciting young woman in the group was Patrik Kittel's Well Done de la Roche CMF for Sweden, only 10 years old.

The horses and riders get tomorrow off while they rest up for the freestyle on Sunday. The format here gives a separate championship for both the individual competition on Friday and the freestyle on Sunday. As of Friday afternoon, no contingency plans have been announced if the wind and rain from Florence prove to be a challenge for Sunday. It might serve the riders well to have planned ahead with "Just Let a Smile Be Your Umbrella" as their entrance music.