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## Carl Hester

**Date of birth:** 29 June 1967.

**Lives:** Newent, Gloucestershire.

**Major achievements:** Carl won the 1985 National Young Rider Championship just 18 months after taking up dressage, was a Talent Spotting finalist in 1986 and a member of the British Young Rider team in 1988.

In his competition career as a senior, Carl has amassed a record 51 national dressage titles and has been British Dressage (BD) National Champion six times. He has competed in three Olympics, one World Equestrian Games, five European Championships and has reached one World Cup Dressage Final.

Carl and Escapado were the highest-placed British combination at the 2004 Athens Olympics as well as the 2005 European Championships, where they finished sixth with a personal record-score. He was selected for the 2007 European Championships with Lecantos, but had to withdraw due to his ride injuring himself a couple of weeks before the competition.

In 2008, Carl's bad luck continued. He had two horses in contention for the Olympics, Dolendo and Lecantos, but both ended up out of the running due to injuries. Things took a turn for the better however when he was given the ride on Liebling with whom he quickly formed a partnership. The pair earned its first international grand prix special victory later that year.

The following year, further good results led to their selection for the British team at the Alltech FEI Windsor European Dressage Championships 2009. Here, Carl rode a personal best on Liebling to help team GB win the team silver medal. This replicated the success of the British team in Lipica in 1993 as the best ever result achieved by a British team at a European Championship, beating Germany for the first time in dressage history.

2009 also saw the emergence of Carl's exciting partnership with Sasha Stewart's exceptional young stallion, Uthopia. The pair produced consistently high results at small tour culminating in PSG, intermediate I and intermediate I freestyle victories at the Dressage Deluxe National Dressage Championships.

In March 2010, Carl and Uthopia revealed their potential at the Spanish Sunshine Tour CDIs, returning home unbeaten with two grand prix and two grand prix special wins under their belt. Their best performances were rewarded with 73.02% (grand prix) and 75.29% (grand prix special), all the more remarkable as it was the horse's first competition at that level.

In Spring 2010, Carl lost the ride on Liebling II as the gelding was sold to John Risley for Canadian dressage team member Cheryl Meisner to ride. However, by the Summer they were temporarily reunited and the pair won the Hickstead CDI5\* grand prix special with a score of 72.41%. Fellow Hickstead competitor Richard Davison commented that it was, 'as if they had never been separated.'

In 1996, Carl won the Dressage Trainer of the Year and, in 1997, he was awarded the Spillers Equestrian Personality of the Year. He is a sought-after trainer; his former pupil Vaughn Jefferis became the 1994 individual three-day event world champion and Carl was the dressage trainer for the New Zealand three-day event team at the 1996 Atlanta Olympics.

**Current competition horses:**

- Liebling II a 16.2hh German-bred bay gelding by Lorentin I, born 1997 and owned by John Risley.
- Dolendo a 17.2hh German-bred chestnut gelding by Donnerhall, born 1994 and owned by Ann Cory.
- Uthopia a 16.1hh Dutch-bred dark bay stallion by Metall, born 2001 and owned by Sasha Stewart.

<b>First competitive experience:</b>	"When I was 18 years old and on the Pony Club eventing team. I was on the dressage and show jumping team at the same time."
<b>Trainer:</b>	Anne van Olst and Erik Theilgaard.
<b>Most admired riders:</b>	"The top 10 riders in the world. All of them have special qualities, different training methods and different horses with different characters. I watch all of them."
<b>Qualities looked for in a dressage horse:</b>	"I look for willingness to work as well as an ability to lengthen and shorten with a desire to go forwards rather a lot."
<b>Favourite dressage venues:</b>	"Hickstead, as we always have stonking good weather, the arena surfaces are great and there is a party atmosphere. Abroad, I love the Sunshine Tour, which takes place on three consecutive weekends in Spain in March, from the point of view that it is the most relaxed atmosphere to start a horse's international competition career."
<b>What other career would you have chosen:</b>	"Something in the hotel trade as I come from an island geared to tourism and worked in bars and hotels in my early years."
<b>Favourite meal:</b>	"Roast lamb."
<b>Favourite drink:</b>	"Any new world white wine."

Carl Hester lived on the Isle of Sark from the age of four. He rode a donkey called Jacko for three years until he was tall enough to ride carriage horses, the only type of horses on the island.

Between the ages of 10 and 16, Carl did not ride as he went to boarding school. At 16, he was offered a job at the Fortune Centre of Riding Therapy in Dorset. He evented and took his British Horse Society Assistant Instructors (AI) exam during his 2½-year stay there.

He became Young Rider National Dressage Champion in 1985 on a skewbald mare called Jolly Dolly and was short-listed for the British junior eventing team with the same horse.

After leaving the Fortune Centre, Carl went back to Sark for six months, before returning to the mainland to event for Janni and Christopher Taylor for three years. While he was with the Taylors, he was given the ride on the schoolmaster Slightly Trendy and was selected for the young rider dressage team in his last year as a young rider in 1988. However, he missed the European Championships as he broke his leg when a horse fell on top of him just before the championships.

"Although we didn't make it to the Europeans, Slightly Trendy inspired me to concentrate on dressage by getting on the team," says Carl.

Then he had a telephone call to invite him for an interview for a job as a rider for the Bechtolsheimer family. He started work for them in 1989.

"I thought I had died and gone to heaven. I went from earning £10 per week as a working pupil to having a wage, car, house, lessons, horses – it blew my mind. At the time, they were pioneering with their stable management and schooling. I just wanted to soak it all up," he says.

Carl made the difficult decision to leave after 3½ years. He set up a yard with Kate Carter, which they ran together for 10 years. Then, in 2004, Carl went solo and he now runs his own yard.

Carl has co-written two books, *Down to Earth Dressage* with Bernadette Faurie and *Real Life Dressage* with Polly Ellison.



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