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www.britishdressage.co.uk

Laura Bechtolsheimer

Date of birth: 31 January 1985.

Lives: Ampney St Peter, Gloucestershire.

Major achievements: Team silver medals at the Pony European Championships with Foresters Gold in 1999 and Golden Dancer in 2000 and Laura took home team bronze from the Young Rider European Championships riding Douglas Dorsey in 2004 and Mistral Hojris in 2005. In 2005, Laura also became the youngest British Dressage National Champion at the age of 20 riding Douglas Dorsey.

Laura has gone on to enjoy success at senior international level and won the B final in the 2006 World Cup Final. She represented Britain at the 2006 World Equestrian Games and was offered a wild card for the 2007 World Cup Final, which she turned down due to university commitments.

She was again on the British team at the 2007 European Championships and achieved the highest placing in the team test riding Mistral Hojris. Laura was the British Dressage 'Dressage Rider of the Year 2008' and represented her country at the 2008 Olympic Games riding Mistral Hojris.

In 2009 Laura and Mistral Hojris reached new heights breaking their own personal bests and British records along the way. The pair racked up convincing wins in both the grand prix and grand prix special at S'Hertogenbosch CDI-W in Holland and at Hagen CDI in Germany amongst top company and were also second at Lingen CDI in Germany achieving 78.04% in the special. At Hickstead CDI Laura and Mistral Hojris took third place amongst hot competition in the grand prix and grand prix freestyle, breaking the British kür record of 77.17% previously held by Carl Hester and Escapado to score 81.80%.

Laura and Mistral Hojris were instrumental to the success of the British team at the Alltech FEI Windsor European Dressage Championships. Britain won team silver and Laura added to this with an individual bronze in the grand prix special replicating the success of the British team in Lipica in 1993 as the best ever result achieved by a British team at a European Championships, beating Germany for the first time in dressage history. The pair also finished 4th in the grand prix freestyle with 81.75%.

On their first competitive outing after the Windsor European Championships, Laura and Mistral Hojris broke their personal best again to win the grand prix at the Stuttgart German Masters with 77.19%. The pair then went on to win the grand prix special with 76.54%. They have since enjoyed a spectacular start to 2010 at Amsterdam CDI-W in January. Yet again exceeding their own and British records to score 78.04% in the grand prix and 82.30% in the grand prix freestyle coming second in both to The Netherlands' Edward Gal and Moorland's Totilas.

At Lingen CDI4* in June 2010, Laura picked up three wins on her two horses, Andretti H and Mistral Hojris. With scores of 71.66% and 76.89% in the Grand Prix classes and an exceptional 79.45% in the grand prix special on Mistral Hojris.

Laura now holds the British International GP record in all three classes:

Grand prix:

Laura Bechtolsheimer and Mistral Hojris, 78.04%, Amsterdam CDI-W 2010

Grand prix special:

Laura Bechtolsheimer and Mistral Hojris, 80.08%, Windsor Euro Champs 2009

Grand prix freestyle:

Laura Bechtolsheimer and Mistral Hojris, 82.30%, Amsterdam CDI-W 2010

Current competition horses:

- Mistral Hojris, a 17hh Danish-bred chesnut gelding by Michellino out of Virginia, born 1995 and owned by Laura and her father Dr Wilfried Bechtolsheimer.
- Dankeschön, a 16.3hh Westfalian bay gelding by Douceur, damsire Ehrentusch, born 2002 and owned by Dr Wilfried Bechtolsheimer.
- Andretti H, a 17hh bay Hanoverian gelding by Aarking XX, born 1995 and owned by Dr Wilfried Bechtolsheimer.

First competitive experience:

"I remember it well because I was disqualified for having a coloured browband at a Pony Club show when I was about five."

Trainer:

Father, Dr Wilfried Bechtolsheimer.

Superstitions:

"I have lucky pearl earrings and I used to wear a stock pin from my great grandmother, but I lost it."

Most admired riders:

"Klaus Balkenhol."

Qualities looked for in a dressage horse:

"I like them really, really sharp and big – that's the type of horse I seem to click with and feel comfortable on."

Favourite dressage venues:

Olympia.

What other career would you have chosen:

"I graduated from Bristol University in 2007 (Philosophy and Politics MSc). Apart from riding, I am a presenter for HorseHero.com and am looking to go into PR and marketing."

Favourite meal:

Spaghetti Bolognese.

Favourite drink:

"I'm a massive tea drinker and I like Mohito cocktails."

Laura started riding when she was given her first pony on her third birthday. She went on to compete in Pony Club eventing and won the National Championships of Independent Schools at Stonar School aged 12. Laura started to concentrate on dressage aged 13 and was selected to ride at the Pony European Championship the following season and won a team silver medal at her first major competition.

"The eventing fizzled out. I find dressage really challenging. Every detail is important," says Laura, who admits to missing the eventing at times.

