



OFFICIAL RIDER BIOGRAPHY
www.britishdressage.co.uk

Nicola Tustain

Date of birth: 27 December 1977.

Lives: Corwen, Denbighshire.

Major achievements: Nicola started riding aged 10, was selected for the British junior squad at 16 and became a Welsh international rider at 17.

She made it a gold treble at the 1999 World Championships for riders with disabilities. Nicola, who is in grade II, won individual, freestyle and team gold riding Hotstuff, whom she had only had for three months at the time.

Nicola won individual bronze, freestyle gold and team gold at the 2000 Sydney Paralympic. In 2003, she retained her World Championships titles with The Berkeley Group's Prinz Heinrich, scoring the highest percentage of the 135 riders taking part. Also in 2003, she won the British Dressage National Disabled Dressage Rider Championship riding Prinz Heinrich. In 2006 she took this title for a second time, again partnered by Prinz Heinrich.

Despite having injured her good hand, Nicola took home team gold and individual and freestyle bronze at the 2004 Athens Paralympics. At the 2005 European Championships, she won team gold, individual gold and freestyle bronze. She competed as an individual at the 2007 World Para-Equestrian Championships, winning gold in the individual test and freestyle silver.

Nicola and Rivaldo Of Berkeley were selected as reserves for the 2008 Beijing Paralympics and became the national champions in their grade in the same year.

In 2000, Nicola was voted Denbighshire Sports Personality of the Year and The Western Mail and Jurys Hotel Wales Sportstar. In the same year, she also received the British Equestrian Federation's Medal of Honour, the Writers Association Team Award and the British Equestrian Trade Association's Team Award. At the Animal Health Trust Awards three years later, Nicola was voted the Top Dressage Rider of 2003. She was the first Welsh athlete to be nominated for a Laureus World Sports Awards in 2004.

Nicola also plays badminton in a local able-bodied team and is a member of the Welsh disabled badminton squad.

Current competition horses:

- Prinz Heinrich, a 16.2hh German-bred bay gelding, born 1992 and owned by The Berkeley Group.
- Rivaldo Of Berkeley, a 16.1hh bay Oldenburg gelding by Rubinstein I out of Claudia, born 1998 and owned by The Berkeley Group.
- Moulin Rouge IV, a 16hh German-bred chestnut mare by Alabaster, born 2002 and owned by Nic.

First competitive experience:

"A best turned-out class with my first pony Merlin at a local show when I was about nine."

Trainer:

Sarah Pidgley, Marcus Gribbe and team trainer Michel Assouline.

Superstitions:

"I wear my lucky socks and knickers and keep a small porcelain black cat in my jacket pocket. I just check it is still there before I start my test. It all started after I saw a black cat just before I was competing at the 1999 World Championships."

- Most admired riders:** “Lee Pearson inspires me. He is in the most disabled category and brings his horses on so well. He has achieved so much.”
- Qualities looked for in a dressage horse:** “Temperament first, three good paces and the way they look – whether they look the part and are pretty or handsome.”
- Favourite dressage venues:** British Dressage National Championships at Stoneleigh. Warwickshire.
- What other career would you have chosen:** “Educational social worker. I was accepted to do a degree, but then went to the World Championships and became a full-time athlete instead.”
- Favourite meal:** Indian.
- Favourite drink:** Vodka.

Nicola was born with right hemiplegia, which means she is paralysed down the right-hand side of her body. She also has spasms down her right side, which is a condition called dystonia.

“I am in pain 24/7, which is worse since I was involved in a car accident in 2001, but when I get on a horse, I forget all about the pain,” she says.

Nicola rides without stirrups and one hand. Together with one of her sponsors, Albion Saddles, she devised special tack to help her riding.

“I look like Miss Piggy from *The Muppet Show* since the car accident as my arm keeps sticking out to the side,” she says.

Nicola’s main sponsor is The Berkeley Group and she also receives sponsorship from Patey hats, Ariat International, Albion Saddlemakers, Dohbert Whips and Haliwell Jones (BMW).

