



OFFICIAL RIDER BIOGRAPHY
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Jo Pitt

Date of birth: 22 February 1979.

Lives: Huntly, Aberdeenshire.

Major achievements: Grade II rider Jo competed at the 2004 Athens Paralympics as an individual, finishing equal eighth. In 2006, Jo won the freestyle to music class at the Hartpury International with Lambrusco III.

Jo and Estralita were selected as reserves for the 2008 Beijing Paralympics. The combination headed both the grade II individual and freestyle tests at Hartpury CPEDI, 2009.

At the 2010 FEI World Equestrian Games Jo and Estralita took bronze in the grade II freestyle test with 74.950% and were part of the gold medal winning team with a score of 67.810%. The pair also placed 6th and 7th in the team and individual tests respectively.

Current competition horses:

- Estralita, a 16.2hh black gelding by Weltjunge out of Chial, born 2002 and owned by Hazel and Robert Pitt.
- Rocadero, a 16.3hh bay gelding by Reggazoni out of Asta, born 2000, also owned by Hazel and Robert Pitt.

First competitive experience: "A best turned-out class for under-10s. I can't plait, so my pony was not plaited, but I had done all the grooming myself and that was obvious to the judges."

Trainer: Michel Assouline and Niamh Meehan

Superstitions: "I have to see two magpies."

Most admired riders: "Those who try their hardest and don't give up."

Qualities looked for in a dressage horse: "Temperament, I can't be doing with a horse that messes around. Trainability is also top of the list. Horses have to be able to adapt to my riding as I have no feeling in the right side of my body."

Favourite dressage venues: Moorsele, Belgium.

What other career would you have chosen: "I can't imagine life without horses. I did enjoy teaching some four- and five-year-old children a while ago, so it would be teaching."

Favourite meal: "Roast with all the trimmings."

Favourite drink: "A cup of tea!"

Jo is a grade II rider. She has right-sided hemiplegic cerebral palsy, which means she has no feeling in the right side of her body and can't use her fingers. When she is riding, she has no idea how much pressure she is applying with her right leg or how much contact she has in her right rein.

Jo was hooked on horses after attending a 10-day summer holiday camp at Hayfield riding school when she was six. By the time she was eight, she had her own pony and joined The Pony Club. She was taught as an able-bodied rider, gained her Pony Club C plus test and went on to join a riding club.

"I remember one time when I was competing cross-country, I set off and two people that set off after me finished and I was still on the course. When I eventually finished, I had fallen off twice and it took quite a while for people to get me back on as I can't mount without a stool!"

In 1995, Jo went to Oatridge Agricultural College in West Lothian, where she gained her NC and HNC in horse management. She passed her British Horse Society (BHS) stage 1 exam, but her disability stopped her from progressing further. She has worked with horses in livery yards and a riding school.

Jo resigned from her job as a riding instructor in 2005 to concentrate on her competition career full-time.

