



OFFICIAL RIDER BIOGRAPHY
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Maria Eilberg

- Date of birth:** 9 January 1984.
- Lives:** Pink Green Farm, Beoley, Redditch, Worcestershire.
- Major achievements:** Maria has been a member of the Pony, Junior, and Young Rider European teams from 1998-2005, winning four medals, two pony European silver team medals (Manitu) and two young rider European bronze team medals (Don Perry and Topscore.) She was British Under-21 Champion in 1999, 2000, 2001 and 2003.
- In 2001, she took the British Medium Restricted title with Prinz Heinrich and, in 2004, she took the British Advanced Medium title with Topscore. In 2006, she was selected as travelling reserve for the World Equestrian Games in Aachen with her father's Two Sox. The following year, she won the British Grand Prix Freestyle Championship.
- In 2008, Maria was the travelling reserve for the Olympics with Two Sox. She retained her British Grand Prix Freestyle title and became National Champion.
- Maria continued this good form in 2009. She started her international season with a 2nd in the grand prix and a grand prix freestyle win at La Mandria CDI on Two Sox, with a score of 74.10%. She followed this up with a 2nd and 3rd place in the grand prix and grand prix freestyle respectively at Hartpury CDI in July, recording a score of 72.35% in the kur. At Hickstead CDI Maria and Two Sox finished 3rd in the grand prix special on 67.63%. These strong results led to their selection for silver medal winning British team at the Alltech FEI Windsor European Dressage Championships 2009.
- Throughout 2010 Maria enjoyed success, with four 2nd places on the Sunshine Tour CDI in March riding Two Sox, scoring an impressive 70% in the grand prix and winning 3rd place in the Hickstead CDI5* grand prix special in August with 69.87%. The Autumn of 2010 marked Maria's first World Equestrian Games where she impressed by taking her place on the silver medal winning team with 68.213% in the grand prix and later improving her performance to post 68.50% in the grand prix special.
- Current competition horses:**
- Two Sox, a 16.3hh German-bred bay gelding by Ehrentusch out of Furstin, born 1994 and owned by her father Ferdi.
 - Woodlander Rockstar, a 16.2hh British-bred black stallion by Rotspun out of Savannah, born in 2002 and owned by Lynne Crowden of the Woodlander Stud.
- First competitive experience:** "Weston Park Pony Club Championships. Aged eleven, I won the under-13 dressage title."
- Trainer:** "My mum got me started, taking me to my first Premier League shows where I contested the FEI Pony classes with Willoway Seasoning. Dad [Ferdinand Eilberg, one of Britain's top riders and trainers originally from Germany] took over when I was 15."
- Superstitions:** "I believe money spiders are a good omen. Apart from that, I always wear a comfy set of competition clothes and like to have quiet before my test."
- Most admired riders:** "I respect dad a hell of a lot. He always gets horses to perform. Dad aside, I admire Isabell Werth the most as her way of riding is so relaxed, Anky van Grunsven because she has a good competitive attitude and Hubertus Schmidt because he has a deep and balanced seat. Imke Bartels is a new one on the list since watching her at the Hickstead CDIO in 2005."

- Qualities looked for in a dressage horse:** "I like them to have a good temperament for training and character/personality as I like my horses cute and cuddly in the stable, not grouchy. I like to form a bond with them."
- Favourite dressage venues:** "Internationally Aachen definitely has the 'wow' factor and I enjoy the Spanish Sunshine Tour because of its terrific atmosphere. Nationally, Addington Manor Equestrian Centre in Buckinghamshire has brilliant surfaces and facilities and the National Championships at Stoneleigh Park in Warwickshire have a lovely big warm-up area. Hickstead in Sussex also has a great sense of occasion."
- What other career would you have chosen:** "Work with animals or children."
- Favourite meal:** "My mum reckons my breakfast is indulgent. I have a big bowl of cereal with about six types of cereal plus a banana on top. It's quite a challenge to pile it up, but it does keep me going until 3pm. Otherwise I like takeaways as a bit of a treat."
- Favourite drink:** "I drink mostly water – it's boring, but I'm usually thirsty."

Maria started riding aged five on a Shetland pony called Midnight Cowboy. She was competing at the Weston Park Pony Club Championships aged 11 with Willoway Seasoning, an international event pony she was given to ride after he had been written off due to a leg injury. After competing in a few one-day events, Willoway Seasoning had another leg injury and the vet advised not to jump him anymore.

"He had nice paces, but I didn't think we'd get onto the team for the Pony European Dressage Championships," she says.

They did, but Maria and Willoway Seasoning didn't make it to the 1998 Pony European Dressage Championships.

"We were at the final selection trials. We had done our tests and had been selected. Then we were asked to do a trot-up in the afternoon and he was lame," says Maria philosophically.

The following year she was given the ride on Manitu N, with whom she made her name and won her first medal at the 1999 Pony European Championships. She finished fifth individually, just three marks off the bronze medal.

"By this time I was hooked," she says.

Maria is an Open University student in her "spare time". She has taken German and French A' Levels and hopes to study Spanish in the future.

"I hate going to a country and not being able to speak the language," she says.

She has also completed her British Dressage Apprenticeship with her father Ferdi.

