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## Stephanie Croxford

- Date of birth:** 10 February 1971.
- Lives:** Matlock, Derbyshire.
- Major achievements:** In 2006, Steph and Mr President won the Best Brit award at Fry's CDI. They also won the Heather Harrison trophy for the most accomplished northern rider and scored more than 70% in their first World Cup qualifier at Olympia.
- In 2007, Steph was back competing only six weeks after the birth of her first child at Hartpury CDI and finished second in both the grand prix and grand prix freestyle. She was a member of the Nations Cup team at Hickstead CDIO, where the British team finished second. Steph and "Mr P" won their first foreign international class at Saumur CDI when they took the grand prix freestyle with more than 74%.
- A strong start to their 2009 season saw Steph post a win in the grand prix at Myerscough Premier League and score well at Addington CDI with 69.6% in the freestyle. They were then part of the silver medal winning nations cup team at Saumur CDI in May but pulled out of the special when Mr President suffered an unfortunate injury that put them out of action until the National Championships in September. Here the pair were back in fine style, coming 3<sup>rd</sup> in the grand prix and narrowly pipped to 4<sup>th</sup> in the freestyle with 71%. At Biarritz CDI in October they proved their worth, coming 2<sup>nd</sup> in the grand prix and going on to win the grand prix special.
- Current competition horses:** Mr President IV, a 16.1hh Irish-bred gelding by an unknown Gelderlander/Hackney cross out of a Dutch Warmblood mare, born 1994 and owned by Steph.
- First "horsey" experience:** Steph's first time on a horse was a memorable experience. She was 24 and her boyfriend, who is now her husband, put her on his "nutty" hunter "in the middle of nowhere". "I remember being tanked off with down a hillside on Exmoor. I fell off and didn't ride for six months."
- The nutty hunter was called Gallow and Simon gave him to her as an engagement present. "I spent more time on the ground than I did his back, but now I can stay on anything."
- Trainer:** Richard Davison
- Superstitions:** "I have a lucky bridle. It is falling apart and broke after I rode the grand prix at the 2007 Hartpury CDI, but I had it repaired at the show. I won't change it, much to Richard's disgust."
- Most admired riders:** "Richard (otherwise I'll be in trouble)."
- Qualities looked for in a dressage horse:** "What matters to me is what is inside the horse's head, not whether he is good-looking. I like a horse to be kind and have respect for you, this is rewarded by total trust and mutual respect on my part."
- Favourite dressage venues:** "Saumur CDI in France because each stable has a trapdoor at the back with a conveyor belt for you to put your horse's muck on. What a fabulous gadget."
- What other career would you have chosen:** "Apart from being a mum and geochemist?" (Steph gave birth to Annabelle in June 2007)
- Favourite meal:** "Home-made lemon meringue pie."
- Favourite drink:** "A nice glass of wine."

Steph met her husband Simon at university, where she enjoyed competing for her university in rugby, squash and tennis. Simon hunted and was responsible for introducing Steph to horses. Her first experience was not the greatest (see First "horsey" experience), but it wasn't long before she was hooked.

Following Gallow's retirement, Steph bought a former racehorse, Waverley, and enjoyed riding club events, cross-country and team chasing. However, injury meant Waverley was sold to a "gentle hacking home". The same day he left for his new home, Steph saw an advert in the *Yorkshire Post* for a four-year-old for £2,500. She went and tried out Mr President.

"I thought he moved a bit funny and only later found out that it's what you need for dressage. A few months later I was on a cross-country clinic and the teacher said this was no place for my horse," she said.

Having tried a couple of unaffiliated dressage shows and won with ease, Steph thought, "wow, this is easy".

"I had a bit of a rude awakening when I went to a British Dressage Young Horse competition. Dressage isn't easy and the judges either hated or loved us. They didn't like his 'way of going' and it wasn't until I got to grand prix level that I learnt how to do it properly. Until then I was doing circus tricks, which just shows how talented this horse is."

Steph had competed at grand prix level for only four months when she was invited to enter a home international, Hickstead. The judges slated them.

"Simon told me to get in touch with our nearest top trainer, so I rang Richard Davison. He has deconstructed and reconstructed us and it is still work in progress. Richard says that watching me ride a grand prix test is like a car crash waiting to happen. I am either brave or stupid, but I know I have a once in a lifetime horse."