

Ursula Treadgold Para Director candidate

Proposed by Lindsey Dawes and Leanne Wall



Hello everybody, my name is Ursula and I would really like to be your next Para Director.

I am a grassroots grade IV para dressage rider who only started riding at the age of 30. I'm now a few years older than that and only started participating in affiliated dressage in 2016 when I was also first classified as a grade V para rider. I currently don't have a huge standing in the world of BD, but hope to increase my profile over the course of this campaign to become the new BD Para Director.

I was the Grade V Bronze Champion in Summer 2019 and Winter 2020, and I also have been placed at the Nationals at Preliminary level in 2019. COVID and an injury to my champion, Tyler II, have meant the past year has been a bit of a write off; however, Tyler is now sound and I have an exciting prospect, Holly Berry, who is only four and already showing promise.

I am passionate about dressage and particularly para dressage and coming to the sport later in life and doing so well shows that perseverance and good training pays off. On Tyler II I have competed up to Elementary level affiliated, and Medium level unaffiliated. We are hoping that Holly will take me further than this.

In my previous life I was a GP. Unfortunately, because I really enjoyed my job, I had to take early retirement four years ago due to my disability. From this job I have many skills that I feel will be beneficial to BD. These include communication skills, empathy, financial acumen, setting and working within realistic budgets, working with volunteers and, of course, my vast medical knowledge. I also have previous experience of sitting on Boards for our local Health Authority and being a Director of my local Out of Hours Service.

I live in North Hampshire with my husband, four cats and two horses. I am lucky enough to have them all at home with me and can train at home with my own arena. We are also lucky to be within easy driving distance of several BD venues including Fair Oak, The Croft, Wellington and Sparsholt.

If successful in my application, I would work to understand the existing BD Board and Para Committee strategies and action plans. Then, I would look to work on the following four areas.

- Working more closely with the RDA and making the transition from RDA rider to para rider easier. At present it is a big step and too big or difficult for many. The lack of horsepower or discrimination against those of us with disabilities can mean a talented athlete never gets the chance to progress. There may be a future Paralympic champion out there who needs a guiding hand.

- Aim to demystify the para assessment process and ensure the pathway to classification is as clear and transparent as possible. My medical training aids this and I hope, given my medical knowledge, that potentially more disabilities could be recognised for para sport. Currently there are only about 230 of us that compete as paras. A very small number out of the whole BD membership.
- Given the last year and COVID-19, more needs to be done on mental health. As a Doctor, I bring a deep understanding of the health issues surrounding disability - both physical and mental. We need to better recognise the stresses that are placed on our athletes. There are many pathways to support youth and elite athletes, but what is in place to support the ordinary athlete such as myself? How should we better support those who suffer mental stress and physical disability especially if this results from injury whilst participating in training or competition?
- Actively promote the public understanding of dressage and para dressage. Tokyo 2020 offers us another prime opportunity to share our excellent story. Everybody knows of the 'dancing horses' that did so well in London 2012 and Rio 2016 courtesy of our amazing athletes. But we can do more to promote our image especially as much of the public is well-meaning but misinformed. We need to ensure that the image we present does not allow the public to misconstrue our sport.

I think it is very important that the Para Director is someone who is completely knowledgeable about para dressage. The para riders that I have spoken to also agree that the new Director needs to understand our sport intimately and that a current para rider would be the best person for this role. Our current Para Director, Julie Frizzell is a para rider and she's done a great job.

Like everyone, I have a huge support engine behind me – coaches, vets, physios (horse and human), friends, farriers and most important of all, my husband who acts as my groom for all my competitions. Everyone is 100% behind me, giving me the confidence to stand.

I hope you'll see I have the skills, knowledge, experience and most of all passion to be our next Para Director. Please vote for me, vote Ursula.