

# Oellers CAPTURES

## FEI PRIX ST. GEORGE at BELAND

BY BETH-ANN CRONAN



Photo: Julia Latham

**E**lizabeth Oellers and her KWPN gelding, Dietrich LJS, have the "IT" factors of presence and brilliance. They have so much of "it" that even their warm-up is dazzling, dazzling in its simplicity and focus. The warm-up was true: The rider did not drill the movements and numb the horse. It was a physical and mental preparation for both of them to perform their best. The rider did not smile as she rode, she beamed an obvious happiness and joy.

**"Dietrich was brave and responsive to my seat.** He was happy to move forward and to collect with ease. The slightest shift of my weight can collect or extend his gaits. I believe that the energy of the rider needs to connect quietly with the horse, and less is more!" commented Elizabeth.

**"Handsome D" did not have blatant indicators** that he was only recently introduced to the five sets of four tempi flying changes of lead as well as the five sets of three tempi flying changes in a standard size outdoor arena. Elizabeth's Cadbury Woods Farm finished their outdoor the week prior to the Beland show. "He, we, had some anxiety on the flying changes. Our goal is to be more straight and through with the flow of our (lead) changes, and not be anxious. Taking our time on the basics of a clean (lead) change and working on low key exercises should make my

timing and aids better," said Elizabeth, "I haven't had the privilege of riding an upper level schoolmaster, so we are learning together, especially the (flying) changes (of lead). The more I can focus and quiet myself, the better he goes. I am so blessed to have the privilege of teaming up with this sensitive and talented horse"

**It should be mentioned that the warm-up and the test were performed in a pouring rain** aided by a punishing sideways wind and a non-May 55 degree temperature.

**Elizabeth commented that the Handsome D's elegant adjustability and suppleness** within the gaits have also been the most beneficial tool for the development of his strength and his confidence. He did not make it come easy. Handsome D considers a "Big Boy Trot" around the arena relaxing after lateral and

canter work. Elizabeth said, "He is the hardest horse I have ever trained. He is an over-achiever and panics when he is uncertain. In his canter, he struggled for balance and would explode on departs. He did not develop a canter until I took him cross country schooling in 2016. It took two months to get him to accept water from a hose onto his legs. Sometimes he sees dead people. He matured late, both mentally and physically and every day is a new adventure. I thank him every day. With encouragement and coaching from Jordan Laplaca, we gained confidence and quickly progressed. Currently, Dietrich and I are focused on refining our Prix St. George skills with Gunnar Ostergaard in clinics hosted by my Cadbury Woods Farm."

**Her first viewing of Handsome D was in 2008,** while horse shopping for a client. Elizabeth had to wait until the colt was six months

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old to bring him home. Elizabeth's life involved a few distractions and Handsome D was not an immediate priority. Gelded late at age five, he was started under saddle even later, his first sanctioned dressage show being the proverbial Level 1 in 2016. The Beland Stable's competition was his 2018 Prix St. George recognized show debut where the pair won with a score of 62.353%

Goals for Elizabeth and Handsome D in 2018 include more confident and "clean" flying changes of lead; the omnipresent dressage

strengthening work to prepare for upper level movements (including piaffe and passage); to enhance and develop skills; and, of course, the improvement their test scores. Elizabeth's greatest wish is to achieve their USDF gold medal by her sixtieth birthday (2022).

NEDA member Elizabeth and Handsome D can be found schooling cross country fences and galloping on the beach between shows. They can be found at many competitions, all of which are "NEDA omnibus picks". If you are intrigued by Handsome D, well, watch for him. He is the handsome horse with the beaming, joy-filled rider, Elizabeth Oellers.

Writer Beth-Ann Cronan is a proponent of the classical methods of dressage enhanced by modern knowledge of the biomechanics of movement. Frequently observed taking copious notes at horse shows and clinics of all disciplines, she is always willing to pause discuss anything equine. She can be reached at [Bethanncronan@comcast.net](mailto:Bethanncronan@comcast.net).



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