

The Equiery Perpetual Eventing Trophy

2006 Winners: Mardi Herman and Zoe

by Katherine Rizzo

Each year, *The Equiery* sponsors a trophy through the Maryland Combined Training Association for the horse and rider with the most Training Level points in Maryland's United States Eventing Association-recognized events. The 2006 winners were Mardi Herman and Zoe.

Mardi and her husband Mark operate Red Oak Farm in Darlington.



Courtesy of Mardi Herman

Mark's father owns the 282-acre spread, while Mark is the barn manager and Mardi is the head trainer. Though their focus is starting young horses for the racetrack, the Hermans also breed race and sport horses. Mardi's partner Zoe, a 15.3-hand chestnut Thoroughbred, is one of their homebreds – which makes this award

extra special. In fact, she's a third generation homebred and the only foal out of Phoebe's Waltz, another mare that Mardi bred and sold as a 2-year-old to hunter rider Edna Lytle before she was diagnosed with EPM.

A former hunter rider herself, Mardi was also the longtime District Commissioner of the Churchill Pony Club and helped two of her three children at horse trials. However, Mardi herself did not start eventing until five years ago, after her youngest daughter moved on to college. At that point, she began taking lessons with Nancy Verzi and Pheobe Devoe.

Mardi considers Verzi her first eventing instructor, and says that she taught her "everything there was to know" about eventing. As for Devoe, she introduced Mardi to dressage and taught her "how to ride a test," the *Equiery* Trophy winner says.

Mardi started eventing Zoe when Topper (another homebred, and Zoe's uncle) was injured. Topper had just moved up to the Training level when arthritis in his shoulder put an end to his competitive career. Luckily, Mardi had Zoe waiting in the wings.

Last summer, Mardi began to ride with Kim Meier of Worton. From the moment she had her first lesson with Meier, she was impressed by how

quickly her new coach spotted all of her faults and began to change them in a positive way. The main focus of their lessons was always Mardi's position, and how improving her riding would improve her horse's way of going.

Meier feels that the pair's success last year was due in part to Mardi's toughness. She says that Mardi is a "hard worker [who] wants to do things the right way" and that she is "very willing to change in order to become a better rider." Meier also believes that her student is one of those "good natural riders" who never makes excuses, and only moves as fast as her horse is capable of going. Indeed, she says, she admires Mardi for always putting the needs of her horses first. Certainly, the fact that she has a passion for riding homebreds shows how patient she is willing to be.

Mardi's 2006 season with Zoe was memorable, to say the least, with top placings at every event they entered. The highlight of their year was a win at the Marlborough Horse Trials in September. There they won their division on their dressage score and completed show jumping and cross-country courses that many felt were very difficult for this level.

Mardi feels that Zoe is "very consistent," which is why they never received a single cross-country jumping penalty in the 10 events they completed last year. These events include a fourth place finish at the Area II Training Championships in New Jersey and a seventh at the Waredaca Training Three Day in October. Zoe accumulated 31 award points for 2006 and 54 career award points.

Though Mardi credits her success to her trainers, she couldn't have done it without her partner. "Zoe has been so great to event because she always tries her hardest and is very honest," she says. Their next goal: Preliminary level competition.

In the end, Mardi finds that eventing helps her work with the racehorses, while conditioning the racehorses keeps her fit for eventing. She calls it "a nice trade" that allows her to continue her work at Red Oak and go out and jump as well.

Mardi also loves eventing folk, noting that everyone she has met has been supportive – including all the MCTA people, who "have never laughed at any question no matter how stupid it may be." In the spirit of giving back, Mardi is now a member of the MCTA Executive Committee, acting as Trophy Coordinator and raising funds for the organization's horse trials. ■

The "great divide" between recognized and unrecognized horse trials seems to be Training level. Those who want to go "big time," i.e. Preliminary through Advanced, must first cross over that Training level chasm.

Eleven years ago, *The Equiery* decided to reward those who successfully negotiated that chasm by offering a Maryland Combined Training Association perpetual trophy. The horse and rider that garner the most points at Training level in Maryland's United States Eventing Association-recognized events (see list below) are the winners. They will receive a "keeper" trophy and have their names engraved on the Orrefors crystal perpetual trophy. Horse and rider will also appear on the cover of *The Equiery's* April 2007 eventing issue.

What you need to do in order to qualify: You must be a member of MCTA • You must compete in at least seven of Maryland's 17 USEA-recognized events on the same horse • You must submit your placings in a timely fashion to MCTA (in other words, you could be qualified to win, but if you don't submit your placings, you can't win) • You may only win it one time.

If you win, you need to attend the MCTA Awards banquet in order to receive your trophy. To be featured on the cover of *The*

Equiery, you must have access to a professional quality photograph with good reproductive value for print media.

Previous Winners of The Equiery Perpetual Trophy: '05: Teresa Ormsby & Bryce Be Quick • '04: Courtney Sendak & Wil'Ya Love Me • '03: Alexandra Curtiss & Pumpernickel • '02: Lizzie Wisner & Top of the Mast • '01: Abigail Gibbon & Forever • '00: Mindy Soethe & Deliparad • '99: Laura Pitts & Luna • '98: Curtis Green & Alterman • '97: Stephanie Butts & Sir Maxwell • '96: Michele Buford & As Easy As •

2008 Maryland USEA Training Level Events (according to the USEA Area II Website Calendar)

Weave A Dream – April 7

Fair Hill – April 20-22

Redland Hunt PC – April 21-22

MCTA at Shawan Downs – May 4-6

Fair Hill – May 19-20

Waredaca – June 2-3

Seneca Valley PC – June 16-17

The Maryland HT at

Loch Moy Farm – July 14-15

The Maryland HT at Loch Moy Farm II – July 21-22

Olney – Aug. 5

Fair Hill – Aug. 11-12

Waredaca – Aug. 18-19

Weave A Dream – Sept. 2

Seneca Valley PC – Sept. 8-9

Marlborough – Sept. 22-23

The Maryland HT at

Loch Moy Farm – Oct. 13-14

Waredaca – Oct. 26-28