

► Doubling The Freestyle Fun

If you'd walked behind the barns at the Colonel Bengt Ljungquist Memorial Championships, you'd have noticed two riders engaged in studying their patterns, trotting and cantering around to perfect them. But those two riders weren't mounted; instead Aneesa Romans and Angelia Bean repeatedly schooled the choreography for their pas de deux on foot in the days and hours before their test.

All the practice—on foot as well as on horseback in the weeks leading up to the competition—paid off for the pair. They earned a score of 82.70 percent and the championship title for their pas de deux, set to tunes from the musical *Annie*.

"It was amazing!" said Romans, who rode her own Wyoming RSF in the test. "I need to frame that test. I think it's safe to say I'll never score that high again."

Romans, an amateur who works full-time as an engineer for Boeing, and Bean, the trainer at Straight Forward Dressage in Glenmoore, Pa., started competing in the pas de deux classes to help Romans' young mare acclimate to the dressage ring. Bean's mare, Venus, and Wyoming had formed a friendship.

"It gave her a big confidence boost to go places with Venus, and this way we could get them in the ring together, so why not do a pas de deux?" said Romans. "She's gotten a lot better since, and it's been really good for her."

"Because the mares got along so well, we could make the pattern really intricate," added Bean. "There are times we canter straight towards each other and then turn away at the last moment. Over the winter, whenever we would ride at the same time, we would mess with the patterns and figure out what we liked."

The pair recruited freestyle designer Anne Miller for help with the music, and Romans and Bean practiced at whichever schooling and sanctioned shows would offer the pas de deux class.

"I understand from a show manager's perspective that it's tricky to offer it, but it's really the most fun you have without jumps in the ring," said Romans, who boards her mare at Straight Forward Dressage and takes lessons with Bean as well. "It's been really good for my horse. We show first level normally, and her scores have been in the high 60s this year."

Romans bought Wyoming, a Hanoverian (Welcome S—Lhibrarian), when the horse was 4, from breeder Maurine Swanson at Rolling Stone Farm. Since then they've dabbled in the dressage ring and completed some schooling horse trials and combined tests as well.

"She's a really game little mare," said Romans, of West Chester, Pa. "Hopefully next year we'll be showing second level. I mostly do the jumping for the cross-training. I'm a little wussy. I love eventing and eventers, but it's a big time constraint with the eventing to get out and school and do all the conditioning work. If I got brave enough, I'd love to do some of the children's/adult jumpers, 1.10-meter classes. But I got her from a dressage breeder, so my long-term goal is to get my bronze and silver medals on her."



Aneesa Romans and Wyoming RSF (left) partnered with Angelia Bean and Venus to win the Colonel Bengt Ljungquist Memorial Championship for pas de deux. STACY LYNNE PHOTOGRAPHY PHOTO



Aneesa Romans and Angelia Bean practiced their pas de deux pattern on foot numerous times to perfect the choreography. KELLY STARLIPER PHOTO

Bean's mare, Venus, a 13-year-old Dutch Warmblood-Thoroughbred (Neptune—Down The Avenue), has been in her barn since she was 4. She's now for sale, and she spent the season competing at third level when not in the pas de deux.

"I'm a professional, and she's mine, so she's always been on the back burner," said Bean. "This was really the first year I gave her a full season of going to shows, but she's had the skills and been to a million clinics. She's a really good girl—pretty unflappable, and she hacks out on the buckle. Sometimes I take her for an occasional jump lesson."

But if Bean still has Venus next spring, both riders are considering tweaking the pas de deux for second or third level.

"I had a great year showing, but that pas de deux was the most fun thing I did this season," said Bean.