

# TIM MALIN

*Not many people qualify for the USEF Dressage Festival of Champions in their first year of showing at the Grand Prix Level. Tim Malin did. Spend some time with Malin and you'll begin to see why.*



Who Took the Photography

By Ann Jamieson

**T**im Malin began riding at 11, just doing some trail riding and participating in a 4-H group. He didn't come from a "horsey" family, but decided to give riding a try because some friends were doing it.

In time he specialized in hunters and jumpers, and feels his most influential trainer was Patty Johnson Stovel. At the time she was in the Connecticut area, and she had trained with George Morris. Stovel was the one most instrumental in putting some "polish" on the young rider.

Malin wasn't blessed with unlimited finances, so he spent a lot of time riding on his own, using trial and error to figure things out. Determination has always been one of his strongest traits, and it continues to help him accomplish what he wants in his life.

Because he couldn't afford many lessons, Malin learned to make the most of what he did get. Malin could take "one drop of a lesson" and turn it into volumes of training. He keeps a journal of everything he does, and constantly draws from the journal.

In the 1980's, Malin had great success with a green hunter named *Good Time Charlie*. He parlayed the success into teaching others to ride hunters, particularly some amateur-owner riders. Then he began teaching some short stirrup kids, and enjoyed working with them

right on up through the ranks into the junior hunters.

But Malin has an insatiable desire to learn, to continually develop himself. He had had great success with the hunters, and wanted to see what else he could do. He began dabbling in dressage as a means of cross training, to make his hunters better, more competitive horses.

Malin also began studying sports psychology, a topic that he has continued to work with. He believes it is important to be well prepared mentally for horse shows, and for life.

Studying dressage, however, proved to be right up his alley. For a man who loves to learn and loves to challenge himself, it was a great fit. Every time you move up a level, says Malin, "there are more movements to learn, more opportunity to challenge yourself." He also feels a deeper connection to the horse, a chance to get inside their heads more. He loves the mental aspect of it, the complexity involved.

For a time Malin did both, hauling to a hunter/jumper show one weekend and then a dressage show the next. He ran his barn, Golden Mean LLC, out of a farm in Cromwell, Connecticut. Half the horses were dressage horses and half were hunters and jumpers.

By 2000, Malin had earned his Bronze Medal in dressage and decided it was time to get serious. Looking for a horse, he found through a friend *Out of the Ordinary*, a Prix St. Georges/Intermediaire I horse that wasn't working out for his owner. Malin had made his career working with horses that have been problems for other people, so he knew he was up to the challenge.

Soon he came to the conclusion that if he was going to be really good at something, he was going to have to pick one discipline and go for it. In order to give himself a chance to do that, he decided to close the boarding barn, which had proven to be all consuming. One of his dressage clients had a private farm in South Windsor, Connecticut, which is where Malin is now located with his horses. He works his clients' horses and freelances as well on nights and weekends.

The discipline Malin chose was dressage. He made the choice because he saw a huge opportunity for growth. In the end, he fell in love with it.

Working with the Intermediaire I horse, he realized he needed a top trainer to help him achieve his goals. When he went to Florida to check on a sale horse he had down there, he dropped by to talk to Robert Dover. Dover suggested Ashley Holzer.

It was a great suggestion. "Ashley Holzer has been a tremendous influence on me. She's been a great mentor. She really has made dressage make sense for me." Other trainers Malin had worked with had made him feel as though classical dressage was an unattainable goal for him, something he could never achieve without spending decades training in Germany.

Holzer gives him building blocks; she makes it easy to complete the task. She has taken him from his Bronze Medal to competing in the Grand Prix Championships at Gladstone.

Malin figures he has spent perhaps a total of six months training with Holzer, yet she has given him the skill set necessary to be competitive at the High

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Performance Level. What was once a dream has become reality.

Holzer is a "very good professional and communicator," Malin related. Of Malin, Holzer says, "He's a very determined rider and a sensitive rider."

Malin sets goals, keeps evolving and continually looks for the open door, the new opportunity. When *Out of the Ordinary* got hurt after doing very well in an earlier Pan American selection trials, Malin was temporarily detoured. He worked with some young horses, but wanted another ride on a top level horse.

Sue Jacoma, of Harmony Sport Horses, soon opened the next door for him. She'd met Malin at Devon and spoke to Holzer about a horse she had, *Harmony's Coolio*. The big (18.2 hands!) gelding needed a new rider. Jacoma had brought him along from the time he was four. He was now 12 and she had accomplished her goals with him.

Malin purchased the horse without even trying him. It worked out well as they have been together and constantly improving for 14 months now. At 6'3", the horse is a good fit for Malin. He has the necessary size to carry Malin well visually.

Malin is very grateful to Harmony Sport Horses; he appreciates how they worked with him to make the horse affordable for his budget. Malin looks at it both as an opportunity and as a responsibility. It's his responsibility to make sure the horse has the opportunity to achieve what he is capable of.

To reach his goals, Malin relies on three aspects: determination, goal setting and risk taking. He sets small goals and "stretch" goals. His "stretch goal" was to qualify for the championships at Gladstone, and he was thrilled that he achieved that goal. Malin always encourages others to go after their dreams, no matter how big, and he is a great example himself of what can be achieved when you go after what you want.

The championships at Gladstone which he qualified for were contested by the top riders in this country, determining the Intermediaire I championship (which this year determined the Pan American Team as well), and the Grand Prix Championship.

To qualify, Malin had to be one of 16 teams to achieve the highest scores in the Grand Prix. (Generally, 12 teams were chosen; this year there were 16). One of the scores had to be from a CDI. Malin particularly enjoys CDIs because it gives riders the opportunity to be evaluated by a superb panel of five judges.

He found riding at Gladstone "a real thrill to have that experience and learn to ride under the pressure." The championship is the only competition where riders have to do all three elements: the Grand Prix, Grand Prix Special (which takes more strength from the horse, you have to be able to maintain the power level) and the Freestyle. Usually at a show riders will choose two, so this proves very demanding for both horse and rider.

Malin loved the feeling of history so evident at the Gladstone facility. He also experienced a little sense of a changing of the guard. In the past Malin attended Gladstone to watch the stars, to see them ride. Now he

was the one competing.

Malin is clearly enthralled with his horse, Coolio. He says, "He is extremely intelligent, possessive and demanding, with a good sense of humor." If Malin doesn't show up to work him he has a "temper tantrum." He doesn't tolerate turnout, preferring the security and companionship of hand grazing. He "thinks of himself as a person, not a horse."

Malin says it is a treat every day to come out and ride him. He is a gift and Malin is forever grateful that he has this experience.



Susan T. Grotzke

Now that Malin has qualified for, and competed in, the Grand Prix Championship (finishing 13th) his goal is for them to become more competitive and to possibly compete internationally. He wants to "put the polish" on them. With other horses, he only had them for a short time so he didn't get the chance to see just how good they could get. With Coolio, he now has the opportunity to take it to the next level. And Coolio just keeps getting better and better.

As Malin has always operated on a bit of a shoestring budget, he is hoping to obtain some sponsorship so that he and Coolio can be the best they possibly can be.

On another level, Malin is looking to expand in other areas. He reads, attends clinics and reads everything he can pertaining to sports psychology. He would like perhaps to write some books, produce some videos and expand his teaching to include clinic tours. Malin is always branching out, always looking for new ways to educate and develop himself. It's not strictly about riding and competing.

Whatever direction he takes, he's sure to be successful. With what he's accomplished so far as proof, and with determination, goal setting and risk taking behind him, Malin can only continue to be a star. ♪