

DRESSAGE

# TSF Dalera BB's Star Shines Bright In FEI Dressage World Cup Final

Story And Photos By **KIMBERLY LOUSHIN**

TSF Dalera BB might be the No. 1 horse on the FEI Dressage World Rankings, but at home in Ostermünchen, Germany, she can often be found going for a brisk canter through the woods. It's a scene that features frequently on Jessica von Bredow-Werndl's social media feeds, and as much as she enjoys performing the mare's piaffe and passage, the moments spent hacking mean just as much.

"It sounds a little bit strange, but it feels like we're soulmates," said von Bredow-Werndl. "It's a very special partnership. It's just so good to spend time with her."

Von Bredow-Werndl got the ride on Béatrice Buerchler-Keller's 16-year-old Trakehner mare (Easy Game—Dark Magic, Handryk) eight years ago, and while the talent for piaffe and passage was evident from the start, she said the flying changes were another story, and it took a year and a half to get the tempis sorted.

"The more time I spent with her, the closer the friendship became," von Bredow-Werndl said. "It's something very special to spend time with her. I also enjoyed every minute here to have so much time with her—that's why I didn't do the sightseeing. I was more spending time with her because this is something she really appreciates."

Their partnership was on full display during the FEI Dressage World Cup Final, held April 4-8 in Omaha, Nebraska, where the pair topped the Grand Prix (79.92%) and Grand Prix freestyle (90.48%). This is their second consecutive World Cup title, having won last year in Leipzig, Germany.

"It's always a challenge to do it again, to be honest, to be in the here and now and have everything together, and again it worked out," she said. "I'm so grateful to be allowed to ride such an incredible mare. This mare is something very special, because she always throws her heart in the arena for me and really wants to give 200%, and she did it again today. I could not be more proud and grateful."

The World Cup Final was the 37-year-old's first championship since having her second child last year. While Moritz, 5, and Ella, 8 months, generally travel to shows with her, given the logistical challenges of coming to the States, she left them at home with her husband, Max von Bredow.

Von Bredow-Werndl was back in the saddle four days after giving birth to Ella.

Jessica von Bredow-Werndl won her second FEI Dressage World Cup Final with TSF Dalera BB.





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Nanna Skodborg Merrald has only been riding Blue Hors Zepter for four months, but they took second at the FEI Dressage World Cup Final.



“You can’t call it sport by then, but just the feeling to sit in the saddle gave me all the motivation I needed to come back in shape,” she said. “And yeah, the horses helped me, and of course I have an amazing team around me. Above all, my family are my biggest supporters, and I’m very thankful that they made [it] happen to be here and to come back to the sport so fast.”

As the reigning Olympic and European champions as well as World Cup champions, the pair entered the competition as undisputed favorites, especially since the current world champions, Great Britain’s Charlotte Fry and Glamourdale, did not to make the trip. Then her greatest threat, Dutch rider Dinja van Liere, withdrew Hermes N.O.P before the Grand Prix when the stallion wasn’t 100 percent. Though no one could catch the title defenders, Denmark’s Nanna Skodborg Merrald emerged as the dark horse for second on an 87.14%, beating five-time winner Isabell Werth of Germany on DSP Quantaz (85.76%).

Merrald, 29, is a veteran championship rider, but her partnership with Blue Hors Zepter is still in its infancy. She took over the ride on Blue Hors APS’ 15-year-old Oldenburg gelding (Blue Hors Zack—Who’s Sunlight, Wolkentanz II) in December from Sweden’s Patrik Kittel and only showed him twice before the Final.

“It’s very new, and I still feel like there’s so many buttons that I still have to find because he has really unlimited potential,” she said.

She described “Zepter” as being like a big puppy who can make friends with anyone and everyone on the ground and is very willing to please when ridden.

“I really like his work attitude,” she said. “He really wants to work, and when I go into the ring, he really surprised me the first time. He just like, ‘OK, now we go,’ and I was just like holding the reins. But I really like that. I like that when they go in the ring they want to work, and that’s very special I think of all the ‘Zack’ offspring.”

Merrald also rides Zepter’s sire, Blue Hors Zack, and took team gold at the Blue Hors FEI Dressage World Championships (Denmark) with him last August.



Steffen Peters and Suppenkasper were the top-placed U.S. pair at the FEI Dressage World Cup Final, finishing fourth.

“They have a lot of power, both of them, and they really want to perform,” she said. “They want to do everything for their rider, and that’s very similar about these two horses.”

“Zacky will always be the king,” she added, “but of course I have even more potential with Zepter.”

### THE RAVE HORSE RETURNS

Before Steffen Peters, 58, gets on Suppenkasper, he has a routine.

“When Eddie [Garcia], his amazing groom, puts the bridle on, first thing [the horse] does, he puts his head on my shoulder and just rests there as long as I want to,” said Peters. “And then eventually I have to tell him, ‘OK, ‘Mopsie,’ it’s time to go,’ and then right off the start he’s there for me. Just a super honest, kind, big teddy bear.”

The pair led the way for the United States, finishing fourth in the freestyle with a personal best of 83.92%. The 15-year-old Dutch Warmblood (Spielberg—Upañoska, IPS Krack C) owned by Akiko Yamazaki and Four Winds Farm reached mainstream fame following the 2021 Tokyo Olympics thanks to a bopping freestyle and a little help from a TikToker who dubbed him the “Rave Horse.”

“I still get messages from people asking, ‘How’s the Rave Horse?’ ” he said. “They don’t ask for Mopsie; they don’t ask for Suppenkasper; they ask for the Rave Horse. That’s wonderful. There was a group of kids here, I think it must have been kindergarten, and they came up to him and took pictures, so yeah, I guess that status is still there.”

With that notoriety, upping the ante for Omaha proved difficult.

### FEI Dressage World Cup Final Omaha, Neb.—April 4-8

#### Grand Prix Freestyle

Judges: K: Katrina Wüst (GER); E: Leif Törnblad (DEN); H: Jean-Michel Roudier (FRA); C: Janet Lee Foy (USA); M: Maarten van der Heijden (NED); B: Magnus Ringmark (SWE); F: Stephen Clarke (GBR)

Horse/Rider/Nation	K	E	H	C	M	B	F	Total
1. TSF Dalara BB/Jessica von Bredow-Werndl/GER	81.25/ 97.20	84.75/ 97.00	85.75/ 96.00	83.25/ 99.60	82.00/ 98.60	83.25/ 97.60	83.50/ 97.00	90.48
2. Blue Hors Zepter/Nanna Skodborg Merrald/DEN	79.75/ 94.20	82.50/ 95.60	81.75/ 90.20	78.50/ 95.20	79.25/ 94.40	81.00/ 95.80	79.50/ 92.40	87.14
3. DSP Quantaz/Isabell Werth/GER	76.25/ 93.60	79.75/ 96.00	76.00/ 88.80	77.25/ 95.20	79.50/ 94.40	78.00/ 90.80	80.50/ 94.60	85.76
4. Suppenkasper/Steffen Peters/USA	78.50/ 91.40	79.00/ 90.00	76.75/ 86.20	76.75/ 95.00	75.75/ 90.20	77.25/ 88.60	78.50/ 91.00	83.92
5. Hexagon's Ich Weiss/Thamar Zweistra/NED	73.00/ 84.40	73.50/ 84.80	72.50/ 84.80	73.00/ 83.60	72.25/ 85.80	72.75/ 81.40	72.25/ 80.80	78.20
6. FRH Davinia La Douce/Anna Buffini/USA	71.75/ 85.00	70.50/ 83.80	69.50/ 82.60	73.25/ 83.60	70.00/ 86.80	71.00/ 82.80	74.00/ 85.20	77.84

Also competed: 7. Fiderdance/S. Pearce/AUS, 76.57; 8. Mazy Klovenhoj/J. Due Boje/SWE, 76.11; 9. Serenade MF/A. Tarjan/USA, 75.20; 10. Sir Donnerhall II OLD/M. Barbançon/FRA, 74.81; 11. Nabab/J. Vanagaite/LTU, 73.69; 12. Tribian/C. Chew/SGP, 72.97; 13. Charmer/J. Verwimp/BEL, 71.90.

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“It’s kind of like writing a sequel to a really good movie: How do you actually step it up, because you can overdo it, and it sounds ridiculous,” said the rider from San Diego. “So we just tweaked it at the end, added some lyrical twists, and I came up with the idea, but my friend Terry Gallo actually recorded the final lyrics, and it worked out great. What an amazing party it was from start to finish, and hearing the crowd getting ready

**“I still get messages from people asking, ‘How’s the Rave Horse?’”**

—STEFFEN PETERS

freestyle for FRH Davinia La Douce. The 28-year-old from San Diego finished sixth (77.84%).

“She was incredible,” Buffini said of her 16-year-old Hanoverian mare (Don Frederico—Anneliese R, A Jungle Prince). “The nerves didn’t affect her as much as the first day. She really gave everything to me. She’s listening even when it’s so difficult; it’s a 10 out of 10 difficulty. And she’s just with me.

to applaud already during the last extension was a wonderful feeling. I think the crowd liked it; Mopsie liked it; I liked it.”

The other West Coast-based U.S. rider, Anna Buffini, had the crowd in mind when she designed her “Top Gun: Maverick”

She keeps listening. She tries so hard, and she felt incredible today.”

This was Buffini’s second World Cup Final, having competed last year in Leipzig.

“This year is so much more comfortable,” she said. “I’m home; that makes a big difference, and I’m prepared for how nervous she was, so we got to prepare. That was huge because you never know how they’re going to be in a big show arena, and it was her first indoor last year. This is only our second indoor together. You know, the Europeans get to do indoors all the time, so the fact that we were able to prepare to keep her more steady, more calm, and have less mistakes was the biggest difference from last year.”

The final U.S. rider, Alice Tarjan, was making her World Cup Final debut with Serenade MF, a 10-year-old Hanoverian mare (Sir Donnerhall—Duet MF, Don Principe). The pair ran into trouble in the first piaffe in the Grand Prix, putting them at the bottom of the standings. While a miscount in the two tempis during the freestyle kept them out of the top placings, it was an improved performance for ninth (75.20%).

“It’s been really exciting to be here,” said Tarjan, 43, Oldwick, New Jersey. “I’m thrilled to be here. At the end of the day, it’s a 20x60 arena we ride in. Once you get in there, you’ve got a job to do. But certainly the experience has been really fun.” 🐾

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