

## **REEM ACRA BRINGS A FRESH NEW LOOK TO FEI WORLD CUP™ DRESSAGE**

**by Louise Parkes**

There is a new spring in the step of the FEI World Cup™ Dressage Western European League as it begins its second quarter-century with the 2010/2011 opening leg at Odense, Denmark. The recent announcement of a three-year sponsorship deal with fashion designer Reem Acra, who puts her name to both the Western European season and the overall series final, hails the blossoming of a fresh era in the history of this sport which has enjoyed astronomic growth in popularity in recent times.



*"I have always loved horses and have watched and admired Dressage events for many years. For me it is the most beautiful and stylish discipline within the equestrian world, so I am thrilled to be given the opportunity to take a more active role in the sport".* Reem Acra

Largely responsible for the upsurge of interest in top-class dressage has been a single horse-and-rider combination who won their way into the hearts of horse-lovers all around the world over the last 18 months during a sensational record-breaking spree. The Netherlands' Edward Gal and the fabulous black stallion Moorlands Totilas have, in terms of competitiveness, appeal and pure ability, raised the bar beyond all expectations and transformed the once-demure dressage world into a showcase of extreme excitement. It was confirmed last week that the stallion has been sold however, and so his partnership with Gal is ended. But their legacy is a raised profile for the sport on which they have left an indelible impression.

### **CHANGED**

The sport has changed a great deal since Denmark's Anne-Grethe Jensen and Marzog first held the FEI World Cup™ Dressage trophy aloft at the end of the inaugural 1985/1986 season in s'Hertogenbosch, The Netherlands. And, down the years, there have been many favourites and crowd-pleasers including double-champions Christine Stuckelberger and Gaugin de Lully from Switzerland (1987-1988), Monica Theodorescu and Ganimedes (1993-1994) and fellow-German Ulla Salzgeber with Rusty (2001-2001). But the unchallenged super-champ was Holland's nine-time winner Anky Van Grunsven whose successes spanned a 13 year period from 1995 to 2008 with the help of two great horses - Bonfire and Salinero.

Whether Gal and the stallion could have come anywhere close to that record we will now never know, but in their wake are a whole range of new target-scores including the 86.457% they registered in the Grand Prix at Aachen this summer and the 92.30% they posted in the Freestyle at the FEI World Cup™ Dressage qualifier at Olympia in London, Great Britain last December, three months before they claimed the 2009/2010 FEI World Cup™ Dressage title.

## **ENORMOUS TALENT**

They dominated the medal podium at the recent Alltech FEI World Equestrian Games™ in Kentucky, USA on their final outing together, but the American fixture also highlighted the enormous and developing talent of some other great dressage partnerships including Laura Bechtolsheimer and Mistral Hojris who took team, Grand Prix Special and Freestyle silver for Great Britain. Bechtolsheimer and her 15 year old gelding showed more flair, confidence and purity of execution than ever before and are likely to continue to make a major impact during the coming season as will the Netherlands' Adelinde Cornelissen whose World Championship dream was dashed when her horse, Jerich Parzival, bit his tongue leading to heart-breaking disqualification on their first visit to the Kentucky arena.

Cornelissen will be determined to make up for that deep disappointment during the six-month Reem Acra FEI World Cup™ Dressage season which, after the opening leg in Odense, moves on to Lyon (FRA), Stockholm (SWE), London (GBR), Frankfurt (GER) and Mechelen (BEL) before the end of the year. The action re-opens at Amsterdam (NED) in January 2011 and then there will be just three more qualifying opportunities at Neumunster (GER), Gothenburg (SWE) and s'-Hertogenbosch (NED) before the Reem Acra-sponsored Final in Leipzig (GER) which will run from 27 April to 1 May.

Riders from three other qualifying leagues - Central Europe, North America and Asia/Pacific - will join the best from the Western European series in this final clash which will decide the fate of the 2010/2011 title.

*"The FEI is delighted to welcome Reem Acra as a new Dressage sponsor. The Reem Acra brand will add even more glamour to what is already one of the world's most stylish sports, and it is wonderful to have such a celebrated sponsor for the Western European League and for the Final".* FEI President, HRH Princess Haya