

# IT WAS WELL “WERTH” IT!



*Photo by David Rosensweig*

**F**ollowing in its own footsteps of bringing the very best to the Adequan Global Dressage Festival (with Carl Hester doing a Master Class last year), this year saw another Master Class with the appearance of Germany’s Isabell Werth. Isabell has been there and back with many medals from European and World Dressage Championships as well as a plethora of Olympic medals.

The bleachers were packed as was the pavilion (and media area) as Isabell began her tutelage in the setting sun with a very expressive four-year-old. She was demanding and precise but always made sure that this horse was happy with his work. As expected, she concentrated on the basics with such a young horse, but it was also noteworthy that, as she worked her way up to horses at the FEI level (Canada’s Jacqueline Brooks was one of these riders), Isabell still insisted that the basics were there and were performed accurately. The gaits that this horse showed, and it was obvious that, with correct and progressive training, this horse would reach the GP level. As Isabell said, “The entire package is rideability, elasticity and a good mind.” And this youngster certainly seemed to have all three!

As the sun slowly sank into the west – right into the eyes of the media personnel, it became a tad difficult

to see all the moves from all of the horses. In addition, Isabell was wearing beige slacks, so she sort of blended in with the arena. The “Werthisms” were there for the riders whose performances improved over the course of one brief lesson, but everyone could hear and learn; some of these “Werthisms” follow:

“Shoulder-in brings the horse in front of you with correct flexion and also is a good preparation for the half-pass.”

“Do more basic work to improve flexibility.”

“Use the inside rein but do not interrupt it with the reins.”

“Sit independently of your reins.”

“Don’t always ride a small pirouette in training; train the collection.”

One thread that ran through the evening’s lessons from beginning to end was that riders needed to “educate their reins” since, according to Isabell, the reins in many cases were being misused. As she said, “If you close the door with your hands, the horse ends up fighting.”

*Submitted by Don Barnes*

