

What a difference a Year can make... this time 12 months ago our beautiful, talented horse Wallmeyer was a very sick boy. We had been nursing "Koschel" through health issues stemming from his respiratory allergies & the constant threat of asthma attacks coupled with the fluid that had accumulated in his lungs made his training regime difficult to say the least. He was using a "puffer" twice a day outside of the competitions & we were having to supplement him constantly with iron & vitamins. His energy levels were diminishing but by relying on his natural talent & paces he was still able to produce some quality work but lacked the real strength needed for true small tour collection. Still, we had entered for "States" in the hope that he would have a good week & so off we headed to SIEC with an open mind & lots of wishful thinking. Gina was very cautious in the warm-up, mindful of conserving as much energy as she could & then into the arena for the Prix St George they went. The trot work went ok but the walk seemed to come as a relief & I suspected the canter might be lacking & sure enough he very uncharacteristically flopped out of canter back to trot & his changes, normally a strong highlight, were laboured. By the time we got back to the stables he was truly exhausted & by the time we got him home he was so run down that he spiked a temperature that took 5 days to stabilise. We were devastated that we had pushed him to the limit & it was horrible to watch him so depressed & lifeless for that week. He ended up having 4 weeks total rest & during that time he again underwent blood tests & blood cultures twice a week. He was severely anaemic & his blood levels just didn't make sense to the vets but gradually he started to feel better in himself & we would get excited about the slightest display of energy or his interest in another horse lunging or playing in their yard. Eventually one day Gina saddled him up & went for a walk around the property & this became their routine 3 times a week.

Fortunately, just prior to States a godsend had come along in the form of the "world's most beautiful horse" – Rodrigo III. As most people know, this gorgeous horse with the sweetest soul is owned by Maree Tomkinson & she had rang to offer the lease of "Ringo" & Gina did not hesitate! Ringo provided an outlet for both Gina & my own frustration at losing (for the time being) our competitive horse, not to mention the fact that we were now playing with an accomplished Grand Prix horse!!! Gina & Ringo spent a couple of months getting to know each other & in early November we all hit the road down to Canberra for their debut GP. Whilst that comp didn't go quite as Gina would have liked it was great to see her back in the arena & loving her dressage.

Meanwhile she had taken Koschel out to Wagga to undergo yet more testing at the Uni vet clinic where our good friend Dr Edwina Wilkes was practicing. Although we got few real answers there the extensive treadmill testing he underwent gave us confidence that he was ready to begin fitness training again so back home the light work increased little by little. Looking back I think this phase was the most instrumental in the "re-building" of the competition horse he has now become as Gina spent weeks in the saddle doing only gymnastic, suppling exercises most often in walk & then some trot. I would watch her do 20mins of shoulder-in, travers, half pass off both reins in walk only, riding those exercises with as much commitment as she would ride piaffe/passage on Ringo. By early in 2013 they graduated to some canter work & I would watch them out in the back paddock doing large working pirouettes around the gum trees & a couple times a week Gina would take him to our friend Don Robb's private racetrack for some endurance work.

Ringo was holding up his end of the bargain providing invaluable training & competition experience & a couple of fancy ribbons along the way including winning the GP Freestyle CDN at Dressage With Altitude!! We sat down with the dressage calendar & dared ourselves to enter Koschel for the Small Tour at the Young Dressage Championships in mid April 2013 – it would be his first comp start in more than 8 long months. By now he was not only fit but obliging in his work & very in sync with Gina. She rode him conservatively in the ring producing solid tests to become Small Tour Champion & Ringo placed 3rd in the Grand Prix. In June it was Clarendon & a magic day saw Gina & the boys win all 3 of their tests, Koschel the PSG & I1 & Ringo the GP. Next we ventured to Scone for the Upper Hunter Dressage Champs & again won the Small Tour & the GP – it was all falling into place & we started to believe that States may just be possible.

And so it was we found ourselves back at SIEC in September this time with a horse in the best form of his career & fitter than he has ever been – how would it translate in the ring? Well, in plain English & in the eyes of this very proud part owner, he was AWESOME! Gina felt it was the best PSG they have ever done & 2 of the Judge's perhaps felt similarly placing him 1st (73.8%!!) & 2nd but unfortunately the third Judge saw him as 10th best & so we settled for overall 4th place but in our hearts he was an absolute winner. The next day for the Inter 1 he warmed up fantastic & went into the indoor & into the lead. We nervously waited for the final score to be posted & he got the win he soooo deserved – NSW Intermediare 1 Champion! To cap off an amazing day Ringo put in a

great effort & finished 5th in the Grand Prix. We later chuckled when reviewing the GP scores as the Judge who had seen Koschel as 10th in his PSG had darling Ringo 1st in the GP – the dressage “Lords” giveth & they taketh!!



Gina, Koschel & I after the PSG – a few tears of joy were shed I must admit!

We had a few quiet drinks, toasted the success & reflected on the journey – what a ride it's been ☺ Sunday bought the boy's Freestyles & although both of them were tired by now they tried their hardest & again got ribbons, Koschel placing 3rd & Ringo getting a cute orange ribbon for 7th. Both boy's were pleased to get home & Koschel was squealing & bucking around the box the next morning waiting to be put out in his yard where he had a quick hoon around thankfully in stark contrast to last year.

Along the way countless people have supported Team AmberWood Park – our respective family & friends who are always there for us even when they think we're a bit mad! Professionally Koschel's various vets have been amazing & spent countless phone calls theorising & trying to figure out solutions. Our fellow owners & competitors have also been supportive, many taking the time to say how nice it was to see him back & wishing us well. Gina's wonderful sponsors; Nature Vet Ceva, particularly as we rely so heavily on their fabulous products & supplements and Stable 8 who dress the boy's to always look like the champions they are. Thank you one & all for your support! Of course the biggest round of applause is for Gina herself who never lost faith in Koschel & has dedicated her life to getting him healthy & continuing his training (which by the way includes all the GP work & we hope to have a start at this level next year, woohoo).

I wanted to write this story as a means of expressing some of my feelings during this past year. Of course, most of you reading are also horse owners & will know only too well the adversity we sometimes face when our beloved horses are un-well in some way. Dressage or showing is just sport & if we cannot compete it is far from the end of the world, in the broader scheme of things it matters not. What does matter is the general well being of the horses & ourselves and for me the two are directly correlated. I am happiest when my horses are happy. I am full of life when they are full of life. I am grateful when their efforts are rewarded and I am extremely proud of my best friends both human & equine, thank you for being part of my life.

Cheers, Lisa



Wallmeyer



Winners!



Rodrigo III

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