

OLYMPIC MEDAL RECORDS

DRESSAGE

MOST GOLD MEDALS—RIDER:

Six, won by **Dr. Reiner Klimke** (Germany), with one individual win in 1984, and team medals in 1964, 1968, 1976, 1984, 1988. **Nicole Uphoff-Becker** (Germany), in 1988 and 1992, and **Henri St. Cyr** (Sweden), in 1952 and 1956, are the only riders to have won two individual titles.

MOST GOLD MEDALS—HORSE:

Rembrandt, ridden by Nicole Uphoff-Becker in four medal rounds in 1988 and 1992.

MOST MEDALS:

Eight medals, won by **Dr. Reiner Klimke**. Six gold, plus two bronze in the individual event in 1968 and 1976.

U.S. MEDALS:

One silver (1948) and three bronze (1932, 1976, 1992) have been won by the U.S. in team competition. **Hiram Tuttle** won a bronze in the individual event in 1932.

Dressage

With her first place win in the selection trials securing her a berth on the Olympic dressage squad, Michelle Gibson, 26, and her elegant 11-year-old bay Trakehner stallion, Peron, are proof positive that the key to winning dressage scores is time spent abroad. Originally from Roswell, Georgia, Gibson has been training in Germany with Rudolph Zeilinger since the fall of 1994 with grants from both the Carl-Heinrich Asmis Dressage Scholarship Fund and the U.S. Olympic Committee.

Gibson's time in Germany has been well spent. Last year, Gibson was sixth at Aachen, the highest placing ever for an American, and she was voted the Best Foreign Rider at the Dortmund CDI. At this year's CDN Munster, Gibson and Peron were the favorites to win, and the pair did not disappoint, clinching the Grand Prix with a 71.02 percent and the Grand Prix Special with a 72 percent. When she competed against the top German dressage riders at CDN Bremen, Gibson and Peron placed fifth in the Grand Prix and won the Special with a score of 74.42 percent--her best score to date. At the 1996 CDN Dortmund, an Olympic qualifier, the duo placed second behind Monica Theodorescu and Bruno in the Grand Prix and tied for third place in the Special. In the first of the U.S. selection trials, Gibson wowed judges and the crowd with her 73.32 percent in the Grand

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Prix and 75.116 percent in the Special.

Joining Gibson and Peron are Guenter Seidel, silver medal winner from the 1995 Pan American Games, astride Graf George. A native of Germany, Seidel emigrated to California in 1985 where he quickly began making waves in the dressage community: In 1992, he was the AHSA National Champion at the Intermediare Level, and in 1994, he was on the bronze medal-winning team at the U.S. Olympic Festival.

Owned by Jane and Richard Brown, Graf George is no stranger to Olympic-level dressage. Michael Poulin trained and rode the 14-year-old Hanoverian, to help secure the Olympic bronze for the U.S. in 1992.

Seidel and Graf George's partnership is
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A Moment With

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only a few months old--they made their first appearance last December. In late January, the pair won the Grand Prix and Freestyle titles at the LA Winter Dressage Show, and in February they won LA Mid-Winter Equestrian Dressage CDI-W Grand Prix Special. Later the duo swept all three of the Miller's/USET Olympic qualifying classes at the International Festival of Dressage in Los Angeles in April, logging the highest score to date in the qualifiers and placing first in the Grand Prix Freestyle with a score of 73.91 percent. The pair finished second overall in the Olympic selection trials.

The third member of the team is Steffen Peters, 32, riding the Dutch Warmblood, Udon, owned by Lila Kommerstad. Like Seidel, Peters, also grew up in Germany. He later trained with dressage guru Johann Hinneman, and then came to the U.S. in 1986 to work at Laurie Falvo's San Diego-based barn. In 1989 he married American dressage rider Janet Michelena and became a U.S. citizen in 1992. Currently, he and his wife operate a training barn in Escondido. In the last few years Peters has seen some nicer results in his adopted country: In 1993, Peters placed second behind Kathleen Raine and Avontuur at the Volvo U.S. League Final. In 1994, Peters went double gold at the U.S. Olympic Festival, on his other mount, Akeena, also owned by Kommerstad. Last year, he rode Udon to the Grand Prix championship at the Festival of Champions in Gladstone, New Jersey.

Rounding out the U.S. team is Robert Dover, 40, who certainly needs no introduction to U.S. dressage fans. Dover, who carried the 1996 Olympic Torch as it made its way through New Jersey, made his international riding debut at the 1984 Olympics—and he's participated in every Olympics since. Astride Anne and David Gribbons' and Jane Forbes Clark's Metallic, this will mark Dover's fourth shot at an Olympic medal. He was an integral part of both the 1992 Olympic bronze medal-winning team and the 1994 World Equestrian Games bronze medal-winning team. But Dover's Olympic dreams seemed merely that until he finally connected with Metallic. Dover relinquished his WEG horse, Devereaux, just prior to the World Cup in Los Angeles in 1994, leaving him essentially horse-less just 18 months out from the Olympics. Searching for a potential Olympic mount, Dover tried on several, including Lea Anne Neal's Aristocrat, before pairing up with Metallic.

Kathleen Raine and her Avontuur, who've repped the U.S. at both the Volvo Dressage World Cup and the World Equestrian Games, are the team alternates.

The U.S. dressage team looks the strongest its ever been heading into an international competition, according to Kathy Roberts, USET director of dressage activi-

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ties. "I think our chances are better than they've been in the past--even better than when we went into WEG and Barcelona, where we won the bronzes. The scores that came out of that first selection trial are the highest we've ever seen. Looking at those scores, I'm feeling very hopeful that not only are we looking at a team medal, but for the first time since the 1920s, an individual medal in dressage. This is certainly a much higher standard than we've seen in the past."

And what of the threat from Germany—home to power players like Isabell Werth, Klaus Balkenhol, Dr. Reiner Klimke, and Nicole Uphoff-Becker. Or Holland—where reigning 1994 World Champion Anky van Grunsven resides?

"Germany is very strong," Roberts says. "They could easily field two teams. And Holland is certainly very strong, but I think that we'll be nipping at their heels."