



## **Para-Equestrian Dressage Program Structure and Pathways** **Elite Athlete Program**

**(Updated and Effective 1.14.2025)**

### Principles

- Internationally competitive athlete / horse combinations with potential to help put the U.S. Team in the Medal Zone and moving towards winning a Team Medal at Paralympic Games and World Championships.
- Based on competition & training opportunities and Games preparation and success.
- Technical Advisor and USEF Discipline Director led communication, training sessions, competition planning, selection methodology, logistical planning.
- Competing at a given level does not imply “elite athlete status,” being internationally competitive does.

### Competitions

- Paralympic Games
- World Championships
- CPEDI3\*s in Europe
- CPEDI3\*s in North America

### Identification

- Selection Personnel – Technical Advisor / Discipline Director / Selectors / Representatives of Sport Committee.
- Objective/Scores at CPEDI3\* plus subjective criteria.

### Support

- Communication with Technical Advisor and Discipline Director.
- Observations by Technical Advisor at Athlete’s home base with home coach.
- Competition Planning toward key Championship events and strategies for the short term and long term.
- Establish KPI’s (Key Performance Indicators) for short term and long term.
- Review of KPI’s.
- Prioritized access to Training Sessions and home visits by the Technical Advisor jointly with Team Vet.
- Competition Opportunities.
- Equine and Human Sports Science Medicine Support (ESSM and HSSM).
- Financial support, if available
- Logistical planning and support.

**The Aim of the Elite Athlete Program is to identify athlete / horse combinations that are truly internationally competitive.**

### **Elite Athlete Program - Criteria for Selection**

Open to current athlete / horse combinations who have met the criteria from one of the two track options within the previous 24 months:

- **Track 1:** The athlete / horse combination have medaled (FEI Para Dressage Grand Prix A, Grand Prix B, Grand Prix Freestyle) at the previous World Championships or Paralympic Games.
- **Track 2:**
  - Gr. II – V** - The athlete / horse combination have earned two (2) 73% or above scores in the FEI Para Dressage Grand Prix A and Grand Prix B tests (4) scores at Athletes' classified Grade, and two FEI Para Dressage Grand Prix Freestyle scores at a minimum of 74%) for a total six (6) scores at a minimum of one CPEDI3\*.
  - Gr. I** - The athlete / horse combination have earned two (2) scores 74% or above in the Grand Prix A and Grand Prix B tests (4) scores at Athletes' classified Grade, and two (2) Grand Prix Freestyle scores at a minimum of 74% for a total of six (6) scores at a minimum of one CPEDI3\*. Scores do not have to be obtained from the same CPEDI3\*. One set of scores (1-Grand Prix A, 1-Grand Prix B & 1-Grand Prix Freestyle) may be obtained through the USEF Virtual Judging program.

Athlete / Horse combination must compete in a minimum of two (2) separate USEF licensed competitions in FEI Para Dressage Grand Prix A Test or Grand Prix B Test at their Grade OR through the USEF virtual judging program.

Athletes / horse combinations who have not produced the minimum scores in the previous 24 months from Track 2, will be identified by an \* as inactive, until the athlete/horse combination have achieved the required scores for regaining the Elite Pathway tier.

Elite athletes who have secured a new horse must have earned a minimum score as listed above for your Grade in a FEI Para Dressage Grand Prix A or Grand Prix B test at a CPEDI3\* and one score as listed above for your Grade in the virtual judging program with the new horse to have the horse added to the Elite tier.

Athlete List will be reviewed and edited quarterly at which time athletes will be added or removed based on their scores from the previous 24 months by the USEF Director of Para Equestrian.

### **Benefits to Membership**

- Included on USEF Para-Equestrian Dressage Elite Program Member List published on [www.usef.org](http://www.usef.org) as well as issued in Press Releases at least once a year.
- "Home" Visit by Team Vet and/or the Technical Advisor and/or Discipline Director in order to facilitate communication and planning as budget allows.
- Assessments by the Technical Advisor and access to Training Sessions.
- Funding may be available to the athlete selected for membership to the Elite Program. Funding is tied to meeting the agreed upon markers, evaluations, and with consideration of the athlete/horse combination to represent the U.S. in the following four years. It is intended to be used towards additional development opportunities such as training sessions and/or travel to European competitions. Distribution of funds will be done on a bi-annual basis as budget allows. Grant eligibility will be re-evaluated based on meeting the agreed upon markers. If the markers are not met, this may result in a loss of a grant or reduction in monetary assistance.
- Priority Access to educational opportunities offered through the Elite Program.
- Access to USEF Human and Equine SSM education resources as available.

### **Application**

It will be the responsibility of the athlete to apply for selection to the Elite Athlete Program based on results achieved in the previous 24 months to the Application, in addition to submitting new scores quarterly to the Director of Para Equestrian, Laureen Johnson. If an athlete is inactive for two years, they will be removed from the Athlete List.

### **Staffing**

- Discipline Director – Laureen Johnson
- Para Dressage Technical Advisor and Head of Coach Development– Michel Assouline
- Para Dressage Team Physiotherapist – Joanna Frantz
- Team Veterinarian – Kim Snyder