



## **PARA-EQUESTRIAN DRESSAGE PROGRAM STRUCTURE AND PATHWAYS**

### **Introduction**

The U.S. Para-Equestrian Dressage athletes and Team are currently not in the medal zone at Games level and only a few athletes are close to being considered internationally competitive. There is a need to set parameters and clearly define what is required.

### **Staffing**

- Director – Laureen Johnson
- Technical Advisor – Kai Handt
- Para Dressage High Performance Consultant – Michel Assouline
- COE Coordinator - Austyn Erickson
- Team Vet – Duncan Peters

### **Para-Equestrian Dressage Elite Athlete Program**

#### Principles

- Internationally competitive athlete / horse combinations who can put the U.S. Team in the Medal Zone. Tokyo qualification and Tokyo Paralympic Games focused.
- Elite Athlete Program based on competition & training opportunities and Games preparation and success.
- Technical Advisor, High Performance Consultant and USEF 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.

#### Competition

- 2020 Paralympic Games – Top 6
- 2020 Qualification (via Ranking List)
- WEG
- CPEDI3\* in Europe
- CPEDI3\*

#### Identification

- Selection methodology – Technical Advisor / HP Consultant/ Director / Selectors / Reps of Sport Committee drive criteria development
- Objective/Scores at CPEDIs plus subjective criteria

#### Support

- Communication with Technical Advisor, HP Consultant and Director
- Observations by Technical Advisor and HP Consultant at Athlete’s home base with personal trainer
- Competition Planning (Competition planning toward key Championship events – establish KPI’s (Key Performance Indicators) and strategies for short term and long term)
- Review of KPI’s
- Prioritized access to Training Sessions
- Competition Opportunities
- Equine and Human Sports Science Medicine Support (Equine and Human SSM)

- Financial support
- Logistical planning and support

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

### **Criteria for Selection to the Elite Program**

Open to athlete / horse combinations who have met at least one of the criteria below since 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016

1. 70% or above combined score from the Team and Individual Championship Tests at Grade Level at two (2) CPEDI3\* **OR**
2. 70% or above combined score from the Team and Individual Championship Tests at Grade Level at one CPEDI3\* plus two (2) scores of 74% or above from the Team or Individual Championship Tests at Grade Level obtained at a USEF recognized show by an FEI Para Dressage or USEF "S" Judge. **OR**
3. 70% or above combined score from the Team and Individual Championship Tests at Grade Level at one CPEDI3\* plus two (2) scores from National Para competitions at Grade Level in GBR, FRA, GER or NED judged by an FEI Para Dressage judge – the percentage to be achieved to be pre-agreed by the Technical Advisor and Selectors.

In extenuating circumstances the Technical Advisor may request the Selectors select an athlete / horse combination to the Elite Program for a set period of time (maximum 6 months).

### **Other Criteria**

- Satisfactory veterinary inspection and/or report
- Agreement to Requirements of Program
- Willingness of athlete to buy in to the aims of the Program including facilitating effective communication between the athletes' own support staff (trainer, vet, farrier etc.) and the Program / Team support staff
- FEI Classification or interim Classification by a USEF approved Classifier (all FEI Approved Classifiers are automatically USEF Approved).

### **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 TA and/or Director in order to facilitate communication and planning.
- Assessments by TA and access to Training Sessions.
- Funding may be available to the athletes 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 professional development opportunities such as training sessions and/or travel to European competitions. Distribution of funds will be done on a quarterly basis. 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.

### **Requirements to Maintain Membership**

- Must set targets to encourage improved performance and results

- The Elite Program athletes will be reviewed twice annually, those unable to show improved results, meet their targets, no longer have the ride on a horse capable of meeting the criteria, or unable to compete due to prolonged injury (horse / athlete) will be removed from the program.
- Must continue to meet the Minimum Criteria for Selection as outlined above. Must achieve this within 6 months following qualification for the Elite Program unless given an exception by the Technical Advisor and Director, who will also consult with the Selectors.
- Demonstrate involvement with Human SSM Program as available and appropriate.
- Encourage communication between support staff and USEF Para-Equestrian Dressage support staff.
- Demonstrate a commitment to the aims of the Program and the Code of Conduct.
- Abide by USEF Code of Conduct.
- Sign Elite Program Agreement.
- Maintain current FEI Classification at the Grade selected to the Program.

### **Centers of Excellence (COE)**

The objective of a COE is to serve as a foundation for High Performance Para-Equestrian Dressage athlete development. The USEF/USPEA are committed to work with COEs to develop recognized hubs of excellence that not only attract new riders to the sport of Para-Equestrian Dressage but also work in partnership with the USEF High Performance Programs to mature athletes to a level where they can represent the U.S. at International and Paralympic Games level and ultimately win medals.

It is intended that these COEs will also be the focus for Para-Equestrian Dressage trainer/coach identification and development programs to expand the availability of quality Para-Equestrian sport programs and services offered such as FEI/USEF Classification, Human Sports Science & Medicine (Human SSM) and Equine SSM. The COEs will be the primary hubs for delivering the USEF Para-Equestrian Dressage High Performance Programs.

- COEs will be asked to run Emerging Athlete Programs (see below).
- Elite and Development Program training sessions will be run at COEs and when appropriate will be funded by USEF or in conjunction with the COE.
- Coach Development Courses will be run at COEs.
- Communication between COEs will be facilitated.

### **Para-Equestrian Dressage Development Program**

**The Aim of the Development Program is to identify athletes with the perceived ability to reach Elite status. This will include developing athletes who have not yet reached Elite status and athletes who have, previously reached Elite status but who currently have a horse that has not yet reached Elite status but is on a trajectory to do so.**

#### Principles

- Identification of Developing athlete/horse combinations and Developing Athletes is a key component of the Development Program in order to manage expectations, facilitate direct communication and foster the talent effectively.
- Development is not a centrally based clinic driven program but a communication- based system that provides opportunities. Educational and training opportunities will be offered.
- Ensure Technical Advisor is briefed on combinations moving up the Pathway.
- Empower Developing Athletes to remain with their own trainers within their own programs but challenge them to move up the Pathway and provide opportunities where possible or requested. Identify certain KPIs and requirements to stay on the Development Program.

- Work with Developing Athletes' trainers to better involve them and help them (where necessary) to understand what is required to be internationally competitive within each Grade.

#### Competition

- CPEDIs
- National Competitions
- European CPEDIs (if funding available)

Identification – There will be two methods of selection to the Development Program: Objective by Right and Subjective by Assessment.

**Objective By Right.** It will be the responsibility of the athlete to apply for selection to the Development Programs based on results achieved in the six months previous to the Application;

1. 68% or above combined score from the Team and Individual Championship Tests at Grade Level at one CPEDI3\*. **OR**
2. 72% or above score in the Freestyle at Grade Level at one CPEDI3\*. **OR**
3. A total of three (3) 70% scores or above from the Team or Individual Championship Tests at Grade Level obtained at a minimum of two (2) separate USEF recognized Shows by FEI Para Dressage or USEF "S" judges. **OR**
4. 68% or above combined score from the Team and Individual Championship Tests at Grade Level at one CPEDI3\* plus two (2) scores from National Para competitions from the Team or Individual Championship Tests at Grade Level in GBR, FRA, GER or NED judged by FEI Para Dressage judges – the percentage to be achieved to be pre-agreed by the Technical Advisor and Selectors.

Note: The above criteria are for athlete / horse combination. They do not apply in the following circumstances unless the Technical Advisor and Selectors agree otherwise:

- The athlete / horse combination have previously been part of the Elite Program
- The athlete / horse combination have previously been part of the Development Program and have been de-selected from the Program for lack of achievement of KPIs or Targets.

**In addition, satisfy the Additional Development Criteria below.**

- A. Technical skills
- B. Trainability
- C. Strategy & Planning
- D. Commitment
- E. Mind set
- F. Management
- G. Fitness (athlete / equine)
- H. Competition record
- I. The length of time the athlete has been on the Program and their progression up the Pathway in conjunction with what is considered the Program can still offer
- J. Demonstrate Potential for Elite Program

**Subjective By Assessment.** Consideration for a subjective invitation to the Development Program will include the following (non-exhaustive list) criteria;

- K. Quality of the athlete's horse and their perceived ability to progress up the competition levels. As an indication a minimum score may be required;
  - i. 66% or above at a CPEDI3\* in the Team or Individual Championship Test

- ii. 68% or above at a CPEDI1\* or CPEDI2\* in the Novice, Team or Individual Championship Test at Grade Level
- iii. 68% or above at two (2) USEF Recognized Shows in *Para Test of Choice* classes at Grade Level

**In addition, satisfy the Additional Development Criteria above.**

**Additional Development Criteria (Applicable to All)**

- FEI Classification or interim Classification by a USEF approved Classifier (all FEI Approved Classifiers are automatically USEF Approved).
- Satisfactory veterinary inspection and/or report if requested by Selectors.
- Agreement to Requirements of Program.
- Willingness of athlete to buy in to the aims of the Program including facilitating effective communication between the athletes' own support staff (trainer, vet, farrier etc.) and the Program / Team support staff.

**Support**

- Communication with Technical Advisor and HP Consultant
- Competition Planning
- Prioritized access to Development Program Educational opportunities
- Establish KPI's (not necessarily competition-based)
- Review of KPIs
- Competition Opportunities
- Access to Equine and Human Sports Science Medicine support and advice as available.

**Training and Evaluation Sessions**

Training and evaluation sessions will be run as funding allows. These will be open to members of the Development Program and those that are seeking selection and meet the minimum criteria.

**Requirements to Maintain Membership to the Program**

- Undergo a minimum of two annual reviews by the Technical Advisor.
- Establish KPIs and Targets markers (i.e., increase of scores, training sessions, competition plan) agreed upon by the Technical Advisor, the athlete, and his/her personal trainer. Following the initial meeting between the Technical Advisor, the athlete, and personal trainer, a personalized performance enhancing plan will be established to aid in meeting the agreed upon markers. This will allow the Technical Advisor to support the athlete/horse combination and their personal trainer throughout the competition year. Markers should include future goals of meeting Elite Program minimum criteria.
- Horses are to undergo an Equine SSM assessment and abide by the agreed follow-up action.
- Promote and encourage communication between their support staff and the USEF support staff.
- Abide by the USEF Code of Conduct.
- Athletes remain classified at the Grade they were selected.

### **Para-Equestrian Dressage Emerging Athlete Approved Programs**

The Emerging Athlete Program will underpin the Development Program and will be made up of “recognized” programs that could be run by USPEA and/or COEs.

Each COE which wishes to run a recognized Emerging Athlete Program will develop a program which must include the following;

- Nominating a Coach to be approved by the USEF / USPEA
- Introduction to Classification, ideally classification to FEI standard
- Provide written updates on athletes’ progress
- A Review system agreed by the USEF / USPEA

USEF will provide.

- Coach development
- A basis for Reviews
- Learning materials regarding the international standards in each Grade.

**PLEASE NOTE THAT MEMBERSHIP TO THIS PROGRAM IS NOT REQUIRED AND WILL NOT BE USED FOR THE PURPOSE OF SELECTION**

Applications may be found at [www.usef.org](http://www.usef.org) or by contacting Laureen Johnson, Director of Para-Equestrian and Vaulting Activities, [lkjohnson@usef.org](mailto:lkjohnson@usef.org); or 908-326-1155.