

A New "Teacher's Notebook" from Charles de Kunffy

Dressage

T O D A Y

November 2012

YOUNG PROS USE
TEAMWORK TO
SUCCEED

PLUS! Mentoring by
Lars Petersen

JUMP AHEAD

Cross-Train with
the Prix Caprilli Test

RIDE
SHOULDER-IN
TO RENVERS

With Janet Foy

HOLIDAY
GIFT IDEAS



Endel Ots and
Caroline Roffman

GOING PRO

How two former Young Riders started a business with the help of mentor Lars Petersen.

By Hilary Moore Hebert • Photos by Susan J. Stickle

Sixteen years ago, a young Endel Ots went to a clinic with Danish Olympian Lars Petersen. When he had the chance, he went up and asked for the accomplished rider's autograph. Thrilled by the experience and the sport he saw practiced, Endel decided that he wanted to follow in that Olympian's footsteps. This story has happened countless times, in many countries, with various outcomes. Now living his dream, Endel, 26, considers Lars his mentor and is building his own business with fellow trainer Caroline Roffman, 23.

"To be riding with Lars now is unbelievable," says Endel.

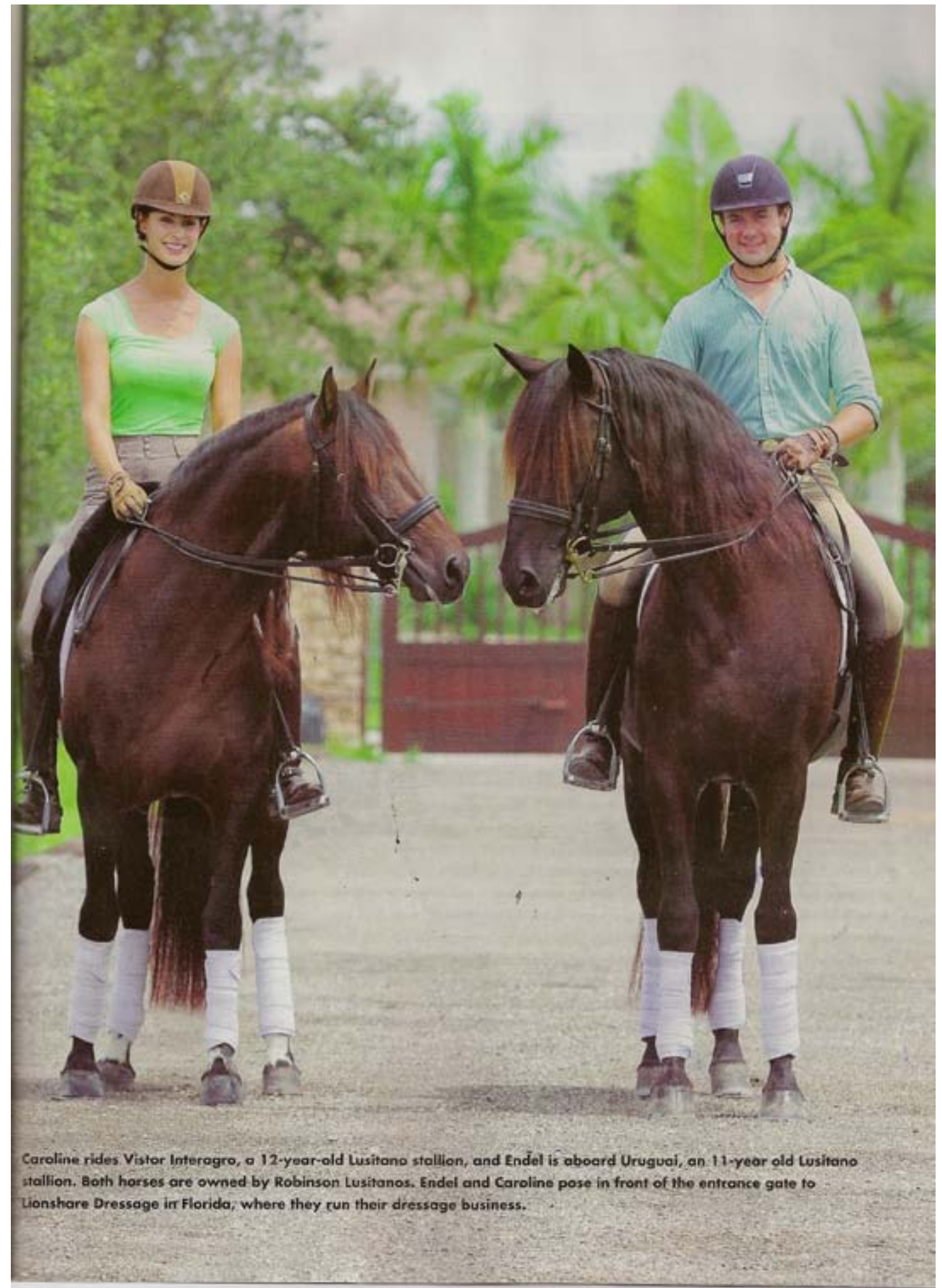
Though they both work with Lars now, Endel and Caroline did not start their dressage careers with him. "I started riding before I met Lars," says Caroline. "I was riding with someone else and had a great relationship with her, but you get to the point where you think you need something more and you are ready to move on."

Caroline took lessons with Lars and then spent the rest of the day as one of

Working Together



Caroline Roffman and Endel Ots prove that two can be better than one. As co-owners of their new dressage business, they support each other in countless ways. In this case, Endel can act as a ground person while Caroline trains piaffe on Vistor Interagro. The stallion gets a pat for a job well done.



Caroline rides Vistor Interagro, a 12-year-old Lusitano stallion, and Endel is aboard Uruguai, an 11-year old Lusitano stallion. Both horses are owned by Robinson Lusitanos. Endel and Caroline pose in front of the entrance gate to Lionshare Dressage in Florida, where they run their dressage business.

Endel's Lesson via Hubertus Schmidt

ive to realize that.

Learn correctly and ride as much as you can: If people want to get better, they have to ride every day. It could be good to have a lesson every day, but they can also get riding tips when they are in the arena. Someone just off on their own without training is like a monkey with a razor blade.

When looking for a trainer or mentor, talk with professionals to get a feeling for whom you are planning to work with. Don't just go to work with someone because you think you know him. You have to have someone who is qualified to give advice so that when you don't agree with him you can trust that they are giving you advice that is in your best interest. It is so easy with the Internet to check out someone's credentials. You just have to read and see something for what it is, not what you want to see.

Remember that to learn a system, you have to work with someone for three or four years. Only then can you move somewhere without them, have them come in for clinics and then put in full-time training months with them in the winter somewhere like Florida. You can't just live somewhere, work with some local "Grand Prix trainer" and imagine that you will be professional-caliber and the best you can be. You can't learn to be a trainer like this, having clinics in between.

I don't understand this thing with people riding with a new person in a clinic each day. You can't have one system for two days and then another system. It is too confusing for yourself and your horse. There is no recipe, so riding with someone you will never see again isn't going to lead to success.



QUICK TRANSITIONS

"When I worked with German Olympian Hubertus Schmidt, I learned this straightforward training exercise," says Endel. "To keep the horse's nose in front of the vertical, especially in transitions, ride quick transitions between the gaits. As you ride into two or three strides of the slower gait, give a quick half halt as you ask for the downward transition. Prepare and ride forward into the trot or canter. Doing this several times will get your horse responding to your leg aid, make him a bit hotter—in a good way—and develop a more uphill tendency. Your horse will stay in front of you, his hind legs will come forward and his poll will stay up. If you cannot maintain the balance of the new gait with only two or three strides, take a few more strides to get a really good balance before transitioning back to the previous gait. As you improve, you can work down to two or three strides before transitioning up again."

his working students. Eventually, he took her under his wing. "He saw that I was really determined and that when everyone was going home, I was cleaning tack," she says. "I have now been working with him for five or six years. My role progressed to being able to tack-walk the horses. Then I got to ride the sale horses and then show the horses,

and then I became part of the team." Eventually, Caroline considered herself less like a working student and more like an apprentice.

It is through Caroline that Endel reconnected with Lars and started training with him. As the two Young Riders ran into each other at shows, they got to talking about Endel's interest in train-