

# Stephanie Dijkstra Trains with the Best

Since early March 2006, Australian-based dressage and show jumping rider Stephanie Dijkstra has been working and training at the stables of Anky van Grunsven of the Netherlands, one of the most dressage riders in the world.

For Dijkstra, riding with van Grunsven is the culmination of years of dedication to equine sport. She grew up on a breeding farm named AEA Burong Stud near Geelong, Australia with parents Dirk and Sicca Dijkstra and younger brother Michael. The bulk of her equestrian focus has been in the show jumping arena, and for a number of years, she was a valued member of the KER Star of the Future Show Jumping Squad, an Australian program for young riders. However, over a year ago Steph decided to follow in her father's footsteps and concentrate on dressage.

After usurping her father's imported Prix St. Georges stallion, AEA Just de Pomme, and competing for only twelve months in Australia, Steph was given the opportunity to export the horse, known around the barn as Apples, to the Netherlands to work and train with Anky van Grunsven.

Steph and Apples have been training at Anky's facility for over seven months and it has been an amazing experience. "Apples and I have improved so much in every way. Anky says I am really starting to look like a dressage rider."


Not only does she get to watch some of the best riders in the world train with Anky and her husband Sjef Janssen, she also is trained by Anky. "The best thing about working here is that you get a lot of lessons. I ride every day that Anky teaches, so sometimes I get up to five lessons a week." Not only does Steph see a lot while she is at "home" (her home for now), she has also been to some amazing shows: the World Equestrian Games in Aachen, the Dutch Dressage Championships, the World Young Horse Breeding Championships, and Spruce Meadows in Canada.

Steph has begun competing Apples at the Prix St. Georges level in the Netherlands. "Lichte Tour (Prix St. Georges and Intermediaire I) is very competitive here. There are hundreds of horses in each class, and some are ridden by top riders such as Coby and Marlies van Baalen, and a few weeks ago I even competed in the same class as Anky. The judges are also really tough, but Anky believes it is advantageous for me to compete over here."

And the plan for the future? "I went home over the Christmas holiday and then came back to Anky's stables. I don't really have a structured plan at the moment. I just want to keep enjoying my time over here and learning and seeing as much as I can. When

that stops happening, I will have to make a plan of what to do next! I want to learn as much as I can here so that I can take that knowledge to Australia to work with our team of horses at home."

Back in Australia, the AEA Burong Stud is running splendidly. Steph's parents, Dirk and Sicca Dijkstra, are working hard with their team of performance-bred dressage and show jumping horses. Over the past twelve months, the AEA string of stallions, young performance horses, broodmares and young stock has benefited from the nutritional guidance of KER. The diets of all horses have been fine-tuned to guarantee that each can perform his or her job well, whether it's in the breeding shed or the show ring.

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