

Horse of the Year

MATERIALE (TIE)

Sunshine Sport Horse Association Perpetual Trophy for the Highest-Scoring Champion



GEDEVASEGAARDS DIESEL

2011 brown 17-hand Danish Warmblood gelding

Sire: Tailormade Temptation • *Dam:* Gedevasagaards Desire

Owner/Rider: Dantia Benson, Somis, California

Breeder: Lise Steffensen, Denmark

COURTESY OF DANTIA BENSON

I'm an amateur," Dantia Benson says, "and at sixty-eight I still love to start babies. I train them up to Prix St. Georges competition and schooling I-I, then sell them on. I have two three-year-olds now, an eight-year-old that I'm competing"—her 2010 Adequan/USDF Materiale Horse of the Year, Bad Boy—"and two Dutch babies that are coming along."

Benson bought "Diesel" last March in Denmark. She and a Danish friend "went to the Danish stallion show and also the stallion auction; I bought Diesel at the auction." She also liked another horse she rode there—and liked his training so much that she sent Diesel to that horse's trainer for three months. "Then, when I brought him home, I also brought Marie Paulsen, the rider who'd worked with him at the trainer's, and she spent two weeks here helping me learn to ride him as he'd been ridden in Denmark: connecting in the contact a little more than I'm used to, and riding more forward than I'm used to.

"So he got an excellent education before I brought him home. Then to have his trainer spend two weeks with me—what a nice experience! And even his having been at the stallion show was helpful: He got exposed enough to everything happening there—trucks running around, odd noises, big bangs—that when he came here, the things you might expect would spook a youngster didn't affect him."

Benson decided to show Diesel in Materiale classes "just to give him some exposure to being in an arena without pressure. And he went to the show grounds and was a gentleman. I was nervous about him showing because he's a little different from the standard horse of today. But obvi-

ously the judges saw the things I saw in him, because he did very well.

"He has a really nice walk, but it's a walk you have to be cautious of because it can have a tendency to go lateral. I'm having to learn to work with it; I haven't had a horse with a walk this big before. His canter is lovely; his trot is nice and will become even nicer as he learns how to carry himself. I feel a lot of good, positive things in this horse: He is a little bit spooky and can be a little bit fresh, but he has the best intentions and he is a workhorse: He is willing to get out there and do the job and learn. It's a nice feeling."

Benson recently started working with 2011 Pan Am Games competitor Marisa Festerling "because she's had such success with young horses. I want her to help me to go down the correct path with my youngsters."

The path for Diesel, Benson says, is "training, mostly, using Marisa's knowledge and his confidence to guide us: Does he go up the levels? Do we try to do the Young Horse classes? Do I just keep him home, school him more, and put him in a show here and there? With the right balance, I feel he has a good chance to move up the levels. I've learned over the years to take a deep breath and not try to do too much.

"He's a little bit nervous, but I can give him confidence if I stay calm, stay light, let him express himself—even if he gets a little 'over the top'—and then go again. Let him be himself, but within a parameter where I can guide him.

"I want to have him as a keeper—to have him stay around, to enjoy the process of making him a star, to have a long relationship with him, and to do the best we can."

—D. J. Carey Lyons

USDF PERPETUAL TROPHIES

SUNSHINE SPORT-HORSE ASSOCIATION TROPHY

Adequan/USDF Highest-Scoring Materiale Champion

2007	Froelich	2011	Wildly Romantic
2008	Bakira	2012-2013	Ballerina DMV
2009	Rashka	2014 (Tie)	Exodus, Gedevasegaards Diesel
2010	Bad Boy		

THE HILLTOP FARM TROPHY

Adequan/USDF Dressage Breeder of the Year

2006-2007	Hilda Gurney & Dr. Mary Contakos
2008	Hilda Gurney
2009-2011	Kenneth Borden
2012	Oak Hill Ranch LLC
2013	Hilltop Farm Inc.
2014	Oak Hill Ranch LLC

STALLION EXPO TROPHY

Adequan/USDF Dressage Sport Horse Breeding Breeder of the Year

2006-2008	Ken Borden
2009-2011	Marion Dresel-O'Connor
2012	Maryanna Haymon
2013-2014	Dreamcatcher Meadows Ventures Ltd.

PIROUETTE BRONZE

Adequan/USDF Adult Amateur Grand Prix Champion

2007	Melissa Rogers riding Marlow
2008	Jennifer Huber riding Al Pacino
2009	Carrie Schopf riding Montaigne
2010	Christi Meyers riding Wonderboy
2011	Melissa Hogan riding Diameter
2012	D'Re Stergios riding Johnny
2013	Jill Irving riding Pop Art
2014	Alice Tarjan riding Elfenfeuer