

TAYLOR

MADE

*Andrea Taylor takes on the
Canadian Paralympic Team*

by Karen Robinson

TOP OF THE CLASS: In 2001, Andrea Taylor and *Dior* finished third in the Canadian World Cup League Final.

She has been peripherally involved in the discipline for the past few years, but now Andrea Taylor has jumped in with both feet. As of April 1st, she is the National Team Coach for ParaEquestrian Canada. Two people were instrumental in motivating her to apply for the job: Sandra Verda and Eleonore Elstone. “Sandra is not only my roommate – someone I see every day,” says Andrea. “She is also the coach of Lauren Barwick, who rides my horse *Dior*; Sandra also looks after *Dior*. Eleonore is a colleague whom I see every day.” Since she became a Grade IV Paralympic rider herself in 2006, Eleonore Elstone has joined a growing talent base in the discipline in Canada. Andrea admits that it is a big responsibility that she has taken on, “but it’s a good challenge for my coaching skills. Teaching is about finding the words to help a rider learn and feel. Teaching in other disciplines, whether it’s Dressage, Jumping or Paralympics, is another way to develop those skills.”

At 36 years old, Andrea Taylor is not short of skills. She has been on the ‘A’ list of the Canadian Dressage Team shortlist several times with

two horses that she trained: *Dior* and Sandra’s *Nissen’s Lex*. In 2001 she and *Dior* finished third in the Canadian World Cup League Final; *Dior* went on to carry Lauren Barwick to a top ten Paralympic finish in Athens in 2004. Current and past students include Young Riders Alex Duncan and Elizabeth McClymont, as well as Shannon Morris, who debuted in the FEI small tour with *Renoir* in 2006. The majority of Canada’s top Paralympic equestrian athletes are currently from BC. Andrea thinks

that may have contributed to her getting the job of coach, because she has a relationship with so many members of the community. “Karen Brain and I were in Pony Club together. I’ve seen her ride recently; she’s very competitive and focused.” Jennifer McKenzie is another student of Sandra Verda’s, so there is just one small degree of separation. Andrea says there is no doubt that Sandra has been instrumental in the development of ParaEquestrian sport in BC. Having come from a therapeutic riding (PRDA) background, she

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SITIN' PRETTY: Lauren Barwick and Dior.



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opportunity for disabled riders. “Sandra is the one who has been taking these riders to Europe, and finding horses for them,” says Andrea.

Andrea has come into the position of Team Coach at a high pressure moment, with the FEI World Paradressage Championships taking place in Hartpury, England this July, but she is not intimidated. “It’s exciting for me, rather than nerve wracking.” Three years living in Germany under the tutelage of Christilot Boylen and Udo Lange exposed Andrea to the competitive atmosphere of international Dressage. “I was immersed with the top riders of the world in Germany. It’s not like I’ve never been in that situation; I coached a couple of riders at shows in Germany as well.” Before Hartpury, she may get to Ontario to see riders there — including Dax Adams, who has been on the Canadian team in the past. A minimum of two clinics each in the East and West through the winter will be part of the longer term goals of preparing riders for Beijing and to assess and encourage new talent. “I think there are such big accomplishments to be had in this first year, I’m only looking that far ahead right now. My eyeballs haven’t gone back into my head yet!”

Andrea has also made it clear that her com-

mitment to her regular students and horses at home must not be jeopardized by the Team coach position. “My priority has to be with my clients; that’s my job.” She will show her own young horses this year: six year old *Ulysses* and five year old *Virtuoso*. She is also excited to show Penny Pillow’s six year old *Usher*, a horse that had a successful season with Christine Mazur in 2006. What motivates Andrea most about her new job with ParaEquestrian Canada is the potential for depth. “Instead of just teaching and leaving a lesson without thinking twice about it, there will be planning, goal setting, and deciding what steps will take us there. That’s what motivates me.” *AT*