Dressage Today Podcast Season 2, Episode 1 Transcription

- The Dressage Today Podcast is back for season two. And hey, you're listening to the first episode. Whether you've come back after spending all of season one with us, or you're a first-time listener, we are glad you're here. In more typical episodes of the Dressage Today Podcast, we sit down with some cool people we've met in the dressage community. Sometimes they're top riders, other times they're inspiring people. Or they are equine industry leaders who have some helpful tips to share that can make you a more informed rider and horse owner. In today's episode however, I'm joined by my co-host Jennifer Mellace, Dressage Today's Content Director, as we discuss the latest news in the world of Dressage Today. Thanks for listening. We can't wait to bring you more this season.

- Hey there, I'm Jennifer Mellace.
- I'm Lindsay Paulsen.
- We're the hosts of the Dressage Today Podcast, where you can find us talking about anything and everything dressage related.
- Our conversations span the world of dressage from leading riders, to local level dressage heroes.
- We're talking training advice, horse care tips and stories to inspire your own dressage journey.
- Tune in, then tack up.

- Hey Jen, thanks for joining me today.
- Hello Lindsay. It's good to be with you.
- Yeah.
- Even though it's a virtually.
- It's so different being in two different places. To everybody that's listening, thank you so much for joining us for a new season of the Dressage Today Podcast. I'm one of your hosts, Lindsay Paulsen. Since we're working during the times of Coronavirus, I'm calling in from Saratoga Springs, New York, and we have Jennifer Mellace here, Dressage Today's Content Director, on the other end of the phone and you are in Frederick, Maryland.

- Yep.
- So I thought maybe just a way that we could sort of introduce our new season here is that we could touch on a few highlights from last season that stood out to us from our episodes and podcast recording. So Jen was there anything that really stands out in your memory that was special to you from Season One of the Dressage Today podcast?
- Yeah, you know it was interesting having never, obviously I've listened to podcasts before but having never done them personally, it was a little, I'll be honest, nerve-racking at first when we had to get started down that road. But, I really enjoyed talking with the people that I spoke with and listening to the people you spoke with. One of the podcasts that I did was with George and Roberta Williams. Everything about that podcast I really enjoyed. We were tucked away in a corner of a barn aisle at dressage at Devon, and it was just like kind of surreal that I'm sitting, we're sitting there with George and Roberta, on these iconic show grounds in a barn that I remember being in when I was gosh, in probably high school when I used to go and to the shows and help the barn, where I grew up riding, we would go there for the breed show. And that was one of the barns that we would be in with the babies and, everything about it kind of brought back so many memories but, that particular podcast was just really nice getting to talk with George and Roberta and listening to their history and all that they have done for the sport and, hearing more about Rocher, George's horse that he rode. And just everything about that podcast was really quite special. Just from the location of it and hearing everything that they've done in the sport and for the sport. So that was one that really kind of was special for me.
- Yeah. And they're like the nicest most incredibly down to earth, grounded people. That's one of the things that I love the most about the job that we have is that I feel like we get to talk to so many interesting people who have been leaders in the sport and I'm always so pleasantly surprised with how the superstars tend to be so generally generous with their knowledge and happy to share what they've learned with you. And that, I don't know, that gives me a warm, happy feeling just to know that exists in our world 'cause I know that's not always the case that when you meet your hero, sometimes it can be terribly disappointing.
- Yeah, no you're absolutely right. We keep saying this—I feel like I'm a broken record—but it all comes back to the horse, right? And we all got started in horses because we love the horse and so at the beginning of it all, and at the end of the day, that's what it's all about and we all, even the top stars in our sport have, it's like this giddy little feeling of when we were kids again. And we all kind of connect on that basic premise that the horse is just such an incredible animal and at the heart of everything we do. So yeah, it is pretty cool. We have a very cool job that we get to meet the people who are so important in our sport and really, really good and cool people.
- Yeah. Well you know I think it's funny too how—Okay for those of you listening, like this podcast endeavor has been really pretty new for both Jen and myself and, it's stressful dealing with the technology end of things and stuff and so, as we're recording these we don't want to have a tech glitch or have something embarrassing happen in the middle of this, so, we've kind

of stressed out about like, "Oh we have to be somewhere that's completely silent and there's no noise and blah, blah blah." But most of the time we're recording this at horse shows or in a barn or something. And I think I had this moment of freedom where I was like, wait a second, if we're recording this in a barn and a horse walks by and you hear hoof beats in the barn aisle, like our listeners aren't going to care because this is real life. We are dealing with horses. So this is what happens. A horse walks through the middle of your podcast.

- Exactly, exactly. So true.
- Yeah. Well, let's see. I'm thinking back on Season One of our podcast and I'm like, "Oh man, I don't know if I could really pick a favorite 'cause I just think every person that we talk to is so interesting in their own way and everybody has such a unique story and a unique perspective" but, one of the most memorable ones for me was either sitting down with Dorothee Schneider at the NEDA Symposium, and just hearing some background, like spending time with her and even though it was very brief during the lunch break but just kind of hearing about her day-today order of operations and the things that she prioritizes. She's very much about the horse having a balanced lifestyle where it gets to go outside, enjoy the sunshine and it's happy in its work and, she seems to be really focused on the partnership aspect, as she should be, of dressage. And she—talk about like meeting other heroes and stuff—I thought she was incredibly humble. She was very soft-spoken and I just think it's interesting 'cause I'm like, "Oh my God, you've like taken over the dressage world. Like you are the queen of the dressage world." And she still is very humble. So I loved talking to her and then, one other podcast recording that I really super enjoyed was when I was in Bermuda, I was talking to their National Dressage Coach, Angela Halloran Smith, who's originally a North Carolina native and now lives in Bermuda. But, this is like the blessing and the curse of podcasts is that we had this lovely conversation where I was learning about all of these unexpected things that you have to deal with when you're doing dressage on this remote island. And it was just fascinating to hear about that. But we had the most spectacular view—when the like the sky is bright blue, there's glistening blue water underneath and there were little sailboats bobbing along while we chatted and I was like, "Oh man, that's the downside of the podcast," Our listeners can't enjoy this beautiful scene with us.
- Talk about loving your job. That had to be one of the coolest experiences for you to be in Bermuda, and not only doing the podcast but just from start to finish that whole thing was pretty cool.
- Oh yeah. It was super cool and just a really nice welcoming group of people out there and they are proof that even though it certainly has its challenges to pursue dressage out there in a way that, you know like things like saddle fitting, or health specialists aren't really easily accessible. I mean they do it and they make it work and, Annabelle Collins, who's a Bermuda native I mean she was slated to go to Tokyo, at the time. And at the time that I was there, there was also a rider who was aiming for the North American Youth Championships. So, it was amazing to see everything that they were doing. I'm kind of sidetracking from the whole like, podcast memory thing—but another part about that was just so cool was that like, we had been invited over for

like a judges dinner, after an FEI show that they had had while I was there and we were sitting in this beautiful old Bermuda estate and we were in this home that was a classic Bermuda, fancy house. That's what this was. We were sitting there talking to Judges Jeanne McDonald and Lewis Yukins. And it was just kind of like we were having this little fireside chat and in any other situation I think I would have been very intimidated to speak to dressage judges but they just made it feel like home.

- Yeah, I remember you telling me about that and what a cool experience that was. And yeah I mean, just kind of going back a little bit to your podcast with Dorothee Schneider, yeah I remember 'cause I was with you when you were doing that one, and talk about being intimidated and I kinda felt that way going into that and I wasn't even the one asking her the questions but I was like, "Oh my God, it's Dorothee Schneider!" And she was so wonderful. She was so approachable and you did a phenomenal job with the questions and, she was just so gracious with her time and that's you know, I feel like I'm repeating what we talked about with George and Roberta but it just goes back to the fact that, there's so many people in this sport that are willing to give us their time and give riders their time no matter whether you're from Dressage Today or you're not. There's just so many people that are looking to share what they know and help people. And that's the coolest thing about all of this. And I think the fun part about doing these podcasts, is that we're getting to not only put it into print on the website and articles and into videos on Dressage Today on demand but also now, somebody can be driving along or doing something and be listening to these wonderful people share their stories and their advice and their tips. It's a pretty cool thing.
- Yeah. I know Dressage Today has gone through quite a bit of evolution just within the past few years and moving away from our print product and moving more into the digital realm and of course, for those of you who are listening to this, Jen and I, we're really attached to the print product and we know that some people have mixed feelings about moving away from magazines and more towards the digital end but, as much as it was difficult in a way to shift the focus from that, it really is cool having a more multi-dimensional approach to everything about dressage that we share with our audience.
- Yeah. Yeah. Absolutely.
- Yes.
- Yeah. So,
- Marching forward, right? Always moving forward.
- Yup. Oh yeah. Well in dressage riding and in life, right?
- Exactly. Exactly.

- Let's catch everybody up on, well what's been going on in your personal life since things kind of ended with the podcast.
- Well, and COVID. Thank you COVID for not giving me much of a life now. We've been, I've been hunkered down like everybody else. I've spent a lot of time at home like everyone else and I've been doing a lot of things around the house and I've gotten much more into gardening, this year and, we have a koi pond that, it's been interesting 'cause I've had the chance to really see everything through the seasons. And I normally don't get that opportunity 'cause I'm either traveling for work or traveling for vacation and none of that has happened this year. So, it's been totally unrelated to Dressage Today, but that's been kind of fun being able to kind of see everything around the yard, the property kind of change with the season. So I've kind of enjoyed that but, riding wise I have not been doing much myself but once everything was lifted so that we could at least get back out to the barn, my daughter Sophia has been riding. And she has actually been taking dressage lessons, over the last month and a half I guess, going on two months on the pony that I was taking lessons on Bubba, which some of you, if you have followed the website and some of the blog posts that I've done in the past, there's this great little Fell pony that Ali Calkins, a trainer in Maryland owns who is just this perfect little school master and adorable to boot. And I was taking lessons on him and just with things getting busy in my life I had stopped but now Sophia is taking lessons on him and watching her progress and seeing her enjoy the dressage lessons has been a ton of fun. I've really enjoyed watching her. So, so yeah, so we've been doing that and, I've been continuing to run and I'm gonna be doing a half marathon. My own little personal, socially distant, half marathon--
- Awesome.
- Next weekend. So, that's kind of where things stand for me. So yeah. How about you?
- Oh well, let's see. So, in New York State it was kinda weird. Well, it's weird for everybody. Isn't that like the understatement of like the year? But, yeah I think, I wanna say it was from March through May, basically two months we weren't allowed to go to the barn here. Just because technically it was like, it's not self-care. It's like a full-service boarding operations and obviously we weren't the ones feeding our horses so, those of us who boarded there, we weren't allowed to even set foot in the barn for two months. It was pretty weird 'cause that's been, that's probably been the longest time I've gone in 20 years without riding. So, that was kind of weird. In the first couple of weeks I was like, "Okay, I can do this. It's fine. Everything's good. It's sort of nice to not have that obligation and to just know that the horses are being taken care of and it's fine. I can go on a walk after work or I have all this free time." And then, by like week three I was like, "I need to see my horse. I just need to be with my horse. And smell some shavings or something." But in the time that I wasn't riding I picked up doing Vinyasa yoga, like just through the TV. What do you call it? Like video subscription service, which has actually been super helpful. And it's been interesting now that I've gotten back to riding. Obviously it's been interesting seeing how yoga has, I can't say whether it's necessarily improved by riding but I think going back to riding was probably easier than it would have been if I had not opted to do that.

- Hmm. Yeah, yeah.
- So anyway, and then I have my mare who, I have talked about this a little bit in the past in stuff that I've written for dressagetoday.com, but she was diagnosed with kissing spine back in November and it just explained so much about her and in hindsight it was really painfully obvious so, gosh I have so many thoughts about kissing spine topic
- Yeah you've been through it all.
- Yeah. But anyway, we got back on track after the really intense quarantine period and we've just kind of been back to normal training. We finally got to go to a clinic and that was super exciting 'cause I hadn't taken her out in quite a while so, it was nice to get back into the groove of things. I didn't end up doing any shows this spring just 'cause of, well A) because of COVID but also because of kind of where we were in the training process of kind of readjusting our approach to training after figuring out this kind of like huge major piece of like the way her body works.
- Hmm. Hmm.
- So yeah so, I guess not too much to report on here other than the fact that I didn't ride for quite a while. But I think a lot of people have a really similar story and experience to me. And also as much as I wanted to complain about like, "Oh, I can't ride my horse. I can't go to the barn." I really had to keep it in perspective that there are a lot of people out there who are dealing with stuff that's much more difficult than this so I need to shut my mouth and not complain so much.
- Yeah, yeah. I mean definitely it's been one of those things where you, I know I found myself like, "oh, we missed out on some vacations and things that we were gonna do," but in the grand scheme of things you know how incredibly fortunate my family is. And I do, I think that has brought a lot of perspective to things for sure.
- Hmm, yeah. The way that I'm thinking about it for me at least is that I'm like "If the way that this affects me the most is as an inconvenience, then I am among the luckiest." I would say.
- Exactly. Yeah. Yup, yup.
- Yeah.
- For sure.

- Hey friends. The show we'll be back in just a few moments, but first I want to tell you about something cool from Dressage Today. If you're an average dressage rider like me, you've only

got a certain amount of time you spend in the arena each week. And it hardly ever seems to be enough. You know the struggle. Maybe you take weekly lessons, or you read books and articles. Well, you obviously listen to this podcast. And maybe you travel to clinics to soak up whatever you can. But if you're looking to take a deep dive into dressage training without ever leaving your couch, you need to check out Dressage Today on demand. Learn from top experts in the sport of dressage with Dressage Today's complete video on demand training resource. Whether you're looking to better your basics or your polishing ground pre-movements, Dressage Today's 3000 plus training videos can help you reach those goals. Visit https://ondemand.dressagetoday.com to score a free trial.

- One of the kind of fun things that did come out of COVID for DT, was our virtual horse shows, which we kind of, you know along with everybody else we kinda delved into that. But that seemed to be right in line with our core educational values, wanting to educate people and give people the opportunity to show in front of a judge and still do something fun while they were stuck, hopefully if they could get out to the barn. But that was something fun that we kicked off.
- Hmm, yeah and for listeners who maybe haven't heard about our virtual shows or haven't participated in one yet, do you wanna fill them in on generally how it works?
- Yeah sure. So we've been doing them I guess what, about monthly now, for the past few months. And essentially we have, I believe it's four classes. We have a Training Level, First Level, Second through Fourth Level, a non-compete class, and then a class where you can sign up and then get a one-on-one phone call from our judge. And the judge who we have been using is Margaret Freeman, who is wonderful and giving our riders lots of great feedback even if they don't do the consult call with her, the test sheets that they get turned back to them have a lot of great comments and feedback and help that she's given them. But what essentially it is, is you sign up and you have, I guess we leave it open for two weeks, the show. So you sign up and get your spot. And then you video your ride. You pick a ride, you choose a test, and then video, have somebody, a friend video your ride, and then submit that ride through a YouTube link, and then Margaret judges the ride. And we have a winner for each of the three classes. So a winner for our Training, First Level and then Second through Fourth Levels. So we have three winners for those three classes. And it's been, I mean, the response has been great. We have sold out almost all of the shows. We typically take about 40 riders per show. And I think we've still got out all but one, of the shows and we've had great sponsors. Vita Flex Pro has been a sponsor for a number of them. And then in the show that's currently going on, which does not close until next week, is the sponsor for the prizes it's HorseTech. So, yeah I mean that was kind of a little bit all over the place. I don't know, Lindsay, if you wanna add anything that I missed out on.
- Yeah. So we're really appreciative to all the riders who joined us in this new venture and sent us their videos and kind of put themselves out there for that experience. And then we're also really thankful to our sponsors who have provided prizes for the shows, including SmartPak,

Vita Flex Pro, Farnam, and HorseTech. We really appreciate their partnership. You know some of the things that I think are so great about the virtual shows is that, I mean if you have a horse that doesn't trailer, but you still wanna know *How competitive are they? How would a judge score their movement?* and things like that, you don't have to deal with the stress of putting them on the trailer or paying for gas or paying for stabling fees or braiding or, you don't have to dress up. We want to encourage people to come as they are. The whole point is learn. Our virtual shows aren't tied into any like larger organization. So, you can't earn points or qualifying scores but, it is such a great learning opportunity. We welcome everybody of all levels. If you want to compete, that's awesome. That's great. If you don't want to compete and you just want to get educational feedback, do that too. There's an opportunity for those riders as well. So, I like how you know in a sport that can sometimes feel exclusive or sometimes feel very extremely cost-prohibitive, I feel like this is a great way for everybody to get involved. Especially since, I think it comes out to be like what? A little more than \$25 a test I think, is that right, Jen?

- Yeah. Yeah. With the, there's like I think administrative fees but it's yeah it's under \$30 . And then the one-on-one phone call with the judge is a little over, I guess it works out to be a little over a hundred dollars, but she gives you a good solid 45 minutes on the phone where she goes through the test, movement by movement as you are both watching it together, she goes through it and then she provides you with exercises on things that, on how to improve certain parts of your tests to help you, get a better score next time. For the folks who have done it they've had rave reviews about that. So yeah, it gives everybody an opportunity to do something that, is very cost effective and then if you want something a little bit more that's there too. So yeah, it's been fun. It's been fun to host these.
- Yeah, oh and I think with Margaret's phone consultation that she has been doing—okay I wanna highlight this 'cause I feel like this is something that really would be awesome for people to take advantage of because, I mean it's basically our version of a Fix-a-Test, and I feel like it's great that you can watch the video while Margaret is talking you through it. So you can literally see what she's seeing and see how these things are being scored and I think it's great that you get this information that's really specifically tailored to your needs. And I think that that should be especially useful for you know we hear from readers and followers that, people say, "Well I live in South Dakota and I don't have a dressage trainer within a six hour drive from me," and we wanna reach those people and we want to provide resources to them and so I think doing something like this, it should be a great way for those people to still continue to progress their education, even if they have a trainer closely.
- Yep. Yep. Agreed.
- Yeah. Let's see. What else is going on in the world of dressage today? We've been launching some digital issues, that are available on https://www.dressagetoday.com. They're called Dressage Today Extras and they feature some really popular articles from our archives that are, most of the information is relevant, for riders of all levels. There's a training story and then there's a health story, typically sport horse health-related issues. Sometimes they're focused on

nutrition, or joint health or, suspensory injuries, things of that nature. We encourage our followers to check those out.

And, let's see, we always have something new rolling out with Dressage Today On Demand Videos. Jen, you wanna tell us more about what's going on there?

- Yeah. We have some really exciting things coming up. I mean obviously with COVID it was a little bit difficult because we had to, we couldn't really travel anywhere. But technology is a wonderful thing and we actually are working with a Pilates instructor, Helen Fletcher, or she actually works with equestrian specifically, and she's in Australia. She has done stuff with Dressage Today in the past and when we had the magazine, she had done some articles with us. But she is working on a series of videos for beginner, intermediate and advanced classes of Pilates that we're going to roll out on Dressage Today On Demand for subscribers. So that's pretty exciting. And then we're also going to be doing some work with Sydney Collier, a Para rider up in Massachusetts and her trainer, Katie Robicheaux. We're going to be filming a series with them this fall, as well as another series with Felicitas von Neumann-Cosel who has been a really great supporter of our new online site. She's gonna be doing some more videos with us. And then we've got some stuff lined up for this winter, hopefully down in Florida as long as COVID doesn't creep back on us again we're hopefully going to be doing some more stuff with JJ Tate and then Charlotte Dujardin and David Thind. We have an article coming out with them and hopefully we'll be following that up with a video series, and a couple other people. So we've got some things coming up for this fall and early next year that I'm really excited about.
- Yeah. That's a pretty good mix. I remember, let's see we've met Sydney and Katie down in Florida. And I also remember that Katie Robicheaux, she rode in the Dorothee Schneider clinic. She was one of the demo riders.
- Yep and I think I wanna say she rode a big, was it a Chestnut gelding?
- Chestnut, yeah.
- Anyway, I thought they were pretty stunning combination and I loved watching them. So I was like, "Oh, hurray!" "We get to do something with them for DT. That's great." And like Sydney, such a cool person. I mean she's got an amazing story and, I remember when we were visiting with them in Florida, we got to meet her horse Alle, and he is like so friendly and just a sweetheart and also like super fancy, too . So, yeah we get to work with some pretty cool people, huh?
- Yes we do. We're pretty fortunate. That's for sure.
- Yeah. In the realm of podcasts, we, well hello, we're launching season two. This is our first episode.
- Yep.

- But, let's see, I've talked to Jochen Schleese about saddle fit. That's been a topic of pretty strong interest for me lately. I mean, I feel like saddle fit is always something dressage people wanna talk about. It's always relevant especially when our training revolves so much around the horse correctly using their back and correctly moving through and over their backs. And, of course, seeing as my horse has kissing spine, saddle fit is a really super intense interest to me. It also so happens that my horse tends to be impossible to fit saddle wise because she has super high withers and she has a very forward girthing area. And then when she lifts her back, when she is working, everything just slides way far forward on her. And oh my God I've been through such saddle fitting hell with her but, anyway, I've just wanted to educate myself as much as I can about saddle fitting and everything. So that was sort of what sparked this conversation with Jochen and I felt like obviously our readers could benefit from it. I don't want our readers to feel like we're pushing a particular brand on anybody. So that was not the focus of this podcast. It was really focused around just the basics of correct saddle fitting, what are things that you should look for if you're on a budget, hello, most of us are. What are the best ways to select an economical option for your horse knowing that you still wanna buy the very best thing for them that you can. That was a pretty and interesting conversation. So we're looking forward to sharing that with you guys. Along lines of tack fitting, we had also had a great conversation with, or Jen had a great conversation with Stephanie Brown-Beamer. Do you wanna tell our listeners about that Jen?
- -I guess it was back in March, we went down to Florida and actually shot a video series with Stephanie on bits and fit fitting, bridle fitting and that it will be released this fall as well. But we also had the opportunity or I had the opportunity to sit down with Stephanie and just kind of talk to her about what she has seen and some of the trends that she has seen and what she finds works for different horses with different mouths and what has been beneficial for, horses of different breeds, that sort of thing. So that we had a really good talk with her and we'll be releasing that soon, probably this fall as well.
- Awesome. And Stephanie is such an interesting person to talk to too 'cause I feel like not only is she an equipment expert, she's also a very accomplished rider so she certainly understands the performance aspect of things. And then she also works with like, she like a huge variety of like very, very talented riders. So Stephanie took us on this little like tour of Wellington where we were talking to some of her clients and it was just like this list of like--
- That was so fun.
- Dressage superstars and I was like, "Oh, okay, this is cool."
- Yeah, yeah, yeah. And that will be, all those folks will be highlighted in the video series as well. So yeah, that was a ton of fun doing that.
- I'm trying to, who are some of the people? We talked to Lauren Sammis.

- Olivia LaGoy Weltz.
- Yeah, Yup.
- Yep. Hillary Clayton. We got to chat with her, which was really cool.
- Oh yeah. Oh yeah. That was so awesome. I feel like, we have this biomechanics, bi, that's hard to say, Biomechanics Expert, Hilary Clayton. I was like, "I feel like I'm meeting a celebrity. This is so cool."
- Yeah. Yep, yep. Yeah, that was a really fun few days that we got to spend with Stephanie. Really enlightening and just a lot of fun.
- Yeah. It was very cool. I'm also hoping to talk to a para dressage rider that we have up near me in New York. She's actually one of my barn mates. And she has a fascinating story and she's aiming for the Olympics as a Para dressage rider. And so I'm hoping to share a conversation that we have with our listeners. And we've also got some interviews from previous horse shows that we've gone to in the past that I'd like to like to share with people 'cause I think there's some interesting stories in there too. our listeners, if there's anybody that or any person or any topics that you feel really strongly about, that you would like us to address or cover, send us an email at dressagetoday@aimmedia.com or you can get in contact with us through our social media. And we wanna hear your suggestions. We want our podcasts to be a real representation of our community. So we really welcome your feedback. And if you have a story that you'd like to share with us, get in touch and maybe we could have you as a guest on our show too.
- Yeah. That would be exciting. We love getting people to give us their thoughts and ideas on who they wanna hear from. Absolutely.
- Only if your thoughts are nice. We don't wanna hear your thoughts if they're not nice.
- Be kind, right?
- Yeah, no, that's okay. We can take tough love too.
- Yeah we can. We're tough.
- Is there anything I'm forgetting Jen that we should share with?
- I can't think of anything right now. I think we've covered most of it.
- All right. Cool.

- Yeah.
- Well thanks for hopping on the phone with me and thank you to everybody who is listening to this. We can't wait to share all of our upcoming conversations with you.
- Yeah, this was a lot of fun Lindsay and I'm sorry we can't see each other in person doing this but this is fun and I'm looking forward to see.

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