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We feature a special guest on this episode and like to think Jen Mellace Dressage Today Online's content director for being a part of this episode. Thanks for being with us Jen can you tell us a little bit about your horse background and life prior to Dressage Today Online? Sure, thanks for having me! I grew up riding, my parents paid for my first ten lessons and then after that realized that this was a hobby that they couldn't afford so like most kids I became a working student. I worked every spare minute I could for lessons, so I pretty much started I guess I've been riding for close to forty years now and grew up riding mostly hunters. All through school, all through college and then the year I graduated college I bought my first horse. I graduated in May and bought my first horse in June. It didn't take long! My focus originally had been to, I wanted to go into equine management and then when I was a working student at this farm in New Jersey I spoke to a big sale barn and she said you know keep horses a hobby and find something else to do and so I chose to go to school for journalism. So that's how I ended up eventually at Dressage Today Magazine. I went to school for journalism and I had worked for actually an advertising agency that handles a lot of equine products. For number of years, I was an account executive and then went into the publishing industry outside of the equine world. I've worked for a regional publication for a number of years and Frederick, Maryland. Before eventually coming back to the industry and landing as an assistant editor with Dressage Today and I was with the magazine for a number of years and Patty Lasko was the editor and when she left, I took over as the editor. So, I had been with the magazine for ten years so wow yeah! Quite a long time and I'm sure this experience affects how you render Dressage Today Online since you at the main point of Dressage Today in the print magazine was to bring exceptional dressage content to riders. How did working on the print side help you enhance the Dressage Today Online program? For sure we've worked with a ton of experts obviously on the print side of the magazine and on a lot of various different topics that crossed over all the different levels in dressage. So, when I knew that I'd be taking over the content as content director for Dressage Today Online I called upon a lot of the knowledge that I had from working on the magazine the different content that we used in the magazine, the experts that we used in the magazine, and knew that I could pull upon all of that years of age of content that I could use for Dressage Today Online. The magazine gosh, I think it was it was going to be going into its twenty fifth year, so that's a ton of content that we had and so I knew that there was a lot there that I could draw upon and turn it into a video, take what we have done in the magazine for all those years and take what was written word and put it into video. Yeah and kind of going into the next question, Dressage Today Online is all about video! Can you explain to us what it actually is and how it helps riders? Sure, there is gosh there's more than 1,700 videos on the on [DressageTodayOnline.com](http://DressageTodayOnline.com) and a lot of those videos that have been done through the years are clinic coverage with a lot of top experts in the sport, trainers, judges, and these videos are riders at every level. So, subscribers can go in and the website is broken down by level and by, you can look by trainer by level by level, by movements so riders of any level can go into the website and choose what it is they wish to see. What we're doing now today in addition to clinic coverage, we're continuing that,

but what we're also looking to do with new content is have very specific training videos available to people. So, for instance if we have a story recently, we worked with our George Williams who is the USDF president, but also you know top trainer in the sport. We had done an article with him years ago called the kindergarten exercises, that helped people kind of the entry level dressage rider. kind of get step by step process of what they can do to work through a session in there. With their dressage horse and so we had this article that he had done years ago that was quite popular with folks what we did we went back to George and we then turned that step-by-step article into a step-by-step video and so it's a series of videos that people can come in and watch, you know part one, part two, part three, and get the information. It's basically a lesson in a video that they can watch and then go back to the barn and practice that either you know on their own or with their trainer. Well, that's a really impressive and it sounds really beneficial for riders and also seems like Dressage Today Online is really trying to be where riders need them and in a format that that's easy for riders to access. How important is it to Dressage Today Online to offer so many different streaming types and make the lessons more accessible for riders? That is the cool thing about Dressage Today Online is that folks can, if their home they can watch it on their television, they can use you know whether it's the Roku or Apple TV, whatever they have they can log into their account and watch it right on their television screen and at home in their living room. They also have access to use it on their laptop, so if they're traveling or you know are at a location where they just have their laptop, they have it there, as well as their mobile devices. So they can log in to their account on their phone or on their tablet as well, and what's really cool about the platform is that if you're watching a series of videos and you don't want to go in and try and figure out where you were in that lesson, if you're watching you know what a half an hour video, it will pause that video at home on your television and then later on you're out of the barn and you want to pick up where you left off on either a tablet or your cell phone, it picks up immediately where you are so you don't have to go searching for it which is a pretty cool feature. You also have the opportunity to save it to your favorites, so you don't have to go searching you know throughout the site, through all the videos are for something specific if you want to create a list that is, you know, your favorite trainers are your favorite videos such you've watched you have that that ability to do that. Yeah, and really allowing riders to kind of customize their own plans and to stay on track. That sounds really beneficial as a rider I would really appreciate something like that! Another great aspect is that Dressage Today Online isn't just for the elite athlete, any skilled rider can access it and then train with some of the best dressage riders and trainers in the world. Can you give us an overview on the topics and trainers available? Absolutely yeah, you're right, you don't have to be an upper-level rider to benefit from this site. It is for riders of all levels; it's you know if you're just coming into dressage or you know you're you know an event rider who just wants to you know start looking into your dressage training there's videos in there for every level. We work with trainers who are in the states, well known trainer such as Steffan Peters, we've got George Williams in there, we've got Felicitous von Neumann Cassell, Nicolas Fyffe, we've got top trainers in there. We've also got judges Janet Foy a just recently did a series with us on the 2019 dressage tests where it was a clinic or symposium that she did, but we were able to film, you know, each level so she went started at training level and went all the way through our fourth level discussing the various tests and the changes for the new tests and help the riders ride through each of the movements and gave them you know expert advice. So, we've got folks like that on there. We talk about, there's a section there for young horses, so if we have somebody that's working with young horses they can go in and pull up information about how to work with a young horse you know either in hand or under saddle for starting a young horse. We are also the other nice thing that we have available is we are partners

with USDF, and we have a special section for USDF where if they need credits for their on-going training, they can get that through Dressage Today Online. So that's another really neat feature that we offer. Well yeah that's a great resource and yet you get to work with all these incredible riders and trainers. What is it like to you to interact with the pros like that and how do you select who and what gets featured? Sure yeah, it's you know it is a lot of fun. With the magazine, I definitely had the opportunity to work with some of these people, but typically it was remotely because we worked with a lot of riders who would work do the story with the trainer or we would work through email or phone calls and now that we're doing video it's actually it's quite fun for us because we get to be on site with them and collaborate with them on these videos that are articles that we have done with them in the past that we are now turning into training videos and it's a really neat experience. So far, we have done our most recent new releases we did a series on the training scale with Felicitous von Neumann Cassell. I mentioned that we had gone back done a story with George Williams, I'm sorry a video series based on a story from George Williams. We have some new releases coming out actually within the next few weeks with David Marcus and Nicolas Fyffe of Marcus Fyffe dressage. They have both been contributors to the magazine over the years and now we were able to work with them on doing the videos as well. Susan von Dietz who is has been a long time contributor to Dressage Today for our clinic series which actually why and Dressage Today Magazine went away some of our content was put into Practical Horseman magazine and the clinic series with Susan von Dietz was one of those that was so well loved that Practical Horseman now has that so we've gone ahead and done some video with Susan so once again taking what has always been the written word and putting it into video so people can actually see the trainer work with riders or actually ride. I think it really helps give people another part of the story. You know it's one thing to see it in words and to see still pictures but then to put it into a video where somebody can actually watch the nuances of a ride and hear how a trainer step by step is helping somebody through a problem or you know work on a new movement, whether it's you know a grand prix movement or just a very basic, you know introductory dressage movement I think it's just really beneficial to people to see it in moving pictures verses a still. Absolutely! I hope that answered the question! That was that was a great answer and I know that I appreciate watching videos and learning from them and it also just helps you relate a little bit more to that trainer or that rider and you're all riders at the end of the day, so I think that's really neat. You mentioned you're adding a lot of new content and that the ever-growing video library, but there's also a couple of really interesting and neat customer care parks that I saw on the Dressage Today Online site. Especially that custom playlists, can you can you give us a little bit of information on that custom play list? Yeah, I so we have a basically a concierge person who, Crystal Forsyth, who is a dressage trainer herself and she is our customer care person who is able to put together a custom playlist based on what a subscriber is looking for. So if you subscribe today and you're a first level rider and you don't have time to go through the entire library of videos that we have and you are working on something very specific or have a trainer that you want to learn from we have you know everything broken down by trainer by level if you want somebody to help guide you to very specific videos that's what still can do she can put together a very custom play list based on your wishes and send that directly to you it was so you basically she takes care of the leg work for you based on your wants and needs of what you're looking for. So, it's a pretty cool feature and Crystal is wonderful. That sounds awesome I want to try that and what other benefits can members expect when they join Dressage Today Online? We are releasing new videos every week so they can anticipate having new footage every week. We offer a newsletter that folks can sign up for which addresses the new releases and in addition to that it gives, it provides an archive of all the articles that

we've done over the twenty-five years, almost twenty-five years that we were being published. We have all those articles available to subscribers and so each week when we do the newsletter, which releases the new video series, whichever series it is we also tie in some of the articles that we have done not only in the past but articles that we are continuing to create because we're continuing to still create new content. So, we are providing subscribers with that content in the written word as well as a video and they'll start to see you know what we are doing is combining the connection we're making the connection between the video and the written articles so you can get a real full look at a specific movement or a specific level or whatever it is that we're releasing that week. In addition, we send out another release on Fridays we kind of go back into our video archives and we kind of do like a flashback Friday and pull from some of the really fun videos that have been really popular on Dressage Today Online over the years so it's pulling up old older footage that might have you know been forgotten or you know somebody hasn't seen that's new to Dressage Today Online, we're rereleasing those videos as well. You know if there's anything that anybody ever wants to learn about or has questions or if they want to see something a different trainer or something that we haven't done on the site, we are always open to suggestions so folks can either contact Crystal or certainly contact me directly if they have any thoughts on what they'd like to see. We're definitely open to that, we have a really vibrant social media presence as well you know on Facebook and Instagram, so we connect with people they are and love to hear from people about what they want to see.

Can you give us any insight on who or what topics might be coming next for Dressage Today online? We have already done some filming, I believe I had mentioned earlier with Nicolas Fyffe, David Marcus, we have a bunch of new stuff from Susan van Dietz that we're going to be releasing in the coming months. We also are going to be working with Charles De Cumffy he's going to be doing a clinic. He's going to be new to the site so we don't have any footage or any coverage from Charles, so he has agreed to work with us and we're going to be doing some filming of some of his clinic, so we're really excited about that. Another new person coming to the site we are going to be filming Dorothee Schneider, she's a German Olympian who is going to be doing her very first symposium in the United States in October and we will be covering that so that will be coming soon. As well we're going to be doing a biting video in the coming months and we're also working with our Beth Bommer who was Dressage Today's technical editor for years and years. She has published a book and we are going to be doing some of putting some of her book into video, so that's really exciting. We started filming some of that with Beth over and when we were down in Florida this past winter and we're going to be continuing that as well. We have some we have some really exciting things lined up! Yeah I'll say quite the full plate it's really cool though and you're keeping it relevant in keeping adding new content is ideal! So that's all I have Jen was there anything else that you wanted to talk about? I don't think so I'm just really excited to be part of your podcast and I hope that people will come check us out! We're really excited about all the new content and just love to hear from people so thank you so much.

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