



Charlotte Bredahl-Baker

Dressage Rider, Olympian, Trainer and Judge

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Family: Married to Joel Baker and one son, Zachary - Foster Parents and Mentors to several other children.

Birthdate: 4-21-57

Profession: Dressage Rider, Trainer, Breeder, 'S' Judge and Real Estate

Agent (Specializing in horse properties in the Santa Ynez Valley.)

Discipline: Dressage

Country: USA

[Accomplishments](#)

For a young woman who first came to America from Denmark with no job, very little English, and just a dream, Charlotte has come a long way. A member of the bronze-medal winning 1992 U.S. Olympic Dressage Team, Charlotte Bredahl-Baker has shown great success as a competitive rider and as a breeder, trainer and dressage teacher. She is also a highly respected "S" judge and coach of young riders. But the life she shares with her husband Joel Baker and son Zachary is much more than horses.



Charlotte Bredahl-Baker

by By Lynndee Kemmet for
Horsesdaily.com

Charlotte's Life with Horses

She arrived in California from her native Denmark in 1979. While she had ridden since she was eight – mostly jumpers and trotters – she came to America with no job awaiting her. She got her start when she attended a lecture by Olympic dressage rider Hilda Gurney and she asked Gurney for help finding a job working with horses. The query led to a long-term friendship. Gurney not only helped Charlotte find a job but later helped her train her Olympic partner, Monsieur.

Charlotte's first horse-related job in the U.S. was at Bell Canyon Equestrian Center located just outside of Los Angeles. It was an unpaid one that didn't even give her the chance to ride, but her horse skills and work ethic soon earned her respect. The turnaround in her equestrian career came when a wealthy boarder at the barn offered to pay her to groom and ride horses. The offer not only gave Charlotte the chance to ride but to be seen in the saddle. Other horse owners at the barn quickly became aware of Charlotte's talent and her American career was launched.

Charlotte became both an instructor and manager at the equestrian center. She also managed the facility's dressage shows. As her talent became more recognized, opportunities followed and Charlotte eventually developed a successful career as a full-time trainer and competitor. She also showed a talent for business and wisely formed partnerships with people who would finance the purchase of horses, mostly from Europe, that she would then train and compete for resale. Monsieur was one of those horses, but once under Charlotte's care, Monsieur decided he'd found his person and refused to be sold by becoming a "difficult ride" for any potential buyer.

Unable to sell him, Charlotte felt guilty about making her partner pay Monsieur's costs, so she did it herself despite the financial struggle. It turned out to be a wise investment in her competitive future as Monsieur took her to the top of the competitive world – the 1992 Barcelona Olympics. In 1991, 1992 and 1993 Charlotte received USET grants to train and compete in Europe.

In the years following her European tours, Charlotte climbed back up the competitive ladder with another star she had bought through a partnership – Lugano. She had started Lugano as a four-year-old and in 1996, he had the distinction of being undefeated at Intermediaire I. By 1997, he was a successful Grand Prix horse and he and Charlotte earned a spot on the silver-medal winning U.S. Team at the North American Championships that year.

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It's a Busy Life on the Ranch

Monsieur is now happily retired on the 50-acre ranch owned by Charlotte and her husband. And it's there at the ranch – the Circle JB Polo Ranch located in the beautiful Santa Ynez Valley north of Santa Barbara – that Charlotte and Joel can be found when not making the rounds of the show circuit. The couple began dating in 1994 and they married in 1998. Now, along with a shared love for horses, share their love for their adopted son Zachary, a wonderful teenager with a passion for tennis.



At the ranch, Charlotte is busy with her horses and her many businesses, which includes not only Bredahl Dressage but also her real estate business. She earned her real estate license in 1989 and specializes in horse properties. Charlotte got into real estate because she believed it was important to have a career to fall back on, other than horses, but she has come to love her second career. Charlotte lives in California's beautiful Santa Ynez and loves showing off the valley's wonderful horse properties to potential buyers. She also just enjoys doing something that is different from horses and challenging in a another way.

While Charlotte is busy with her activities, Joel is busy with his work as a financial advisor and devotes hours to polo. He is a rated U.S. polo player and breeds and trains many of his polo ponies right on the ranch. Joel was a member of the U.S. Ski Team and grew up around Southern California's Will Rogers Polo Club. He started off working barns to finance his skiing but soon discovered a passion for the horses that remains to this day.

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Breeding Successes

In recent years, Charlotte has also become involved in breeding and has had some excellent results. She bought her first stallion—a black, 17-hand Hanoverian named Windfall CB — in Denmark and imported him in 2000. She had been looking for a 3-year-old gelding but a friend told her of a 5-year-old stallion. She went to look and it was love at first sight.



Windfall, who is out of St Pr St Fergie by Weltmeyer, was the 2001 USDF Third Level Horse of the Year with a median score of 72 percent. In 2002, he was the Hanoverian Horse of the Year at Fourth Level. Also in 2002, he was approved as a breeding stallion by the American Hanoverian Society. He has also been approved by the ISR, the Oldenburg Verband and the Rheinland-Pfalz-Saar. In 2004, he was named the USDF Horse of the Year in Intermediaire I with a median score of 71 percent. He was also named AHS High Score of FEI that year. He has turned out to be an extremely successful breeding stallion.

Charlotte owns two of Windfall's offspring herself. One is a six-year-old mare that was top mare at the Hanoverian Inspection in 2004 where she scored a nine on her walk and an eight on her

trot. In 2005, she won the Hanoverian Mare Performance test by scoring an eight on rideability and a nine on jumping ability. Charlotte also owns a two-year-old gelding for which she has great expectations. In general, Windfall throws fantastic temperaments with strong toplines and beautiful heads as well as lots of suspension.

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Busy Being Back in the Show Ring

Windfall drew Charlotte back to the show ring, and her successes with the talented stallion were quickly followed by successes with Eskada, a 9-year-old Dutch Warmblood gelding she owns in partnership with Sayoko Nakatani of Japan. At the 2005 California Dressage Championships, Charlotte and Eskada garnered three championship wins – two at Prix St. Georges and one at Intermediaire with scores in the 70s. In 2005 Eskada was also named USDF Horse of the year at 4th level.

That same year, Charlotte took over the ride on the late Carol Plough's Dutch Warmblood gelding Komo. With the 14-year-old Komo, owned by Kathy and Tom Pavlich of Highland, Calif., Charlotte rode away with four Grand Prix championships at the 2005 California Dressage Championships, earning three scores in the upper 60s and a 74.31 percent.



With such a successful record, Charlotte decided to hit the show circuit big time for the winter of 2006. She and her husband, Joel Baker, packed up their son Zach, Charlotte's horses and the family dog and headed off to the Florida circuit. The family had a fantastic time in Wellington.

Dressage, show jumping and polo competitions were within a five minute drive. Hence, Joel could help Charlotte with dressage shows in the morning and then travel down the street to spend the rest of the day watching some of the best polo in the world.

photo credit: susanjstickle.com

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Success in Florida and Future Plans

During the 2006 Florida circuit, both Komo and Eskada performed very well and made it onto the top twelve list for the National Dressage Championships at Grand Prix and Intermediaire I respectively. At one Wellington show, Eskada won the Intermediaire I and was second in the Prix St. Georges.

At another show, while competing in the USEF high performance classes, Komo was third in the Grand Prix and second in the Grand Prix Special where he was only one-tenth of a percentage from winners Tuny Page and Wild One. These successes were achieved amid serious competition. Many classes had as many as 40 competitors.

Charlotte and Komo were ranked 5th for the USET Grand Prix Championship at Gladstone, but because of a minor injury to Komo, they were not able to compete.



Komo will be back in work in the beginning of July. Eskada was ranked 8th on the USET Intermediaire 1 list, but Charlotte decided not to go, because of the expense of flying a horse to the East Coast.

Last year Eskada did well in Gladstone and he is working towards Grand Prix this year, but not ready to show at that level.

Charlotte would like to try out for the World Cup in Las Vegas next year with Komo and hopefully start Eskada showing Grand Prix at the smaller shows.

Bredahl-Baker also shares her knowledge and experience with Young Riders. In 2004, the U.S. Dressage Foundation asked her to serve as chaperone for the four young riders who earned a trip to Europe to train with top European-based dressage trainers, including Klaus Balkenhol.



She also served as chef d'équipe for the top 12 junior riders at the National Championships at Devonwood, Oregon in 2002 and Pebble Beach, California, in 2004, and has recently been asked by the USEF to once again be the chef d'équipe for this prestigious competition to be held in Pebble Beach California.



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Making a Difference

Along with her competing, training, teaching and breeding, Charlotte finds time to pack in other activities. In her "spare" time she enjoys tennis and her passion for ballroom dancing. For about two years, Charlotte owned and operated a ballroom dance studio. Unfortunately she couldn't find anybody to manage it, and decided to close it down. There are only so many hours in the day. Charlotte is also a Big Sister and mentor to several children.

"I think there is nothing more rewarding than to know you have made a difference in somebody's life, especially a child," Charlotte said of her mentoring work. "I encourage all other horse people to mentor a child. Even just spending time with a child two-to-four times a month can make a profound difference in that child's life. Our son Zachary came to us as a foster child through our local social services and eventually we became guardians. I also have mentored a wonderful girl, now 10, since she was 5 years old. She lost her mom before I met her and lives with her grandparents."

More recently Charlotte got involved in an Inner City riding program in Compton, Los Angeles. She met a wonderful lady named Mayisha Akbar, who bought a small horse property in the middle of the city and started this program. She now has 15 donated horses and around 25 kids, who come and ride for free.

Charlotte went to visit and after watching the program for an afternoon, decided to get involved. June 10-11 she invited Mayisha and her volunteers to bring 8 teenagers and three horses for a weekend at her and Joel's ranch. Charlotte did some demonstrations on her horses and then taught all 8 teenagers both days. They had spent a lot of time on bare back pads and had good seats. Charlotte and Joel put everybody up at a motel down the street and friends of Charlotte's hosted a BBQ. It was a great weekend and the kids were very appreciative.



More kids will be back the weekend of July 22. Charlotte is encouraging those in the equestrian community to get involved. "If anybody wants to get involved or help out with the horse expenses (non profit 501c3), please call me, and visit their website [Compton Junior Posse](#). It is a great program and gives the kids an alternative to gangs."

Despite her tremendous success in the world of dressage, Charlotte remains philosophical about it all and admits that as passionate as she is about dressage, she doesn't let it overwhelm her life. Her broad interests are what make her such a fascinating person.

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Charlotte's Favorites

Favorite drink: Ice blended Java Chip Frappucino

Favorite food: Salads and chocolate

Favorite vacation place: Wellington , Florida and Barbados

#1 priority in life: Family, friends and pets (horses and dogs)

Hobbies: Playing tennis with my husband and son (2-3 evenings a week on our ranch tennis court) and ballroom dancing, whenever possible.

Other pastimes: Spending time with the kids I am mentoring and playing with my dogs Rocko and Bandit. Meeting my girlfriends at the local coffee house.

Favorite characteristic in friends: Integrity and loyalty.



My Supportive Owners and Partners:

Sue Veley and I have been friends for more years than I can remember and we've owned several horses in partnership. At the moment we own **Windfall CB**, a very successful performance horse as well as a great breeding stallion. We also own his offspring **Victoria**, a 7-year-old mare (winner of the AHS mare performance test last fall).

Sayoko Nakatani and I co-own the 9-year-old Dutch Warmblood gelding **Eskada** together. We started out as client and trainer and now are the best of friends. The plan is to take Eskada as far as he can go, which we believe will be Grand Prix. Thus far, he's been very successful at Intermediaire I.

Kathy Pavlich and I have been friends for many years and I now ride her wonderful Grand Prix horse **Komo**, formerly ridden by the late Carol Plough. I also really enjoy teaching Kathy on her other talented horses.

I am so incredibly lucky to have not only wonderful horses, but also the best of owners.

They are true friends and they understand the risk involved when you have horses. They are also very encouraging and positive and never put any pressure on me.

We have so much fun at the shows together.

Last but not least, my very supportive husband **Joel Baker**. Being a horse man himself, he really understands the commitment it takes to compete at this level. He also understands it is a way of living, not just a hobby or career.

I would also like to thank my sponsors:

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Superior Saddlery has supplied me with wonderful custom-made saddles. They are so comfortable. Whenever somebody gets on one of my horses, they always comment about how comfortable my saddles are. The owner is Paul Selvey.

I have been feeding Platinum Performance to my horses for many years now and have been very happy with the results. At 24 years old, my retired Olympic horse Monsieur still looks great with a very healthy coat. That also goes for my two-year-old Westpoint and my competition horses Komo and Eskada. You can find out more on www.platinumperformance.com.

By Lynndee Kemmet

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