

Graves Raises The U.S. Flag In Aachen

She becomes only the fourth American dressage rider to win at the historic German venue.

BY KIMBERLY LOUSHIN
PHOTO BY SHANNON K. BRINKMAN



Laura Graves had a spectacular 30th birthday when she won the Grand Prix Special on Verdades to help the U.S. team take silver in the Nations Cup at the CHIO Aachen.

The last time Laura Graves competed in the Nations Cup at the CHIO Aachen she was the de facto underdog as the least experienced member of the U.S. team. But she's no longer the starry-eyed rookie she was in 2014; this year she came to win. And win she did.

On July 22, Graves and Verdades turned in an 88.82 percent in the CDIO Grand Prix Special to win over current World No. 1 Isabell Werth aboard Weibgold OLD. That score was enough to hold the U.S. team (Graves, Adrienne Lyle and Salvino, Kasey Perry-Glass and Goertlingaards Dublet and Olivia LaGoy-

Weltz on Lonnor) to silver in the Nations Cup competition behind Germany.

"It's funny to look back," Graves said of her first Aachen. "It doesn't seem that long ago, but it's a different level of confidence. In 2014, I was just really still trying to get my feet wet in this international Grand Prix ring, and there was a large amount of innocence. Now, going into this year, I felt a lot more confident."

She said the rivalry between her and Werth wasn't something she focused on but was more played up by the media.

"It was just a feeling that it's very possible [to beat her] and that I do have a great horse, and I can show everybody that," Graves said. "This is a perfect opportunity seeing as it's Aachen—there's no better venue to showcase what you have for a horse."

Though Graves, Oviedo, Fla., anchored the U.S. team to a bronze medal and finished fourth in the freestyle at the 2016 Olympic Games (Brazil), it wasn't until the FEI World Cup Dressage Final in Omaha, Neb., this spring, when she finished second to Werth, that she began to believe she had a shot at beating her. Riding around the practice session alongside Werth and Weibgold gave her the opportunity to compare her 15-year-old Dutch Warmblood (Florett AS—Liwilarda, Goya) to the German pair firsthand.

"It made it very clear to me, watching our horses next to each other, they're a little bit opposite," said Graves. "The things that her horse does very well are maybe the things where my horse is weak and vice versa. It made me think, 'Well she can get 9s there, but I can get a 9 where she gets a 7.' Comparing the horses directly next to each other in the same arena really opened up my eyes to the fact that there's no reason I can't win."

While any win at the Aachen venue is memorable, Graves' victory is especially sweet as it landed on her 30th birthday.

"It was kind of funny because everybody had been joking about it, and you just think, 'OK, OK, wouldn't that be amazing?'" but it's probably never going to happen," said Graves. "It was really pretty unbelievable. It's something that I've known this horse is totally capable of, and my team behind me, we watch this horse work every day, and we say he can do it. He is as good as or better

than any horse in the world, and sure enough it was his day."

This marked the first time in eight years that the "Star Spangled Banner" has played over the Deutsche Bank Stadium. Only three other U.S. pairs have achieved victory in Aachen. Patricia Galvin was the first to do so in 1960 aboard Rath Patrick. Current U.S. Dressage Chef d'Equipe Robert Dover edged out the reigning Olympic champion Reiner Klimke to win the freestyle on Federleicht in 1987. Then

Steffen Peters and Ravel scored a hat trick of Grand Prix wins to earn the 2009 Dressage Champion of Aachen title.

"It showed the strength of our programs and of our riders and our horses," said Dover of the fourth U.S. title. "I think the fact that she beat the No. 1 combination in the world shows that the door is open for her to do it again. I think that it could not be greater, and I know she's so happy and proud, and I'm that proud of her."

Dover has used the off year

AACHEN CDIO^{*****} Aachen, Germany—July 19-23

GRAND PRIX

Judges: E. Ana Grillasso (USA); E. Susan Howson (AUS); H. Hans-Christoph Matthies (GER); C. Isabel Woods (GBR); M. Frenck-Boecklin Bay (GER); B. El Becharif (GBR); F. Annette Frenck-Boecklin (SWE)

HORSE, RIDER/NATION	K	E	H	C	M	B	F	TOTAL
1. Weibgold OLD/Isabell Werth/GER	81.80	81.00	85.40	84.70	85.00	82.90	81.50	80.17
2. Verdades/Laura Graves/USA	82.00	79.90	82.20	80.80	76.80	77.30	82.50	79.52
3. Casara SR/Nicole Rötzelberger/GER	78.40	77.80	80.60	78.70	80.10	78.20	76.40	78.78
4. Athanagoras Cassidy/Cathleen Duhaes/GER	76.10	77.00	81.00	75.20	78.70	76.90	77.10	77.41
5. Vancoveen K/Judy Reynolds/IRE	78.20	74.40	77.20	78.40	75.20	76.20	76.60	75.25
6. Delmaray/Patrick Kintel/SWE	78.20	74.50	73.50	73.50	73.70	74.00	75.40	74.68

Also competed: 7. Samany Davis Jr./G. Schaefer/GER, 74.52; 8. Deep Impact II/S. Jurek Lopez/ESP, 73.97; 9. Kallitri C. Cavilla Rolo/ESP, 72.55; 10. Torno I. Yurbing/GER, 72.04; 11. Zippo P. Van Der Ploeg/NEZ, 72.41; 12. Jajo 82/B. Thigge/GER, 72.05; 13. Savino A. Lyle/USA, 71.82; 14. Lennix D. LaFoy-Holt/USA, 71.32; 15. Ingrid 3/4. Schmidt/GER, 71.17; 16. Emano Wellito OLD/T. Niblagan/SWE, 71.05; 17. Lollipop 128/E. Faurie/GER, 71.11; 18. Mitan X/I. Mielke/GER, 71.12; 19. Blue Hors Dax Olymbia G. Bachelman/ANDORRA, 69.74; 20. Savino A. Lyle/USA, 69.37; 21. Goeftingquards Sotela K. Perry-Glass/USA, 68.82; 22. Seltis HR/A. Dahl/GER, 68.88; 23. FE Bruga G. Rose/WEL, 68.88; 24. Blue Hors Dax Olymbia G. Bachelman/ANDORRA, 68.81; 25. Alfonso G. Davison/GER, 68.57; 26. Zingara Apple/M. Van Der Ploeg/NEZ, 67.87; 27. Margo Stoteman/I. Domingo Coll/ESP, 67.64; 28. Dobano D'24/G. Hoare/WEL, 67.62; 29. Glavole II De Lanby/C. Belmonte/ESP, 67.31; 30. Catch Me/Th. Timmermans/WEL, 65.52; 31. Royal Publicity/D. Engelen/BEL, 64.44; 32. Ravel R./J. Ravel/SWE, 63.22.

GRAND PRIX SPECIAL

Judges: E. Mouton; E. Becharif; C. Grillasso; M. Frenck-Boecklin; E. Matthies

HORSE, RIDER/NATION	E	H	C	M	B	TOTAL
1. Verdades/Laura Graves/USA	81.50	80.50	84.50	79.51	82.43	81.82
2. Weibgold OLD/Isabell Werth/GER	77.40	83.97	85.00	78.82	82.35	80.65
3. Casara SR/Nicole Rötzelberger/GER	78.11	77.84	77.35	78.52	78.72	78.51
4. Athanagoras Cassidy/Cathleen Duhaes/GER	80.38	76.37	77.25	77.15	79.41	78.11
5. Vancoveen K/Judy Reynolds/IRE	76.88	76.86	74.60	75.40	75.00	75.78
6. Samany Davis Jr./Gorath Schaefer/GER	76.94	77.05	72.15	73.72	76.17	75.11

Also competed: 7. Davis Wellito OLD/T. Niblagan/SWE, 74.71; 8. Delmaray/P. Kintel/SWE, 74.15; 9. Salvino A. Lyle/USA, 73.61; 10. Moulton C. Cavilla Rolo/ESP, 72.56; 11. Blue Hors Dax Olymbia G. Bachelman/ANDORRA, 72.28; 12. Lennix D. LaFoy-Holt/USA, 72.12; 13. Goeftingquards Sotela K. Perry-Glass/USA, 71.00; 14. Deep Impact II/S. Jurek Lopez/ESP, 71.56; 15. Zippo P. Van Der Ploeg/NEZ, 71.31; 16. Lollipop 128/E. Faurie/GER, 70.70; 17. Savino A. Lyle/USA, 70.30; 18. Jajo 82/B. Thigge/GER, 70.25; 19. Ingrid 3/4. Schmidt/GER, 69.45; 20. Rabin M/A. Wolow-Graessner/GER, 69.29; 21. Seltis HR/A. Dahl/GER, 69.25; 22. FE Bruga G. Rose/WEL, 69.07; 23. Mitan X/I. Mielke/GER, 68.26; 24. Blue Hors Dax Olymbia G. Bachelman/ANDORRA, 68.27; 25. Margo Stoteman/I. Domingo Coll/ESP, 67.92; 26. Torno I. Yurbing/GER, 67.33; 27. Glavole II De Lanby/C. Belmonte/ESP, 66.25; 28. Alfonso G. Davison/GER, 64.88; 29. Dobano D'24/G. Hoare/WEL, 63.59; 30. Zingara Apple/M. Van Der Ploeg/NEZ, 62.22.

► **GRAND PRIX
FREESTYLE**

Judges: E: Franck Leclercq; H: Hoenes; C: Gieseler; M: Verbeek-Van Ros; B: Gribbons

HORSE/RIDER/NATION	E	H	C	M	B	TOTAL
1. Wellgold OLD/Isabel North/GER	84.25/ 92.00	86.25/ 96.00	85.50/ 95.00	84.25/ 94.00	83.00/ 94.00	89.67
2. Cosma 58/Sinka Rothemburger/GER	84.75/ 90.00	82.00/ 96.00	81.25/ 96.00	82.25/ 95.00	77.25/ 86.00	85.76
3. Mercedes/Laura Graver/USA	80.50/ 87.00	79.00/ 84.00	80.75/ 85.00	78.75/ 84.00	80.00/ 87.00	82.55
4. Atteruggards Cassidy/Corinne Darsox/DEN	78.75/ 85.00	82.50/ 88.00	78.75/ 84.00	79.75/ 86.00	73.50/ 84.00	81.62
5. Dante Mollis OLD/Therese Nihlgren/SWE	78.75/ 83.00	75.50/ 82.00	77.50/ 82.00	76.50/ 83.00	76.50/ 84.00	79.87
6. DeLaney/Patrick Nittel/SWE	74.75/ 81.00	74.25/ 80.00	75.75/ 81.00	74.25/ 81.00	73.50/ 81.00	77.65

Also competed: 7. Vite course R./J. Reynolds/IRE, 75.52; 8. Alonzo/C. Castillo Ruiz/ESP, 75.80; 9. GerdHilggards Dukat/K. Perry-Glass/USA, 75.50; 10. Zippo/P. Van Der Meer/NED, 75.30; 11. Sammy Davis Jr./D. Scholtes/GER, 75.00; 12. Loralie/D. LaBoy-Waltz/USA, 74.40; 13. Sonjara Wallberg/M. Kärne/SWE, 73.20; 14. Jojo 42/R. Nils Thielgaard/DEN, 72.77; 15. Röhle Nils/M. Wilson-Greaves/GBR, 72.77; 16. Ben-Am/Th. Nilsson/SWE, 72.45; 17. Lullpop 120/E. Fauré/GER, 71.30; 18. Deep Impact 3/R. Jarade Lopez/ESP, 71.30.

Scoring: Technical/Artistic

as a building opportunity for the U.S. team, which has had close to 20 horse-and-rider combinations competing in Europe throughout the summer. His goal is to broaden the pool to choose from for the FEI World Equestrian Games in Tryon, N.C., next September.

"I think that the dressage community has seen a lot of new horses and a lot of new faces and riders this season from America, and they've definitely taken notice of it," said Dover. "I've gotten a lot of great comments from people. Our No. 1 goal is to keep building depth with great combinations that can score between 75 and 80, and above." 🐾

LAMBERTZ NATIONS CUP CDI*

Aachen, Germany—July 20

TEAM	GP	GRS	TOTAL
1. GERMANY			
Sarany Davis Jr./Dorothée Schneider	76.52	75.24	
Ingeborg S./Hubertus Schmidt	(71.37)	(69.49)	
Cosma 58/Sinka Rothemburger	78.75	78.31	
Wellgold OLD/Isabel North	84.27	81.05	471.04
2. UNITED STATES			
Sandra/Adrienne Cyle	71.81	71.60	
GerdHilggards Dukat/Karen Perry-Glass	(64.92)	(71.60)	
Loralie/Diane LaBoy-Waltz	71.51	72.11	
Verbeek/Laura Graver	78.51	81.80	450.39
3. SWEDEN			
Ben-Am/Maria Nilsson	73.65	72.29	
Burjel R.H./Juliette Rammal	(63.22)	(—)	
Dante Mollis OLD/Therese Nihlgren	71.85	74.78	
DeLaney/Patrick Nittel	74.68	74.15	437.63

Also competed: 4. Demoski/Elisabeth Oer Ojvindsdotter/GER, 69.80; 5. Dorothea/Andreas Holter/GER, 69.80; 6. Jojo 42/R. Nils Thielgaard/DEN, 69.80; 7. Sonjara Wallberg/M. Kärne/SWE, 69.80; 8. Lullpop 120/E. Fauré/GER, 69.80; 9. GerdHilggards Dukat/Karen Perry-Glass/USA, 69.80; 10. Lullpop 120/E. Fauré/GER, 69.80; 11. Lullpop 120/E. Fauré/GER, 69.80; 12. Lullpop 120/E. Fauré/GER, 69.80; 13. Lullpop 120/E. Fauré/GER, 69.80; 14. Lullpop 120/E. Fauré/GER, 69.80; 15. Lullpop 120/E. Fauré/GER, 69.80; 16. Lullpop 120/E. Fauré/GER, 69.80; 17. Lullpop 120/E. Fauré/GER, 69.80; 18. Lullpop 120/E. Fauré/GER, 69.80; 19. Lullpop 120/E. Fauré/GER, 69.80; 20. Lullpop 120/E. Fauré/GER, 69.80.

Did not qualify for the Grand Prix Special: The Netherlands/Corine M. Thiermann, Doreen Apple/M. Van Der Pijl, Gabor/Dora J. Hazon, Oppo/P. Van Der Meer, Sigrun/Paul Rühli, G. Engelen, R. Ruge/L. Ross, Tessa/J. Veenling.



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