

# Truett's Dreams Come True At U.S. Dressage Finals

The professional rides reformed wild child Absolute Dream to a national championship win.

Story And Photos By **Lindsay Berreth**

**A**bsolute Dream has been called a lot of things over the years that he's been with Jennifer Truett—Rocket Gumby, Electric Noodle, an enigma, just to name a few—due to his unique personality and huge amount of power, but at this year's U.S. Dressage Finals, he got to be called champion.

The gelding and Truett earned their first national championship win at the U.S. Dressage Finals, held Nov. 10-13 in Lexington, Kentucky, when they topped the open Intermediaire I division (72.79%).

"I'm just thrilled," said Truett. "We had a warm-up test [Thursday, and] we only got a 62 because he was scared.

We basically just said, 'OK, let's just go as big and bold as we could,' and I just wanted to give him a lot of confidence and praise him and tell him he's a good boy and really give him a place to go because he got backed off in his test of choice class. He was just amazing. That was the best feeling I've ever had from him.

"I'm so excited and so proud of him," she added. "He was so brave in [the Alltech Arena]. It's so much of an environment to take in. The class was huge and super competitive, and he's young. Regionals was his first win. He's always been the bridesmaid, never the bride."

Truett grew up riding Quarter Horses in reining and barrel racing and driving them. As a teen, she tried eventing and eventually moved on to Thoroughbreds. After seeing the Roemer Breyer horse, she tried dressage and was hooked.

Truett, who has a degree in psychology and a masters in criminal justice research, is a professional trainer now at her Dancing Horse Farm, but that wasn't always her job. Early in her career she started a consulting company working with the domestic violence division

of the Dayton Police Department (Ohio) where she tracked domestic violence incidents from initial offense to prosecution. Her company was eventually taken over by a larger corporation, and she and her husband, Lenny Truett, moved to Washington, District of Columbia, where she worked on Capitol Hill with members of Congress and senators to

help start a semiconductor facility in Utah.

"The opportunity came along where I could stop doing that full time and devote full-time attention to running a business as a trainer," she said. "I always told the guys that owned that company that I'm only going to work here as long as it takes me to learn how to run my training business like a business. So often I've seen over the years that it's like a mom-and-pop kind of thing, and people do things under the table and don't pay their taxes, and horses and clients suffer. I didn't want to have a business like that. My husband, with his top secret clearance, we couldn't do anything under the table. I learned about marketing and how to run a company and manage people."

The couple bought a farm in Lebanon, Ohio, and they've slowly renovated and improved it for the last 13 years.

*That was the best feeling I've ever had from him."*

—Jennifer Truett



Jennifer Truett won her first championship at U.S. Dressage Finals when she topped the open Intermediaire I with Absolute Dream.

"It's a dream," she said. "This farm is wonderful. It's old. We keep having to replace stuff. We've been improving it as we go. It's been great. It feels like I've lived a couple of different lifetimes with different careers and jobs."

Jennifer found "Dreamy" in 2016 as her former top horse, Lafayette HQ, was heading into retirement. The gelding had done his 2-year-old stallion testing and was quite naughty, so his owners had recently gelded him.

"He just moved like a cat and was just the most balanced young horse I'd ever seen," she said. But Dreamy also had a wild side. "He threw one of the handlers into the wall and was standing on his back legs, just being crazy. I'm like, 'It's gotta be the testosterone still coursing through his veins!'" she said with a laugh.

Dreamy was imported to Florida during the winter season, and Jennifer was second-guessing her choice at times.



Bobby Covington and Carlson won the adult amateur second level freestyle championship at U.S. Dressage Finals.

"He was really crazy," she said. "I was so excited to walk him from the barn to the arena, which was like 40 feet away, and he was a kite. I thought, 'Oh my God, what have I done?' He was not easy to start. In fact, there were a lot of classes we didn't make it in to because I had to scratch to longe him.

"He's still super hot. He's highly intelligent and just an incredible personality," she continued. "He's a total comedian. By 6, I'd say he was fairly reliably showable without me having to longe him for at least an hour. He would be just wild on the longe line. It didn't matter what I did; he was just going to be crazy to show. That's why he only started the young horse stuff at 6."

For the first few years, Jennifer and her trainer, Olivia LaGo-Weytzy, called Dreamy an electric noodle and a rocket Gummy.

"Basically there was no steering but tons of power and energy," she said. "We were just going to go forward, but I'd have to hang on. Now she calls him an enigma. When

he gets a little behind my leg, she came up with this week that he's a constipated eel. He'll just be blasting around and then suddenly stop, then go blasting and then stop. He's amazing. She said she's never had a horse like him to work with. He's so electric and so powerful, and he loves doing it, but he's also very emotional. He's always 100 percent into giving his all, but sometimes his all is way more than I can manage. He's a very cool horse for the future, for sure."

Jennifer, 48, is hoping to compete the 8-year-old Westphalian (All At Once—Fiona, Fuerst Piccolo) at the developing Grand Prix and Intermediaire II levels in 2023.

### THE PERFECT PAIR

For most of his riding career, Bobby Covington was all in on eventing. His mother, Bobbie Covington, bred Trakehners, and his father, Dan Prechtel, bred Thoroughbred race horses in Ocala, Florida. When they moved to Georgia, he picked up eventing while boarding at Rick Wallace's barn and trained with Nancy Gosch.

Bobby competed through the preliminary level on one of his mother's homebreds and won the beginner novice amateur division at the 2015 Nutrena USEA American Eventing Championships (Texas) on his Thoroughbred Halo.

But Halo ended up having navicular disease, so Bobby decided to try dressage.

"Eventing wasn't as exciting as it used to be because I'd been doing it forever, and then I kind of lost my nerve," he said. "It was exciting to be training very purpose-driven and having new goals."

The pair went to the U.S. Dressage Finals in 2019, and Bobby was officially hooked on the challenges of the sport. This year, he and his newer partner Carlson won the adult amateur second level freestyle championship (74.64%), and they also earned the adult amateur third level reserve (69.25%) and adult amateur second level reserve titles (69.96%).

"This is surreal," he said. "To win and do the victory lap around the Alltech [Arena] is mind blowing. Adult amateurs don't frequently get to compete in there.

"I felt really good," said Bobby, 45, of his winning ride. "It was the first time we'd competed in the Alltech, and walking down the tunnel, it's like you're going to the Olympics. It was one of the first times after riding that freestyle that I actually teared up. He was so good and was on everything."

## TIDBITS

• **Bridget Bursey** came close to competing in the open fourth level freestyle championship last year at U.S. Dressage Finals, but her horse **Forty Creek** picked up an injury right before they were set to leave. The pair made the trip this year to take home the win, scoring a 72.98%.

"She's had a couple of injuries, a baby, and I'm super excited that we finally won. She's my little rockstar," said Bursey, a professional based in Stillwater, Minnesota.

Bursey started riding "Stella," a 12-year-old Dutch Warmblood mare (UB-40—Windsor CA) who was bred by Susen Shumaker, when the mare was 4. Bursey bought her from clients for \$1 when the mare was 5.

"She was a bit of a wild child," she said. "We got along pretty well, and they decided she was best with me, so they gave her to me. It's super nice of them, and I can't thank them enough."

Her winning test was choreographed by Hailey Guard, who competes Stella's full sister, Dalwhinney, on the small tour and worked with Stella in hand as a youngster. Bursey also has a 2-year-old out of Stella by Fiderprinz she's hoping will be her next star.

"[Stella's] a little on the hot side," said Bursey. "She's a diva. She likes things her way, and you have to do it that way. If you do it her way, you're good to go."

• **Celsiana William** had never been to a Finals before, and she came home with a championship win on her first trip. With **Prima Ballerina**, the 20-year-old won the junior/young rider fourth level championship, scoring a 70.69%.

"She was very focused and with me the whole time," William said of the 9-year-old Oldenburg mare (Bon Bravour—Parle). "She sometimes gets nervous at big shows. I'm just really proud of her. She did her best for me. I was a little nervous. I've never ridden in an arena like that before, so I felt the pressure. She was so good and so easy, so she gave me that confidence."

William, Ocala, Florida, grew up in rural California and didn't have access to good dressage training until she met Brian Hafner 10 years ago. She trained "Bella" largely on her own before moving to Ocala recently to be able to ride with Hafner regularly and has hopes of competing at the FEI North American Youth Championships next year.

She bought Bella off a video from Germany. "It was love at first sight," she said. "She's so sweet and tries so hard. When you get a good mare, it's the best thing ever. She tries her heart out every time, sometimes too hard."

• **Emma Batchelder** took 10 years away from horses as she built her career as a nurse anesthetist, but her's came back to dressage in the last year with help from her sister, Grand Prix rider Nora Batchelder.

At Finals, Emma rode Nora's former Grand Prix mare **Fifi MLW**, a 14-year-old Hanoverian (Fidertanz—Wolkenstanz MLW, Wolkenstanz), to win the adult amateur third level



Celsiana William and Prima Ballerina won the junior/young rider fourth level championship at U.S. Dressage Finals.

championship (70.16%).

"I was here last year watching and grooming and was like, 'Wow, what a dream it would be to come here.' To come and win surpasses everything," she said.

Emma, 30, works two 14-hour shifts and a 12-hour shift at a hospital in Williston, Florida, every week to fit in riding time. She moved from Colorado recently but is happy to be reunited with her sister so they can share their love of dressage.

"She's very generous," she said. "She's done so much with Fifi, and I really love Fifi."

• **Nartz Chanca** had a Finals to remember with his two horses, **Dazzle** and **Dante Rubin M.R.** He won the adult amateur first (72.54%) and second level (71.70%) championships on Dante Rubin M.R., a 5-year-old Oldenburg gelding (Dante Weltino—Rosalie), and the adult amateur Grand Prix (66.59%) and Intermediaire II (66.76%) championships with Dazzle, a 10-year-old Oldenburg gelding (Danone I—Leonie).

Chanca, 41, runs a company and rides with his wife, dressage professional Marta Renilla, out of their Tomball, Texas, farm, where they live with their three children. Renilla won the open third level championship with Zalando M.R. (73.25%).

"It's a good team," Chanca said. "It's great to be able to share this passion with her. At the end of the day, I do this for fun. She's obviously a professional, but she's so passionate about this, and we love this sport. We love the horses; we love sharing our life. We give up a lot. Maybe our social life is not very good, but we have to sacrifice a lot in the day to day, but it's all worth it. We're crazy about this sport. We love it, and sharing it with her and my family is the best you can have."



Catherine Bowman won her first championship at U.S. Dressage Finals when she and Felix took home the adult amateur training level title.

brought a tear to my eye that she tried versus just going around and having a clean jumping round.”

Three years ago, she decided to get more serious about dressage and went to Germany to find her current horse, Felix.

“I love him,” she said. “He’s a good boy. He really tries for me,” she said. “It’s different because the last horses I was riding were Quarter Horses, so going from Quarter Horses to a kind of hot, German-bred horse is really a jump—learning how to ride that forward energy more and still

being obedient and going up through the levels. You have to start somewhere, so we’re at training level.”

The pair took home the adult amateur training level championship at Finals, scoring a 73.10%.

“I got kicked out of my first horse show with him because it was like a rodeo, but now we’re here, and it wasn’t a rodeo!” Bowman said. “I’m very proud of him, and I think the future’s bright.”

The Westphalian gelding’s (Fashion Maker—Finess) local show debut a few years ago did not go to plan.

“I was doing training level, test I, and he was just really charged up to be there,” said Bowman, who’s worked in the pharmacy at Publix for 10 years. “All of that energy, and I was still kind of inexperienced with it at the time. I hadn’t ridden him off the property much. I didn’t have a horse trailer for the first year and a half I had him. In the warm-up he was getting rambunctious. I didn’t run into anybody, but the TD came over to me and said, ‘You need to get this figured out before you come back to another horse show.’ I went home and regrouped and started riding with Shelley [Van den Neste], and a couple months after that we got all the kinks worked out.”

Bowman, 28, describes Felix, 7, as very forward, but she hopes to be able to keep that energy and make it to Grand Prix one day. For now, she gets to ride some of Van den Neste’s upper level horses at home to learn the feeling. 🍎

It was Bobby’s third time attending the U.S. Dressage Finals and his first win. He’s been partnered with Carlson, a 14-year-old Hanoverian gelding (Contendros Bube—Wonne, Wolkentanz 1), for two years. He trains with Martin and Jenna Arnold at Concordia Dressage.

“When you do eventing, dressage is the boring part, but once you dig into the movements it’s just as challenging and rewarding and exciting as when you jump a big jump or finally nail a movement you’ve been working on,” Bobby said.

Bobby, who’s worked for 14 years as an executive assistant for the CFO of Whole Foods in Austin, says his dream would be to take Carlson to Prix St. Georges.

“I feel like we’re really solid now, and we understand each other,” he said. “He’s really trying for me. He’s super sweet. That’s why I bought him.”

## FROM FARM GIRL TO FINALS

Catherine Bowman grew up a “typical farm girl” in Alachua, Florida, riding Quarter Horses, showing 4-H and raising goats.

“I had a Quarter Horse pony that was always super heavy on the forehead, and I took dressage lessons nine times out of 10 to get the pony off the forehead and up, and I learned the shoulder-in and leg-yields, and it helped so much,” she said. “It translates. When she would give me a really nice leg-yield or shoulder-in, it almost



Anartz Chanca won four championships at U.S. Dressage Finals, including the adult amateur Grand Prix and Intermediaire II with Dazzle.

## U.S. Dressage Finals Lexington, Ky.—Nov. 10-13

Judges: Anne Appleby, Anne Cizadlo, Liselotte Foy, Janet Foy, Heidi Gaia, Sandra Hotz, Natalie Lamping, Jodi Lees, William McMillin, Sandy Osborn, Michael Osinski, Adrienne Pott, Debbie Rodriguez, Ulf Wadeborn, Lois Yukins

**Open Trg.** – 1. Shmoky Quartz/H. Mason, 77.52; 2. Vho!/M. Kuhn, 76.37; 3. Da Vinci HSR/J. Upchurch, 71.14. **A/A Trg.** – 1. Felix/C. Bowman, 73.10; 2. Dark Knight/L. Hodgson, 71.99; 3. No Limits/E. Lisdie, 71.93. **Jr./YR Trg.** – 1. Diana/L. Polk, 72.35; 2. Del Christo/S. Fogg, 71.95; 3. Morque’s Minuet RSW/R. McCool, 71.72. **Open 1st Level** – 1. Louisville HTF/M. Bragelli, 73.28; 2. It’s Showtime/K. Petersen, 73.19; 3. Shmoky Quartz, 71.75. **A/A 1st Level** – 1. Dante Rubin M.R./A. Chanca, 72.54; 2. Juilliard/M. Rogers, 72.45; 3. Lady Rozlyn/N. Bangasser, 70.92. **Jr./YR 1st Level** – 1. My Lorino/C. Colby, 69.67; 2. Immortal Thor/R. Stockfish, 69.40; 3. Flynn/C. Burlew, 69.21. **Open 1st Level Freestyle** – 1. Manuskrift SCF/H. Mason, 77.07; 2. Shmoky Quartz, 74.96; 3. Hylke Van De Klei/H. Catsulis, 72.46. **A/A 1st Level Freestyle** – 1. Louis Vuitton MTA/L. Kimball, 72.21; 2. Looker 507/A. Krosson, 70.88; 3. Favy Rigitia W/R. Tomczak, 70.74. **Open 2nd Level** – 1. Manuskrift SCF, 72.34; 2. Bianska SOf/L. Eden, 71.34; 3. It’s Showtime, 70.95. **A/A 2nd Level** – 1. Dante Rubin M.R., 71.70; 2. Carlson/B. Covington, 69.96; 3. Wubbs/J. Edwards, 69.92. **Jr./YR 2nd Level** – 1. Fleur De Lis/T. Allen, 69.40; 2. Skikkil’s DeNozzo/C. Duncan, 69.96; 3. Romantic Rose/M. Brown, 68.65. **Open 2nd Level Freestyle** – 1. Manuskrift SCF, 73.82; 2. Fiona MRF/M. Dunn, 72.30; 3. Crestone Clover/B. Bursay, 70.65. **A/A 2nd Level Freestyle** – 1. Carlson, 74.64; 2. Supergirl KS/S. Cotter, 72.98; 3. Black Jack/D. Daggs, 71.33. **Open 3rd Level** – 1. Zalando M.R./M. Rennils, 73.25; 2. Rocket Star/M. Kuhn, 73.16; 3. Die Schnelle/M. Kurz, 72.79. **A/A 3rd Level** – 1. Fifi ML/W.E. Batchelder, 70.16; 2. Carlson, 69.25; 3. Spyder/K. Hering, 67.79. **Jr./YR 3rd Level** – 1. Hots Le Mans/E. Fruchterman, 70.62; 2. Silhouette/A. Allen, 69.29; 3. Erin Meadows Jagermeister/M. Roth, 69.25. **Open 3rd Level Freestyle** – 1. Hofratt V.Z./J. Conour, 73.78; 2. Leelo Dallas/L. Chumley, 72.57; 3. Skikkil’s DeNozzo, 72.46. **A/A 3rd Level Freestyle** – 1. Straight Horse De Milia/L. Saldana-Rich, 70.24; 2. Welcome/M. Rezaei, 69.63; 3. Carlson, 69.58. **Open 4th Level** – 1. Bravado K. Broecker, 70.27; 2. New Beginnings/H. Mason, 69.35; 3. Wallace G/T. Lindsten, 68.70. **A/A 4th Level** – 1. Friabee 65/P. Sachs, 68.42; 2. Dreamcatcher/M. Caldwell, 68.19; 3. Sense/D. Giorgio, 67.77. **Jr./YR 4th Level** – 1. Prima Ballerina/C. William, 70.69; 2. Saracchi/T. Parrish, 70.09; 3. Hannah Montana W/E. Fruchterman, 69.16. **Open 4th Level Freestyle** – 1. Forty Creek/B. Bursay, 72.98; 2. New Beginnings, 71.91; 3. Lehdorff Van De Vogelzang/J. McDonald, 71.90. **A/A 4th Level Freestyle** – 1. Friabee 55, 70.63; 2. Nicene/A. Krossen, 68.94; 3. Baltimore/L. Kimball, 68.76. **Open PSG** – 1. Ronin/M. Kuhn, 76.78; 2. DreamGirl/K. Fuqua, 74.21; 3. Hollie’s Oh Land/L. Sammis, 71.47. **A/A PSG** – 1. Rita Mae Johnson/K. Ott, 69.55; 2. Soprano S/P. Sumner, 68.98; 3. Hena/L. Crowl, 68.68. **Open Int. I** – 1. Absolute Dream/J. Truett, 72.79; 2. Gennett HTF/E. Bonneville, 71.47; 3. Bellina/L. Abner, 69.96. **A/A Int. I** – 1. Friend/C. Stewart, 70.34; 2. Iggi Pop/L. Valone, 68.22; 3. Rita Mae Johnson, 68.02. **Open Int. I Freestyle** – 1. Guinevere C/Pf/G. Vowell, 74.35; 2. Quarter Fox/A. Taylor, 74.07; 3. Gennett HTF, 73.20. **A/A Int. I Freestyle** – 1. Friend, 72.53; 2. CMOFF/C. Morin-Graham, 70.27; 3. Kingstown/M. Richards, 69.97. **Open Int. II** – 1. RTF Lincoln/H. Mason, 68.43; 2. O’Captain/P. Tighehar, 68.18; 3. Au Revoir/H. McCarthy, 67.80. **A/A Int. II** – 1. Dazzle/A. Chanca, 66.76; 2. Asta Lindelberg/A. Hellman, 65.29; 3. Demetrius/R. Lord, 62.79. **Open Grand Prix** – 1. RTF Lincoln, 71.90; 2. Eycatcher/S. Van Den Neste, 70.61; 3. Dream Catcher/B. Halner, 69.78. **A/A Grand Prix** – 1. Dazzle, 68.59; 2. Adiah HP/A. Maul, 65.76; 3. Hampton/A. Watts, 64.42. **Open Grand Prix Freestyle** – 1. RTF Lincoln, 76.20; 2. Guernsey Elv/L. Spriser, 74.51; 3. Eycatcher, 74.06. **A/A Grand Prix Freestyle** – 1. Adiah HP, 70.00; 2. Femke Zarma TF/J. Degrazia, 69.51; 3. Caprice/A. Maul, 68.32.

# U.S. DRESSAGE FINALS

Nov. 10-13  
Lexington, Kentucky

Photos By **Lindsay Berreth**

Ashley Maul and Adiah HP won the adult amateur Grand Prix freestyle title and finished as reserve champions in the adult amateur Grand Prix.

Penelope Sachs and Frisbee 55 won the adult amateur fourth level championship and the adult amateur fourth level freestyle championship.



Heather Mason won seven championships, including the open Grand Prix, open Grand Prix freestyle and open Intermediaire II championships with RTF Lincoln (pictured).



Jennifer Conour and Hofrat V.Z. won the open third level freestyle championship.



Caroline Colby and My Lorino won the junior/young rider first level championship.



Kristen Orrt rode Rita Mae Johnson to win the adult amateur Prix St. Georges championship.



Emma Batchelder rode her sister Nora Batchelder's Fifi MLW to win the adult amateur third level championship.



Kelsey Broecker and Bravo and Bravado won the open fourth level championship.