

Diana Porsche: Work, Love, and Patience

09/05/2024 Having fulfilled her childhood dream of becoming a professional dressage rider, Diana Porsche is now pursuing her next goal: to be the world's best in her discipline. "Christophorus" gets together with her at her equestrian facility in Austria.

Diana Porsche has just 390 seconds - or, six and a half minutes - to show if she's done everything right over the past few weeks, months, and years. Did she train hard enough and did she choose the right horse? Does she have what it takes? With her senses heightened, the 28-year-old Grand Prix dressage rider enters the arena on her gelding, Douglas, to present a variety of movements such as flying changes, half passes, pirouettes, passages, and the piaffe, which is a highly collected and cadenced trot in place. Though it requires a great deal of strength, especially for Douglas, world-class riding should appear elegant and harmonious - much like an intuitive dance - with the steed and rider so in sync, they almost appear as one. How does she feel during the performance? “I try to stay entirely in the moment,” explains Diana Porsche, who was born in Salzburg. “I connect with my horse on a deeper level.”

And that's exactly what she's been doing in her own way for more than 20 years, having dedicated her

life to horses. Austria has high hopes for the dressage rider in international competition riding. “I’m an ambitious person,” says Diana Porsche, when we catch up with her at her Tannbrunn estate in Austria’s Salzkammergut region. “I know that if you invest a lot of work, love, and patience in something, it will lead to something positive eventually.”

The pillars of her success

Work, love, and patience – this triad just might be the best description of the pillars of her success. She may have inherited her unwavering dedication from her grandfather, Ferry Porsche, who founded the sports car company. Or it might simply be the fact that her father, Gerhard, who is one of Ferry Porsche’s four sons, made the decision when he was still young to follow his passion and become a farmer in Salzkammergut. “Even as a kid, Diana spent her days and nights in the stable and with the horses,” says her mother, Iris, who runs a hotel resort in Mondsee. Shortly before her sixth birthday, her parents gave their daughter her first pony, and she was given her first dressage pony when she was twelve.

That’s when she began competing. “Dreams need to force you out of your comfort zone,” she says. “If they don’t scare you in the slightest, they’re just not big enough.” Her dream has always been to be one of the top dressage riders in the world someday. Everything else has always come second. At the age of 15, she decided to make the switch to evening school, so she’d have more time to dedicate to her passion. Having spent her morning and afternoon on horseback, she’d begin her five-hour school day at 5 p.m. But the heavy workload eventually paid off. She secured the Austrian Junior Master title three times in the years that followed and even won Bronze for her country in the European Championship for riders under the age of 25 (U25) in 2016.

Diana Porsche began preparing her horses for competition on the Tannbrunn estate, which was completed in the same year. By that time, she already had seven horses. “My horses are like my kids,” she says warmly, adding that it’s extremely important to her to train them herself and grow with them. “It allows you to have a better connection.”

As she enters the light-filled stable this afternoon, her equine friends greet her with an affectionate nicker. Diana Porsche trains each horse several times a week and has been working with her gelding Douglas, who is now 15 years old, since she was a child. Their body language is almost in sync when they perform a few movements out in the arena later on. Douglas snorts nervously, unsure about the camera drone buzzing overhead – but his rider soon calms him down again, speaking softly to him and rubbing his neck. There it is, that special connection.

Twelve hours work a day

Diana Porsche spends eight hours with her horses every day, feeding them, working with them, and mucking out the stable. This is usually followed by strength training, yoga, or cardio for her own fitness.

Her workday is often twelve hours long.

“I want to make progress every day,” she says. Without having to rely on others, if at all possible. Diana, who as an eight-year-old was able to drive her father's 911 for the first time on her parents' farm under their supervision, has a truck driver's license and can tow 40 metric tons. For many years, she drove her horses to tournaments herself, but now has a driver to do that. She's often accompanied by her husband, Philipp Stadlmann, who himself is an athlete and plays soccer with Union Mondsee in the Oberösterreich-Liga. The 28-year-old always has a large stash of tissues with him, as he suffers from a severe animal hair allergy. He even reacts to hay and grass, so basically everything that has to do with the world of horses.

“Horses come first for Diana. And then there's me – far, far behind,” he says with a wink. Standing at the arena gate, he watches his wife working with Douglas on the piaffe and passage. As much as she demands of herself, Diana Porsche is always gentle with her horses. “I take my time guiding them through the demanding dressage movements, always remaining calm,” she explains later. “It only works if I don’t put too much pressure on myself.”

International top league

That's not always easy, as pressure has only increased in recent years. Since 2021, Diana Porsche has been riding in the international top league alongside stars such as seven-time Olympic champion Isabell Werth. “I’m working my way up,” she says. The first few months were difficult, and there have been a few setbacks. But that no longer discourages the Austrian – because that’s where the third pillar comes in: patience. Particularly in dressage competitions, where many riders don’t excel until they are in their thirties, patience is often a good tool. Diana Porsche has learned that lesson, thanks in part to crises. She even briefly considered quitting two years ago. Things weren't going well in the arena, or with her trainer at that time. “It felt like I wasn't getting anywhere,” she says. Rather than giving up, she decided to part ways with her trainer, and is now working with a new coach. “He trusts me and my abilities, which gives me strength.”

And that has resulted in some successes. In early November 2023, Diana Porsche competed in a tournament in Lyon with her gelding Douglas. It was her first World Cup ever, and she was up against some big names. With the decisive 390 seconds on the clock, the two of them entered the arena for the freestyle-to-music event, her back as straight as an arrow and a joyful smile on her face. “You have to enjoy these moments,” her trainer told her. And that's exactly what the two of them did. Light-footed, they danced through the arena and performed their freestyle movements, to the delight of the audience and jurors. And they secured eleventh place, their biggest success to date after years of training together. “Thank you, Douglas!” wrote Diana Porsche afterwards on her Instagram channel with over 100,000 followers. There is no doubt – she did everything right. Her dreams are indeed big enough.

Info

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Image Sublines

Path: Diana Porsche: Work, Love, and Patience/Images/img_1.jpg
Title: Diana Porsche's Tannbrunn estate in Austria's Salzkammergut region, 2024, Porsche AG
Subline: A close connection: Diana Porsche with her mare Lady Gaga, one of seven horses the Austrian trains herself.

Path: Diana Porsche: Work, Love, and Patience/Images/img_2.jpg
Title: Hoof care, 2024, Porsche AG
Subline: Care: Diana Porsche grooms her horses before and after training.

Path: Diana Porsche: Work, Love, and Patience/Images/img_3.jpg
Title: Diana Porsche, gelding Douglas, 2024, Porsche AG

Subline: Training: Douglas, her gelding, was momentarily agitated by the camera drone, but Diana Porsche knows how to calm her partner in the arena.

Path: Diana Porsche: Work, Love, and Patience/Images/img_4.jpg
Title: Diana Porsche, gelding Douglas, 2024, Porsche AG
Subline: Successful duo: Diana Porsche in her tournament outfit on her gelding Douglas, which is her star horse and currently the most valuable ribbon collector in her stable.

Path: Diana Porsche: Work, Love, and Patience/Images/img_5.jpg
Title: Gut Tannbrunn in the Salzkammergut region, Austria, 2024, Porsche AG
Subline: Diana Porsche has been training her horses on the Tannbrunn estate since 2016.

Path: Diana Porsche: Work, Love, and Patience/Images/img_6.jpg
Title: Diana Porsche, Porsche Panamera Turbo, 2024, Porsche AG
Subline: With a successful day of training behind her, she bids farewell to Lady Gaga and leaves the stable in her Panamera.

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