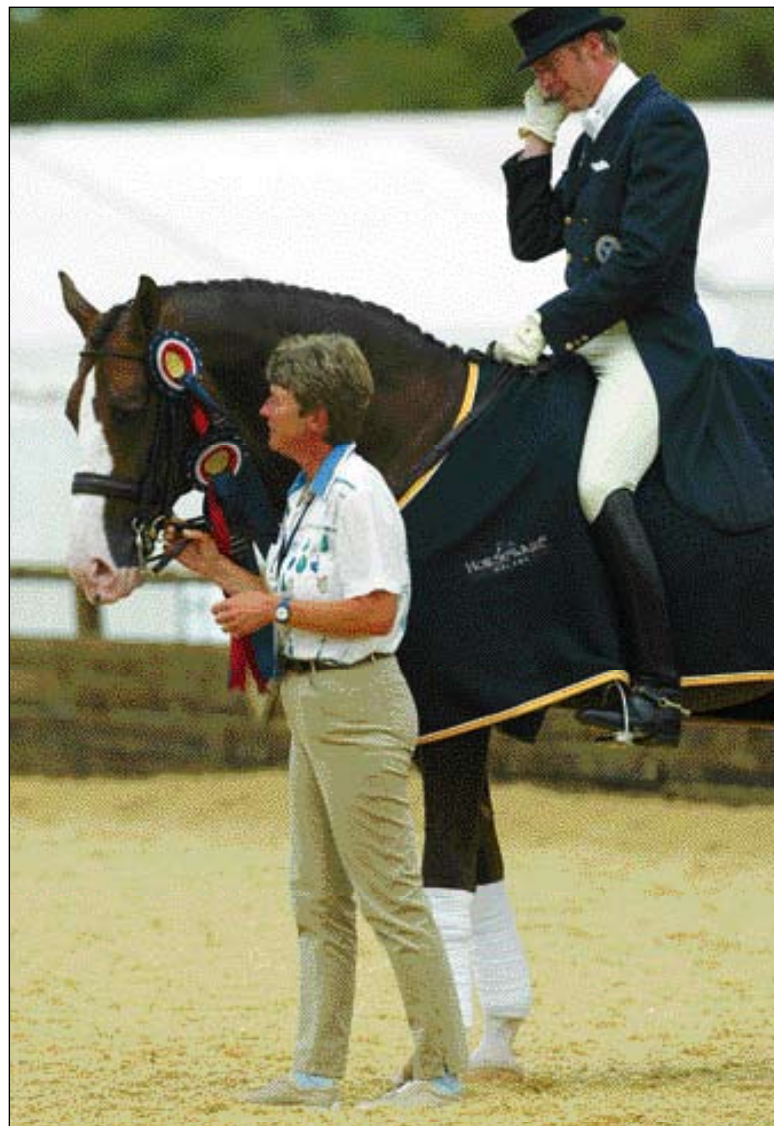




Kyra with her partner and trainer Richard White.



Coaching student Jan Brink, who Kyra cites as an example of what can be achieved when a rider has faith in his horse.

his head, which would make his whole body relax. I have now realized how important sugar and other positive reinforcement is for the horse. I use a lot more sugar now than I used to ten years ago." Max looks quite calm in prize giving ceremonies, but that wasn't always the case. "He was a very, very anxious horse. If he gets anxious in the prize giving I always have sugar. It's a way of saying 'hey, I'm here and take it easy', and then he relaxes again." If giving sugar upon exiting the dressage ring is something that sets Kyrklund apart from other dressage riders, it is no rare occurrence in show jumping. "You see a lot of jumping horses get sugar from their grooms when they come out of the ring."

THE DANCE

Max's current freestyle features music from Cabaret, and its overall mood is one of fun and happiness. Kyrklund's freestyle trademark has become lighthearted music; Max's sire Master performed his 1998 World Cup Final freestyle to Happy Birthday and Row, Row, Row Your Boat. "I always try to find something a bit different, not the same as everyone else," she says. "It

has to be entertaining, but one also has to find music that fits the horse, and that interprets him." She is careful not to over-edit her music. "I want the music to have a story. If you cut and

paste too much then the music loses its story." Her current program with Max was a bigger production than in the past, "with an orchestra, more money and more effort. There is always a

balance between how much prize money there is at the end to make it possible to do that." Good music cannot make up for a bad ride, but the right music can help create a better impression. "Good music can bring out the best things in the horse." She recognizes that judges don't and can't have a musical education, and that personal taste is a simple fact. "Music is like any art. Some like rock and some like classical, jazz or something else. You have to choose something that you like and then hope that they like it."

THE NATURE OF THE SUBJECTIVE BEAST

Events like the Global Dressage Forum have become platforms for discussing one of the greatest challenges of dressage, subjectivity. A recent public relations consultant's survey of the relationship among the athletes, judges and media yielded results that Kyrklund found interesting. "The focus of blame on the judging is a problem in the sport, but all subjective sports have this problem." Kyrklund has obviously reconciled it in her own mind, otherwise she wouldn't still be competing and contributing – mere mortal and icon that she is. □



Edinburg, the little black stallion that carried Kyra to fifth in Barcelona and third at the 1994 World Cup Finals, was "a fantastic horse, but his problem was that he came after Matador. Everyone was looking at him and saying 'what a little rat you have'."