

# For The Love Of Liberty

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE INTERNATIONAL LIBERTY HORSE ASSOCIATION



## Welcome

September is almost here and with it comes fall - cooler weather, football games, pumpkin spice everything and, of course, the 2019 ILHA Championship Show!

On the one hand, its hard to believe its almost here and on the other its been a long time coming.

Behind the scenes, the work involved in creating an association and competition recognizing a new discipline has at times been daunting. But it has also been equally rewarding. The outreach, interest and encouragement of trainers and participants from around the world has been overwhelming and the potential for the Liberty discipline is almost limitless.

Today we are more committed then ever to promoting Liberty and creating a platform for people to showcase Liberty horses and Liberty training.

To all of the ILHA members we say - keep it up. Keep asking questions, keep offering suggestions, keep spreading the word, keep getting excited, keep encouraging each other, keep looking for more news, and keep up the good work. We could not do this without you. Your membership, your endless enthusiasm, and your continued support are the backbone of the ILHA. It is a great time to love Liberty and we are only just getting started!

Sincerely,  
Dr. Elizabeth James, Editor in Chief

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Josephine Pilhede

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# ILHA FEATURED TRAINER

## *Josephine Pilhede*

With the 2019 AQHA Congress just weeks away most people will expect to see the versatility of the American Quarter Horse on full display. What they might not be expecting is a young Swedish trainer working at Liberty in the Reining Freestyle.

Traveling all the way from Gothenburg, Sweden, Josephine Pilhede came to the US with one goal in mind: to train under Dan James of Double Dan Horsemanship. Accomplishing that goal has been years in the making and has in turn led to the opportunity to compete at the QH Congress on one of Dan's reining horses.

Josephine's riding career began when she started riding English at the age of 5. By the age of 9, she got her very own horse, a Shetland Pony named Pontus.

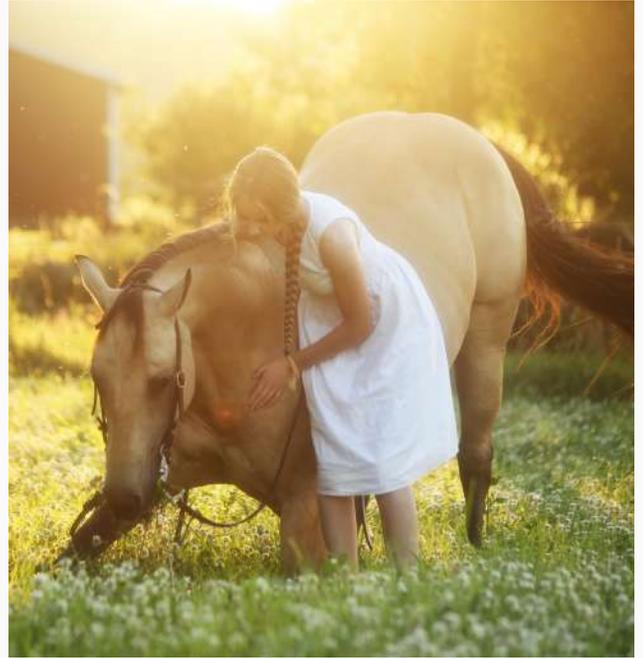
"He was very cute, but awful," said Josephine. "Pontus would bite and kick me all the time" she added with a laugh.

Because of their cantankerous relationship, Josephine yearned for a deeper connection with her pony and also wanted to become a better horsewoman herself. So at the age of 12, in hopes of building a better bond with Pontus, Josephine began trick riding and incorporating Liberty work.

When asked how she first learned of Liberty training, Josephine admitted she has YouTube to thank. After watching a YouTube video of Double Dan Horsemanship competing on "Australia's Got Talent," Josephine wanted to give Liberty a try. She saw the ease of communication between both Dan James and Dan Steers and their horses and felt compelled to challenge herself with Liberty.

Josephine's Liberty training began with a lot of trial and error and considerable time spent watching YouTube videos. One of her earliest inspirations was Eva Roemaat, a Dutch horse trainer based in the Netherlands, who would frequently post Liberty training videos.

At the age of 15, Josephine bought her first Quarter Horse, a mare named Rima, because she also had a love for reining. Rima and Josephine went on to compete in reining and also train at Liberty.



**"When you first get that connection and you both can read each other's mind and understand one another - that's definitely the best feeling."**



When Josephine heard of a 3-day reining and Liberty clinic with Dan James happening in Denmark in 2015, she knew she had to go! One clinic quickly turned into two when she also attended another one of his clinics in Sweden the same year.

Even at a young age, Josephine’s dedication and talent impressed Dan and he invited her to come train under him in the US when she was ready. It took 4 long years,. But finally in 2019 everything aligned and Josephine reached out to Dan to see if he would still be willing to mentor her. Within 2 weeks, Josephine was in Kentucky as part of the Double Dan US team.



“It all happened very fast. I quit my job and actually sold a horse to fund my travels. It was all very spontaneous. This just felt right and like a natural fit,” admitted Josephine.

When asked what her greatest Liberty accomplishment is, Josephine struggles to choose just one thing.



“I just love it all” she explained. “When you first get that connection and you both can read each other’s mind and understand one another- that’s definitely the best feeling.” Josephine admitted that one of the reasons Liberty captivates her is the thrill and adrenaline it brings, like rearing or galloping across a field without a saddle or bridle.

In her training, her travels, and the preparation to compete at QH Congress, Josephine has proven fearless and her dedication to learning is undeniable. Even at the young age of 21, Josephine has acquired an impressive portfolio of diverse experiences spanning many disciplines and along the way she has started developing her own philosophy.

“I always try to listen to the horse. There needs to be respect from both sides.” Josephine explains. “People should try to understand the horse. Do what I did, try new and different things. See what works and what doesn’t. I think the horse is the best teacher. He will tell you what works. But YouTube is also a great place to find inspiration.”

On Saturday, October 12 for the first time ever, there will be a Swede competing in the AQHA Congress Freestyle Reining and there's no doubt that friends, family, fans of Josephine Pilhede, and Liberty enthusiasts alike do not want to miss it.



If you would like to see your favorite Liberty trainer highlighted please nominate them at: [info@libertyhorseassociation.com](mailto:info@libertyhorseassociation.com).

# DESIGNING PATTERNS

Designing a show pattern sounds like an easy feat – until you try to do it. One of the biggest time investments of planning the first ever liberty competition has been developing the competition patterns. The first round of patterns were created back in March and it seemed like smooth sailing. Until we attempted to film them. Only then did we realize that what works on paper doesn't always work in the arena – especially at Liberty.

So we scrapped everything we had and started over. Only the second time around we started at the end instead of the beginning.

We looked at what the purpose of the patterns was? We considered how the patterns needed to be judged? We consulted numerous Liberty trainers to get their thoughts. We studied how other judged equine sports operate and weighed what was good and bad about different judging systems? In the end it was all quite simple. At the heart of every equine competition is the ability to control the direction and speed of the horse. Once we identified that we stared there and worked backwards.

We compiled a list of liberty maneuvers, ranked them from beginner to advanced, grouped them by levels and worked them into a pattern. What evolved was a set of patterns designed with the end in mind – to facilitate a competition highlighting training and ability rather than cues or methods. For the ILHA it doesn't matter how one person cues the horse to follow them compared to how someone else does, it only matters how well the horse follows, and so on.

There's doubt that with time, experience, and feedback the ILHA patterns will evolve and we look forward to adding new patterns as well. But what we have for the first show is a good starting place. Patterns that are fair, clear cut, and versatile with the goal of showcasing Liberty horses and Liberty trainers of all levels and abilities.

As always, we welcome the input of all ILHA members and encourage you to share your feedback, thoughts and suggestions. Please check out the patterns on the ILHA website [www.libertyhorseassociation.com/classes](http://www.libertyhorseassociation.com/classes) and email us at: [info@libertyhorseassociation.com](mailto:info@libertyhorseassociation.com).



# MEET THE JUDGES

*They say that horse enthusiasts are so confident they will pay someone to judge them just for fun.*

The number one goal of the ILHA is to promote the Liberty discipline. A close second is to facilitate competitions where participants have fun, feel encouraged, have their successes celebrated and their hard work rewarded. The best way to accomplish this is to select the right kind of judges.

Its no secret that the success or failure of any competition can be largely attributed to the way its judged. Few things will run off exhibitors more than judges who are unprofessional, unconstructive in their feedback or overly arrogant. On the other hand, few things will attract people more than judges who are professional, encouraging, and fair. When selecting judges for the first ILHA Championship Show their experience as a Liberty trainer, exhibitor, and instructor; characteristics as a judge; and passion for the Liberty discipline were all considered. We could not be more proud to announce or work with this year's judges:

JESSE WESTFALL

RYAN ROSE

FRANCESCA CARSON

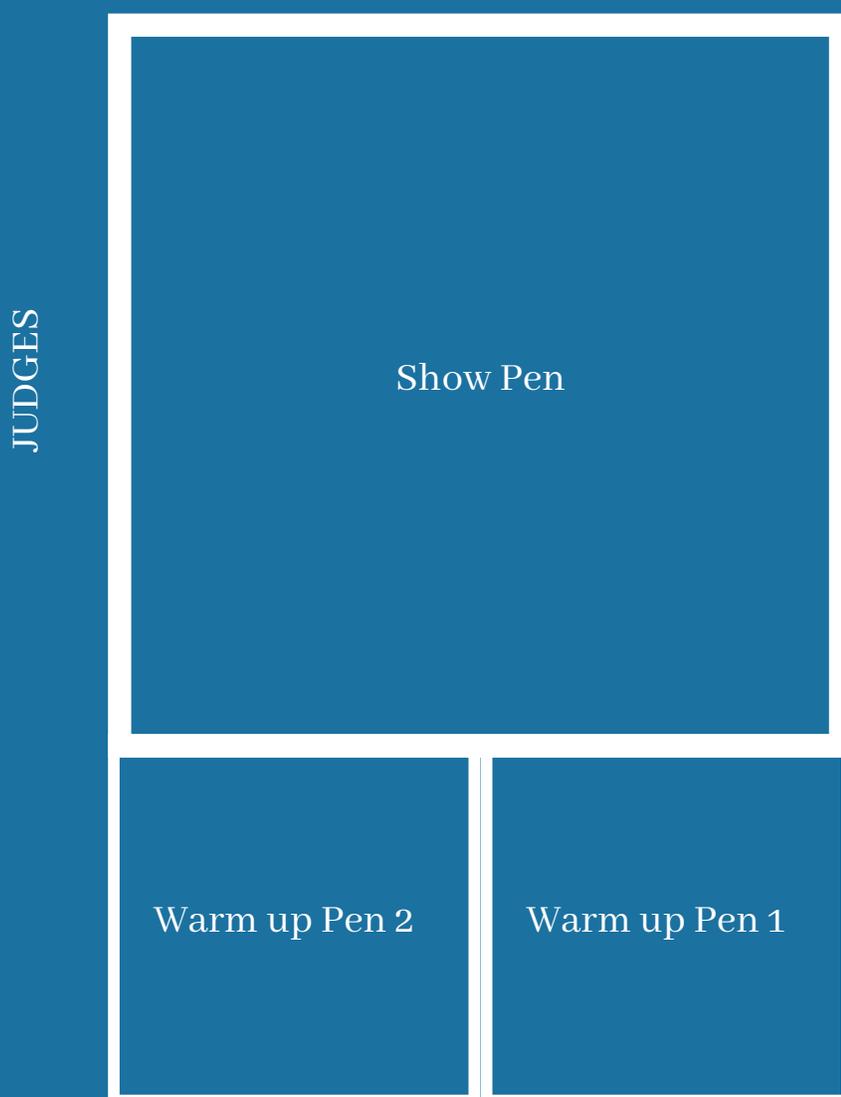
JESSICA BLAIR FOWLKES

Be sure to check out their respective social media pages and websites and stay tuned for Live Q & A sessions with each judge to learn more about them and what they are looking for in the arena.

# THE ARENA SETUP

*Stay tuned on social media for an upcoming FaceBook Live detailing the arena setup for the upcoming ILHA Championship Show.*

In the meantime, below is a sneak peak for members only. There will be 2 Warm up Pens and the Show Pen separated by panels in the arena. Competitors and their horse will rotate from Warm up Pen 1 to Warm up Pen 2 to the Show Pen. This design will allow each participant time in the arena with their horse to warm up before competing.



# SHARE YOUR STORY



Want to share your Liberty story, photos, tips, or advice?  
Do you have a Liberty trainer you would like to see featured in

*For The Love Of Liberty?*

Visit the ILHA website and go to the ALL ABOUT YOU page to  
nominate someone or submit content.

[www.libertyhorseassociation.com](http://www.libertyhorseassociation.com)

