

# NORTH COUNTY TIMES

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## Dressage Affaire

- **What:** A national dressage competition that serves as a qualifier for June's U.S. national championships.
- **Where:** Del Mar Horsepark
- **When:** Today through Sunday, 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. each day.
- **Who:** Top riders include U.S. Olympian Guenter Seidel (Cardiff resident), Leslie Morse, Jennifer Hoffman, Steffen Powers and Jan Ebeling.
- **Admission:** \$5 per day or \$10 for all three days.



## Seidel's push for fourth Olympics leaves little time for scenic escape

By: DAVID HAMMEL - Staff Writer

At last, Guenter Seidel could take that short walk down the hill to the beach.

The Olympics were over. Another bronze medal was in his possession, and it was the slow season for equestrians who specialize in dressage. Seidel could finally enjoy his Cardiff home's proximity to the beach, finally sink his feet in the sand, and finally unwind after a grueling quest to reach and compete in the Olympics for the third time.

"It was just perfect weather for a month. I made sure I got down there every day," said the 44-year-old German-born Seidel, who has lived along the North County coast for 20 years but has rarely been home to enjoy it.

The break, of course, was short-lived. It almost always is for dressage competitors, who earn little money for their athletic exploits and must supplement dressage with traditional jobs.

Before long, Seidel was back working at Albert Court, a Fairbanks Ranch barn where he is the head horse trainer and an instructor.

Not long after that, he took the first steps to align himself for a spot in his fourth Olympics, traveling to Dusseldorf, Germany, for a month of training and competition under the supervision of U.S. team coach Klaus Balkenhol. When the 2008 Olympics open in Beijing, Seidel will be nearly 48, an age that's far from over-the-hill in dressage.

Seidel is in Del Mar today for the annual Dressage Affaire, a qualifying tournament for this summer's U.S. national championships and precursor for next weekend's international equestrian federation Dressage World Cup in Las Vegas. The Dressage Affaire runs today through Sunday at the Del Mar Horsepark. Seidel, who is using the event as a final World Cup tuneup for himself and his horse, Aragon, will compete only this afternoon.

"I feel pretty much 100 percent again now," said Seidel, a three-time Olympic bronze medalist in team dressage. "Sometimes, it takes a while to get back into shape when you haven't ridden for awhile. I think we're well prepared now."

Seidel's World Cup expectations are somewhat modest since his trip to Germany was not as productive as he had hoped. He took two horses on the trip, hoping to

make Aragon, the high-strung horse he rode at the Olympics, more accustomed to indoor competitions ---- the World Cup is indoors ---- while also hoping to break in a new, younger horse, Metropolitan.

But Metropolitan developed a bone chip in his jaw, limiting his availability, and Seidel sustained a groin injury, limiting the amount of time he was able to ride Aragon. At the qualifying event for the World Cup in Los Angeles two weeks ago, Seidel finished a disappointing third and needed to apply for an at-large berth to gain entry to next weekend's event.

Aragon, though still very temperamental and prone to fits in confined spaces, is ready, Seidel said.

"My goal is top six," Seidel said. "(Aragon is) very anxious. You don't generally work them out every day, but this horse could go every day."

In that respect, the two are somewhat alike.

Seidel regards his time between the World Cup and June's U.S. national championships in Gladstone, N.J., as "quiet." Then he starts reciting what he'll be doing between now and then, and it becomes apparent he's just as busy as his horse prefers to be.

Searches for Seidel often elicit the response "He's not in-country right now," which is especially the case during the summer months, when the beach culture of his adopted home region is most enticing.

Between now and June, Seidel will compete in a few local shows, travel to Europe for more training and guide the pupils he instructs through their various competitions.

And hopefully, sometime between now and 2008, he'll find some time to walk down the bluffs to the beach.



The Dressage Affaire is sponsored by the San Diego Chapter of the California Dressage Society:  
[www.sandiegodressage.com](http://www.sandiegodressage.com)

For more information about The Dressage Affaire contact Show Manager [Kim Keenan](mailto:kimkeenan@adelphia.net) at (858) 518-4128 or [kimkeenan@adelphia.net](mailto:kimkeenan@adelphia.net).