



Jane Savoie with Menno, a seven-year-old Friesian gelding she co-owns with Proud Meadows Farm in Texas.

Photo by Rhett Savoie

Savoie And Schleese – A Decade Of Success

by Sabine Schleese

As CEO of Schleese Saddlery Service Ltd. since its inception in 1986, I have worked with Certified Master Saddler Jochen Schleese – my husband, and our talented staff to ensure that the company philosophy of "Happy Horse and Happy Rider" is achieved for our clientele. One of the most rewarding partnerships we have developed over the years is with Grand Prix dressage rider Jane Savoie.

Jane and Jochen have worked together for 10 years, developing saddles and educating riders on the importance of saddle fit. What makes their partnership so successful? Why does their partnership work? And why do they work together in the first place?

From my obviously close vantage point of observation, I can tell you that the successful pairing of these two is based on mutual respect, complementary philosophies, and genuine passion for the product. Also, both Jane and Jochen are especially committed to the ultimate well-being of the horse.

In this day-and-age, when logos, sponsors, and promotional deals are a way of life in the equestrian world, what makes any rider choose a particular saddle manufacturer? Of course, we're all aware that some riders are paid mega-bucks to say they ride in a particular saddle (and then *don't!*) but the 'JS & JS' story is a 'horse of a different color'. Jane truly uses our saddle out of conviction for the value of the product, not because we pay her to use it. That's a big difference, and in this article I'll share with you why that factor has been key to the success of this partnership.

Shared Philosophies

Not only did Jane find that she had discovered her perfect saddle, but she also found the person behind the saddle shared many of her philosophies.

When it comes to equestrian endeavors, both Jane and Jochen are primarily focused on education and the comfort of the horse and rider. They also share the ultimate goal of producing happy horses that can easily do their job. While Jane helps people from the instructor/trainer point-of-view, Jochen helps people by giving them the information to make educated choices when it comes to deciding what alternatives they have in selecting a saddle.

Jane believes in 'physical therapy' types of exercises that unlock, unblock, loosen and strengthen the horse so that he can become more of an athlete. Jochen also uses these exercises to demonstrate the impact a poorly fitting or incorrect saddle can have on the horse's ability to perform.

Getting The Word Out

Obviously, both Jane and Jochen can personally reach only a limited number of people on a one-on-one basis, so they also try to educate using alternative methods to impart their message to a larger audience.

Jane is a prolific author, having written several books. She also produces videos that allow people to benefit from her training methods long distance. Jochen educates people through clinics, seminars, lectures, and articles about what goes into proper saddle fit and design so that neither horse nor rider suffer any discomfort.

Both Jane and Jochen realize the importance of maintaining a 'cutting edge' level of knowledge and influence, and they make every effort to consult with industry professionals in various fields on an ongoing basis. And most importantly, it is the ongoing communication between Jane and Jochen that ensures that they continue to work well together.

Giving Away 'The Secrets'

Jane and Jochen both consider 'the personal touch' and one-on-one service a specialty in their respective businesses. Jane only teaches private sessions and keeps the numbers of lessons and clinics down so she can keep the quality of instruction high. Likewise, Schleese Saddlery will never mass-produce and sell saddles in discount catalogues. Jochen insists on having trained representatives that can help riders find the perfect fit for themselves and their horses. At the end of the day, this might mean that Jane and Jochen make less money, but both are satisfied that they've done the best they can by their clients.

There's also an 'openness' to what these two do. For instance, Jochen was told that he was "foolish to give all his secrets away in articles." Jochen is so passionate about educating riders that this would never be of concern to him! He also realizes there are lots of people out there who are more than capable of taking the necessary measurements, talking the talk, and offering suggestions to riders. The expertise lies in being able to interpret the data, analyze the numbers, and then allow the rider to make his/her own decision based on the information offered. Jane is also passionate about what she does. She would never withhold information or intentionally make things sound mysterious (as many teachers may be wont to do) with the goal of making students unnecessarily dependent on her. Both Jochen and Jane daily 'give away their secrets'.

I'm happy to have this opportunity to bring this unique partnership to light and I hope that this article has given further insight to you about two people that I work with and respect, as well as love. After a decade of working together, their relationship continues to be mutually beneficial, and I look forward to watching it grow further.

For further information into the working lives of both of these dedicated equestrians, visit their web sites at www.janesavoie.com and www.schleese.com .

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