



# August 24, 2016 – U.S. Para-Equestrian Driver Stefanie Putnam Earns Fifth in the World at 2016 FEI World Para-Driving Championships in Beesd, The Netherlands

United States Para-Equestrian Association

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## U.S. Para-Equestrian Driver Stefanie Putnam Earns Fifth in the World at 2016 FEI World Para-Driving Championships in Beesd, The Netherlands

By: Lindsay Y. McCall

**Lafayette, California, August 24, 2016** – The 2016 FEI World Para-Driving Championships took place August 3-6, 2016, in Beesd, The Netherlands. Stefanie Putnam made her international debut as the sole Para-Driver representing the United States of America. Putnam drove her horse Bethesda After Dark, a 1993 Morgan gelding, to a remarkable individual fifth place in Grade I against 13 seasoned competitors, also earning a third in Cones. She was supported by U.S. coach Scott Monroe and chef d'equipe Marcie Quist, as well as Marie de Ronde-Oudemans from Holland who graciously hosted and assisted the team. Seven nations competed in the championships with drivers from Latvia to Ireland. Putnam and Bethesda After Dark have been working towards accomplishing their international dreams for five years and on August 6, Putnam did just that made her international debut as the sole Para-Driver representing the United States of America. Putnam drove her horse Bethesda After Dark, a 1993 Morgan gelding, to a remarkable individual fifth place in Grade I against 13 seasoned competitors, also earning a third in Cones. She was supported by U.S. coach Scott Monroe and chef d'equipe

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Putnam grew up competing hunters and jumpers and was also the captain of the Cal Poly Tech polo team. She suffered a spinal cord injury that left her paralyzed from the chest down in 2009. In 2011 she discovered the sport of driving and competed in her first competition the very same year. In 2015 Putnam and Bethesda After Dark claimed top honors in the Preliminary Single Horse division at the Shady Oaks CDE, as well as earning the prestigious Charles Kellogg American Driving Society North American Preliminary Horse Champion and West Coast Triple Crown Preliminary Single Horse co-Champion titles. This season (2016) the duo took the Reserve Championship in the Intermediate Single Horse division at the Summer Festival CDE.



Stefanie Putnam at the 2016 FEI World Para-Driving Championships, August 3-6, 2016, in Beesd, The Netherlands. Photo by Katrin Doerr

The 2016 FEI World Para-Driving Championships gave Stefanie an opportunity to compete at the FEI level for the first time (this is not an option for Para-Drivers in the U.S., as it is for Para-Dressage riders). The World's enabled Stefanie to experience the thrill and challenges of international competition and to get to know the Para-Equestrian Drivers from other countries. Being selected to represent her country on behalf of USEF was especially exciting and meaningful. While there are no carriage driving events in the Olympics and thus the Paralympics, this competition is considered to be the equivalent in the equestrian driving world.

Stefanie stated, "I have been deeply honored and indelibly touched by this incredible, inspiring

opportunity. It has taken an army of people to help me reach this goal, and I want to extend my utmost gratitude and heartfelt thanks to everyone who has supported me in this amazing journey. Against the backdrop of Rio, it was a proud and unforgettable feeling flying the American flag from the back of a beautiful horse drawn carriage.”

Results from the 2016 FEI World Para-Driving Championships:

<http://www.hoefnet.nl/uitslagen/2016/NED/WCPENKBEESD.20160804.20160806/results.html>



Stefanie Putnam at the 2016 FEI World Para-Driving Championships, August 3-6, 2016, in Beesd, The Netherlands. Photo by Marcia Putnam

***About the United States Para-Equestrian Association:*** *The United States Para-Equestrian Association (USPEA) includes every recognized equestrian discipline that is practiced by athletes with an eligible physical impairment with a focus on Paralympic Equestrian Sports. . The USPEA is a network of current and past athletes, owners, officials, event organizers, and equestrian enthusiasts. The Association assists athletes to get involved and expand their knowledge and experience in the Disciplines of Para-Equestria organization.*

*USPEA was created to fill a need to assist Para Equestrian disciplines when they came under the governance of the FEI. While Para Equestrian disciplines were originally segregated, they now are integrated in international sport. As each individual Para Equestrian discipline that the established able-bodied discipline affiliate will integrate within their organization. develops, it is USPEA’s mission to always serve as an advisory resource with the ultimate goal that the established able-bodied discipline affiliate will integrate within their organization.*

*In 2010, the USPEA earned its 501 (c)(3) status and became a recognized International*

*affiliate association of the United States Equestrian Federation (USEF) working together to grow the FEI recognized disciplines by helping to provide press, educational information, symposiums and competition opportunities for athletes with eligible physical impairments.*

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