



Flettrich again helping to train them beforehand. They rode to their career high score, dominating the Grade II division with the high score of 77.917 percent during the freestyle.

Through hard work and training with Flettrich, Hart and Romani have solidified their bond. Flettrich sees a bright future ahead for the pair and is confident in Hart's abilities.

"I am delighted with her and with the horse," Flettrich said after the show. "This is the beginning of a long relationship, and only the start to their road to Rio. Working with Rebecca has been a wonderful experience. Sometimes, I think, Rebecca has taught me more than I have taught her. That girl has an unbelievable work ethic, and she does not allow her disability to run her life."

The rider and trainer share a mutual admiration for each other's work ethic and riding style.

"I really look up to Todd as my riding role model," Hart said. "He's just a real class act... I strive to present myself

in that manner and to have my horses be as consistent as his are. I'm so grateful to all of the people who have helped me along the way, Margaret, Todd and Missy."

Hart is not only a top international para-dressage rider, but also a motivational speaker.

"There is always an element of 'I don't know if I can,' and what I say to them is that you never will know if you don't try," Hart explained. "I didn't know if I was going to be able to come as far as I have, but I didn't let that stop me."

The disease she has eats away at trunk muscles and confines many patients to a wheelchair as they mature. Hart continues to astonish doctors, surpassing scientific evidence that she should not still be able to walk. Hart credits it all to the horses.

"Horses are amazing creatures, and it is astonishing to see what they do for an individual's confidence, motor skills and muscle memory," she said. "A



Rebecca Hart and Schroeters Romani compete at the Adequan Global Dressage Festival CPEDI3*, sweeping the Grade II division.

PHOTO BY SUSAN J. STICKLE

horse's gait mimics the muscles used when walking, and for me it has been huge in maintaining stability. Continuing riding has activated muscles that are technically dead, but through nerve connection they are being fired off because of movements of the horse."

Hart will continue looking ahead to the 2016 Paralympics in Brazil, training in both Pennsylvania and Wellington.

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