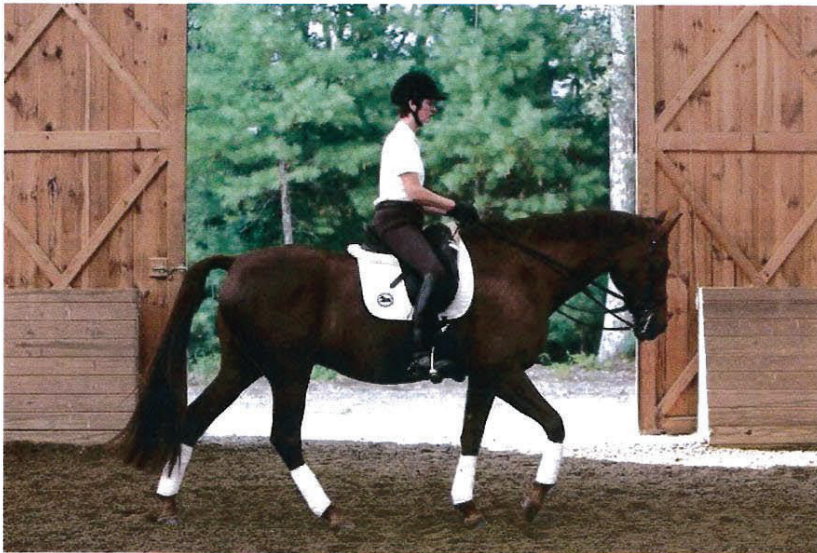


THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

WHAT'S YOUR WORKOUT

CEO Works in Riding and the Chocolate Factory

Head of Harbor Sweets Competes in Dressage



Phyllis LeBlanc trains her horse, Chinon, four times a week at Rosebrook Farm in Georgetown, Mass. *KELVIN MA FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL*

By **JEN MURPHY**

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Phyllis LeBlanc often jokes she has two important family members: her husband and her 1,200-pound horse, Chinon. "Just like a husband and wife, a horse and rider can push one another's buttons, so there is a diplomatic agreement of trust, fairness and

respect," says the CEO of Harbor Sweets, a Salem, Mass., chocolate company.

Ms. LeBlanc has been riding horses all of her life. As a teenager she delivered newspapers on her childhood pony in Redding, Conn. She took a few years off from riding after getting married, but resumed it with the support of her husband. She started at Harbor Sweets as a part-time chocolate dipper while in college and moved into various executive roles while pursuing her M.B.A. She bought the company in 1998.

Though Ms. LeBlanc eats a chocolate a day, the 55-year-old maintains a healthy diet and exercises regularly so she is fit enough to ride. "Riding a 1,200-pound animal requires a lot of core, leg, and arm strength and a great deal of skill to make it look effortless and graceful," she says.

She rides four times a week to prepare for dressage competitions. The sport is often called horse ballet because it is elaborately choreographed. A horse and rider must demonstrate some 38 movements that increase with difficulty between a walk, trot and canter. She competes throughout New England and New York, and tries to enter a competition a month during the May-through-September season.

At Harbor Sweets, Ms. LeBlanc started a line of chocolates in 1992 called Dark Horse Chocolates. Each chocolate is stamped with a horse or related symbol. The line includes Peppermint Ponies and Dressage Classics of almond buttercrunch toffee.

"Riding provides me with lessons in patience and clarity for managing my work at the chocolate factory," she says. "When I'm not focused, my horse can sense the lack in my authority....The same can be said of employees and vendors."

She says she wouldn't be able to juggle riding and owning a business without her husband's help. "I ride after work so he often has dinner waiting when I get back from the stables at 9 p.m.," she says.

The Workout

To build her stamina for riding, Ms. LeBlanc gets up at 5:30 a.m. on weekdays and power-walks on a home treadmill or around her neighborhood for 30 minutes. She leaves her home in Bradford, Mass., around 6:30 a.m. for her hourlong commute to her office.

She rides at Rosebrook Farm in Georgetown, Mass., a 45-minute drive from her office, two or three times during the workweek and on weekend mornings. After work, she spends about two hours there, 45 minutes riding and the rest on horse grooming, and is



Ms. LeBlanc power-walks to build her stamina for riding. *KELVIN MA FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL*

home by 9
p.m.

She trains her
horse to
understand
her subtle

communication cues, such as the movement of one leg, to perform complicated movements at a trot or canter in a way that looks effortless. Ms. LeBlanc says it can take up to 12 years for a horse to learn a foundation of movements. Many of the movements are "a variation of the horse's gait," she says. "For example, a collective trot is where the horse puts more weight on its haunches and steps higher."

She works with a riding trainer once a week, with extra sessions before competitions.

The Diet

Breakfast is yogurt and a banana, and occasionally eggs for protein. She brings a salad or turkey and Swiss with mustard on pita bread for lunch. Dinner is grilled fish or chicken. She loves ice cream. "I try to be good and eat frozen yogurt," she says. "My favorite is coffee with Heath bar."

She says it's hard to resist the chocolate at work. Her strategy is not to eat her one chocolate a day until she walks out the door "because once you have one you can't stop."

The Gear & Cost

Dressage is an expensive sport, running in the tens of thousands of dollars a year for equipment, stable costs, competition fees and travel. She says a saddle can cost between \$2,000 and \$6,000, and riding pants average \$230. She wears Ariat riding boots, which cost between \$400 and \$600, though other brands can retail for up to \$1,000. Ms. LeBlanc pays about \$50 for each competition's entry fee and around \$200 to 400 to stable her horse for the four days of a show. She pays \$80 a session with her riding trainer.



Dressage:
Putting a
Horse
Through
Its
Graceful
Paces
Anyone
who has
watched a
dressage

She spends much of her time at the farm caring for Chinon. *KELVIN MA FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL*

competition might think the horse is doing all of the work. The rider sits as still as possible, using their muscles to subtly signal the horse to perform.

"A good rider must be balanced, coordinated and develop tremendous body control in order to be harmonious with the horse," says George Williams, the Wellington, Fla.-based president of the U.S. Dressage Federation.

The word dressage is from the French language and means training. The goal of the training is "to develop movements that are considered natural to the horse," says Mr. Williams. When the rider shifts his hips, shoulders and weight, he is asking the horse to move in different directions and step in variations of its three natural gaits, walk, trot and canter, he says. One such movement is a trot with a high step and slight pause, frequently depicted in statues.

In competitions, each rider performs a series of movements in a predetermined pattern called a test. Each test has between 25 and 30 movements. A numerical score from 0 to 10 is given for individual movements. The horse and rider also receive collective marks that reflect the overall performance.

In addition, they may compete in a freestyle, in which they perform a choreography of movements the rider has designed. These require certain mandatory movements and are done to music. "Judging is similar to figure skating and gymnastics," says Mr. Williams. "The technical performance, choreography, degree of difficulty and music interpretation are all taken into consideration,"

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