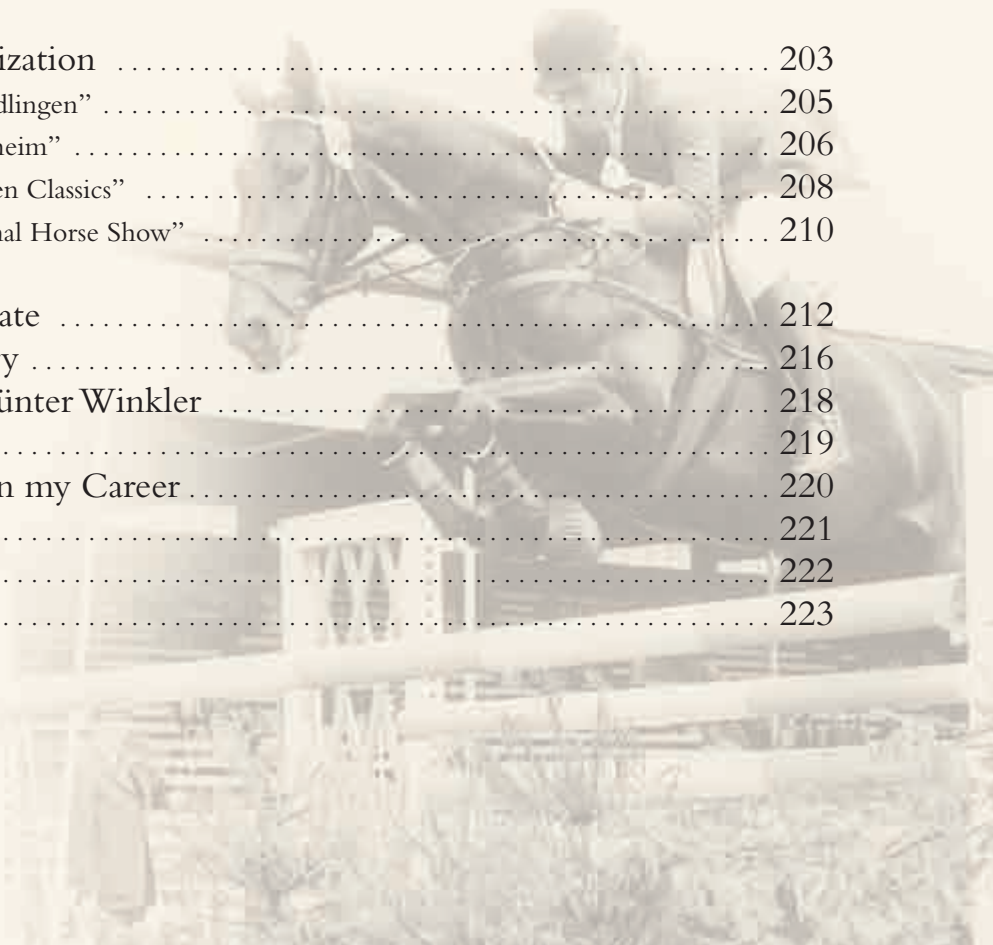


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# EVERYTHING STARTED IN AACHEN – THURSDAY JUNE 30, 1955

World Championships in Aachen 1955,  
Riding in the first qualifying round on „Halla.“



The car rolled along the road. Inge is not talking very much. She is probably also thinking about the important days we have in front of us. Or she senses that I am busy in my own thoughts and doesn't want to disturb me.

Our destination is Aachen, the International Horse Show, the most important equestrian competition of the year. This year Aachen was offering something that had been the topic for the sport's fans for some weeks. The third World Show Jumping Competition, and for the first time in history they would be held on German soil! Without helping it, I knew that I would be the centre of attention since I was the defending champion. Although the exceptional South American contingent of riders were unable to compete due to the transportation difficulties of horses at that time, the competition was still recognized as the World Championships by the International Equestrian Associations.

It entered my mind what my friend Francisco Goyoaga told me during his springtime visit to Warendorf. Goyoaga was my predecessor as World Champion in 1953 and lost the title to me in 1954 in his hometown Madrid. Speaking in his bold German he said to me:

"You will hardly be able to defend your title in your own country Hans Günter, believe me. Can you imagine what it means to be the favourite and the hometown hero? Tens of thousands hanging their hopes on you when you ride? Every jumping fault is a catastrophe for the spectators. You feel it, it smothers you. At least that's what it was like for me in Madrid last year. It won't be any different for you."

The jovial Goyoaga gave me a piece of his advice which was typical of him. I should go on a pub-crawl the night before the Final day so as to come in to the arena as relaxed as possible!

It was clear that I had a difficult task ahead of me. I knew that many believed – among them respected experts in the field – that Madrid was a fluke. It was for many too much of a surprise win.

I could imagine many of the old masters of our sport sitting in the stands, looking on sceptically as I rode into the arena:

"Aha, the young Winkler! Of course, he won the World Championships last year in Spain. But who knows how that was run. Here in Aachen, on this hollowed ground, and with us to witness it, he will have to prove that he is truly worthy of that title."

If anyone had a chance to defy the International field a win, as far as the Press were concerned, it was Fritz Thiedemann. Wasn't the first riding idol the people cheered for after the war? Didn't he almost bring home the Gold medal from the Helsinki Olympic Games? Was he not the true successor to the last cavalry masters Carl Friedrich Freiherr von Langen, Kurt Hasse and Hans Heinrich Brinckmann? Thiedemann had not competed in Madrid and therefore, according to the experts, "Fritze" would show us who the real master was.

All of a sudden I said out loud, "I can ride too, can't I?".



The German National Anthem is played for the winner and I know this is most wonderful moment in my career.

The Olympic Gold medal in Stockholm was, and will most probably remain, the most gratifying and remarkable victory of my career. My injury was such that I was still walking with a cane and unable to ride in Aachen to defend my title in July. Raimondo finally won a well deserved title that, with his riding ability, seemed almost overdue. I should note here that in the winter of 1955-1956 a few changes had taken place in our stable in Warendorf. Our long time and trusted Werner Stahl, left my employ. He had married and was

a father now and did not want to travel as much as the job entailed. Luckily, Hans the young "home groom" had gained enough experience under Werner's watchful eye, to be able to step up and take over the number one spot.

For "Orient" my faithful companion for seven years, travelling had also become a task and, as I had feared for a long time, he had developed a heart defect through his earlier bout "broken wind" and his lungs were not sound

**I rode “Torphy” in 31 Nations Cups during our partnership together, of which we were victorious 18 times.**

He was my partner in two Olympic Games winning a Gold and a Silver medal for Germany.

“Torphy” was a special horse, true to the point of putting his own safety second to helping me clear some massive courses. He never let me down and when it really came to difficult situations whether it was the Olympic Games, a Championship, or a Grand Prix, he gave his absolute best, which made it possible for me to have a contributing result for the German team. ■

**With “Torphy” in the Nations Cup of the Munich Olympic Games, 1972**

