

# *Icesaddles* ~ Technical Riding Gear

Article by  
Thórunn Kristjánsdóttir

Photos provided by  
Rúnar Þór Guðbrandsson

Icesaddles, the company that manufactures the Hrímnir saddles, has in the last few years aggressively come onto the Icelandic horse saddle market. In order to learn more about this saddle, its history, technology, development, and uniqueness, we went straight to the source. We contacted Rúnar Þór Guðbrandsson, the owner and founder of Icesaddles, and the man behind Hrímnir.



## How did you get into the saddle business?

I began as a manager for the equestrian store Hestamaðurinn in Iceland, in 1994. From there I started my own shop Reiðlist, which later merged with Hestamaðurinn and one more shop in 1999, to form the largest Icelandic horse tack store in the world, Töltheimar. After leaving Töltheimar, and studying in the U.S., I started my company, Icesaddles, in 2003. I built the company around one supplier, Ruiz Diaz in Buenos Aires, because I had worked with them since 1997 on the development of the Hrímnir saddle. Ruiz Diaz is a unique saddlemaker. They have been at the forefront in the development of new technology in saddlemaking, such as the Bayflex foam used in the panels and seat of their saddles, as well as the Dupont FlexTree with X-change gullet system. Besides making the Hrímnir saddles, they also make saddles for other breeds, such as the legendary Pessoa saddles in cooperation with Nelson and Rodrigo Pessoa.

## When did you begin developing the Hrímnir saddles?

I began working on- and developing the saddles in 1997, but the first saddles didn't enter the market until 2000. When I moved to the U.S., I left the development and manufactur-



Rúnar Þór  
Guðbrandsson,  
the man behind  
Hrímnir saddles.

Right: The 2009 World Champion in four gait, Lena Trappe from Germany, riding Vaskur vom Lindenhof into first place in her Hrímnir PRO saddle. Right center: Lena and Vaskur with their World Championship medals.



Photo Mark Johnson

ing of the saddles with Töltheimar. I overtook it again when I started Icesaddles in 2003. I started out slowly, but beginning in 2005 and every year since, the sales have dramatically increased.

**Where did the name 'Hrímnir' come from?**

The saddles are named after the legendary, white horse, Hrímnir frá Hrafnagili. Hrímnir was elected four-gaiter of the last century, by readers of Eiðfaxi magazine.



**How is the saddle different from other Icelandic horse saddles?**

Our saddle is very technical, and our aim is to make the best saddle for the Icelandic horse – in the world. We therefore choose to use the best quality materials that are available, and the newest technology in saddlemaking.

The saddles are, for example, built on a very technical saddle tree, which was developed in cooperation with DuPont. This unique saddle tree is unbreakable, and its flexibility is perfect for the distribution of the rider's weight, yet adjusts well to the movement of the horse. The tree is also fitted with X-change gullet systems, which, in minutes, allows the rider to adjust the width of the tree from medium to extra wide (see page 25).

We also use the Bayflex injection molded memory foam in the panels, knee rolls and seat. Due to the nature of- and technology behind this foam, the saddle will never have to be re-stuffed. This memory foam was developed in cooperation with the German pharmaceutical company, Bayer.

The leather we use is mainly calfskin leather



that comes from Remy Carriat, in France, which is one of the best tanneries in the world, and their leathers are of the highest quality.

**How different is it to ride in a Hrímnir than in other saddles?**

Everyone must experience this feeling for themselves. But I can say that, most riders experience their horses differently when riding in our saddles. And the consensus is that it allows for much closer contact with the horse. Many riders say that from the first day of riding in the new saddle, they experience this close contact, which is not common with new saddles. The saddle gives the rider a good, balanced seat, and it allows for good communication from the rider to the horse.

**Are there many professional riders using the saddles?**

Yes, there are many great riders in Iceland, in the other Nordic countries, continental Europe, and North America using the saddles.

Last summer (2009), the World Champion in fourgait, Lena Trappe from Germany, was riding in the Hrímnir PRO 17.5" saddle when she won the World Champion title.

In Iceland we have, among others, the winners of the last three years in the Championship League, Viðar Ingólfsson and Sigurbjörn "Diddi" Bárðarson using the saddle.

In the U.S., our dealers are all very experienced professional riders, and they all ride in a Hrímnir saddle. These riders include Will Covert, Guðmar Pétursson, Kristján Kristjánsson, and Sigrún Brynjarsdóttir. ●



Above: Hjalti Guðmundsson on Reynir frá Hólshúsum, competed for Sweden at the World Cup. Left: Viðar Ingólfsson riding Tumi frá Stóra-Hofi, the Icelandic champion in tölt.

Further information about Icesaddles and their products can be found on their website [www.icesaddles.com](http://www.icesaddles.com) or [www.hnakkar.is](http://www.hnakkar.is)