THE Guestrian CATALOG

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AMIERICAN STALLS DESIGNED FOR HORSE PEOP

DESIGNED FOR HORSE PEOPLE BY HORSE PEOPLE

BEHIND THE SCENES WITH JOHN FRENCH

FLATWORK HAS IT BECOME OBSOLETE?



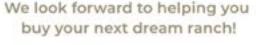
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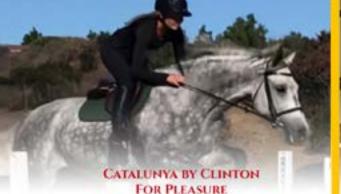


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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

THE Equestrian Catalog hopes that everyone is enjoying all the show circuits that are offered to all of the competitors. The shows keep growing all the time, both in popularity and numbers. It is a great thing to see.

And speaking of growing, we want to take this opportunity to show some appreciation. We know that the magazine business is not an easy one. We are so grateful when we send magazines to horse shows and then be told they need more. People snatch them right up, and that is so gratifying to us.

It is also great when we see folks at the shows, and they give us such positive feedback. That is doubled when we have done an interview with someone or included them in an article, and they say how pleased they are. We also love reading those kind words on Facebook and Instagram.

We continue to grow, and that is due largely to many people. We want to thank all of our advertisers, the horse shows that partner with us and distribute our magazine at their events, everyone who has participated in our editorials and given up their time to speak with us, the photographers who contribute those amazing photos, all the readers, and our staff!

We are excited for the future, and hope to branch out even more. And we will continue to bring editorials and interviews that we hope you will find interesting, informative, and sometimes even entertaining.

The hunter/jumper part of the horse show world has a big stage, and there should be no lack of interesting people to speak with. We look forward to meeting new people, finding new equine and human talent, and bringing all of that to you.

Thanks again, good luck this summer, and we will see you at the shows!!

"NEVER LET SUCCESS GO TO YOUR HEAD. NEVER LET FAILURE GO TO YOUR HEART" - HORSE WAS MY FIRST WORD



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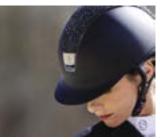
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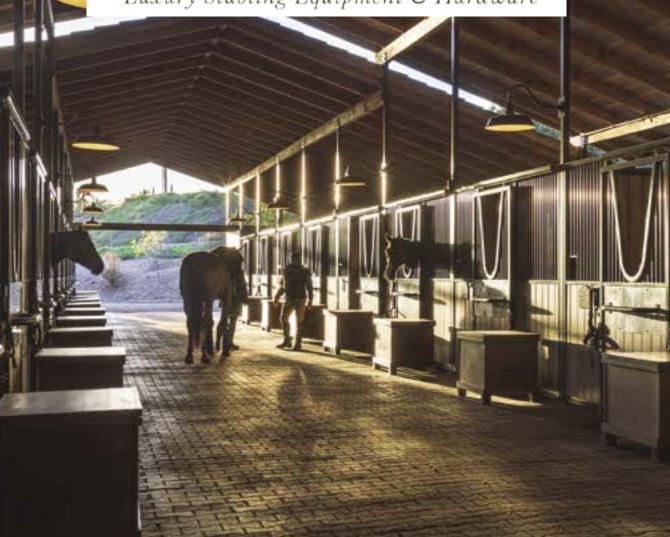
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AMERICAN STALLS

Luxury Stabling Equipment & Hardware



Designed for Horse People Designed for Horse People Designed for Horse People By Barbara Pinnella By Barbara Pinnella

V V ith more than 34 years in the steel industry, American Stalls is part of a family-owned, global ownership group which include three other businesses. They are all based in steel manufacturing, catering to industries such as construction, steelmaking, fencing, the mining industry, and electrical power line transmission. It wasn't until 2006 however, when HITS approached them to build 1,500 stalls for their facility in Saugerties, New York. That was the beginning of American Stalls' journey in building world class stabling products for lovely barns. Their extensive manufacturing expertise, infrastructure, and experience allowed American Stalls to make an impact right away.

It was in 2017 that Yash Balasaria joined his family's business – initially learning the business, improving its manufacturing process, and eventually becoming CEO of American Stalls in 2018. We had the privilege of speaking with Yash to learn more about this side of their business. One of the first things he wanted to stress was the approach they take with each project.



"When I joined American Stalls, we wanted to fully overhaul the business, our product line, and its approach. Because of this rebrand, we like to think of ourselves as a newer brand which is built upon a 33-year-old foundation of world class manufacturing. In our brand's revitalization effort, we really shifted our focus to building an extremely high-end product which is backed by world class customer service. That is what we are known for in our other businesses extremely specialized products that solve our clients' needs and backing it up with prompt, attentive customer service. While we might be a newer business in the ultra-luxury segment of the equestrian industry, we feel extremely confident in our ability to deliver best-in-class solutions and meaningful experiences.

"For us, it's extremely rewarding to work on more and more projects because it's a way to showcase our mission. We want to help equestrians build beautiful barn spaces that are conducive to their lives and their horses' wellbeing. Because of this, we take a very personalized approach to each project," Yash explained. "We don't view any one project as the same. Whether you have a four-stall barn for your own horses or a 58-stall renovation like we recently did for Arroyo Del Mar, we treat each project individually to ensure we cater to the discerning needs of our clients.

"What is important for us is to understand you as the owner and rider, your preferences, likes, and dislikes; how do you want your barn to look? How do you want it to function? Having been in hundreds of barns, are there certain designs that speak to you? For example, there are riders who prefer to fill the water buckets to know just how much water their horses are drinking at any given time, instead of using automatic waterers. In these cases, we're able to design and manufacture our stall fronts so that water lines flow through the stall. This allows our clients to easily turn a knob and fill water bucks at each stall. That's an example of how a small design and product choice can influence other decisions in our barn projects.

"We also like to know about our clients' breeds, the dispositions of the horses, and what discipline our clients are training or riding in. So, we really try to take a holistic approach. It is not just American Stalls picking a stall design and telling you it will work great. It is about what is best for you, and what is best for your horses' health and well-being.

"Last but not least is the product quality – including the build, finish, and overall maintenance. That is what we are known for. Everything we build and offer is going to be built to last. That starts with raw materials where we use galvanized steel as the base material for all of our products. We then go to great lengths to only use stainless steel, brass, and aluminum in all of our hardware to ensure longevity and durability against the rigors of daily use, humidity, and moisture."

"Last but not least is the product quality – including the build, finish, and overall maintenance. That is what we are known for."

"Each project is tailored around our clients and their horses"

American Stalls certainly has the capability to do a complete renovation or large new barn construction projects, as illustrated by the work done on the previously mentioned Arroyo Del Mar, the facility owned by Steffen and Shannon Peters.

"This was a great opportunity to show our capabilities as a firm. We did everything in that 40 or 50-year-old barn, renovating it from top to bottom. That included the the horse stalls, the wash stalls, the barn doors, window yokes, sliding paddock doors, the lighting on the property, and more.

"We have recently shipped to Jamaica. We are shipping out another order soon to Hawaii. We are also working on a project in Japan as we speak. Horses are all over the world and we're excited to showcase our products not only in the North American market, but all across the globe as well." Since taking over as CEO of American Stalls, once you speak with Yash it is obvious that he is passionate about what he does, and quite excited about where the business will go in the future. With the emphasis on superior customer service and a mission to build a genuine relationship with each and every client, the sky is the limit.

"The scope of the project was significant. We want people to know that we have a large breadth of products that we can custom manufacture with exceptional quality. Along with that, we offer personalized customer service throughout the process. Lastly, we're able to bring in some of the best relationships for our clients including builders, architects,



interior designers, and more."

It is obvious then, that American Stalls has a wealth of products to offer their clients. But do they have everything they feel is needed?

"I think we are finally at a point in our product line that we feel it provides our clients with a wide breadth of products, where we can act like a one-stop shop - without compromising on auality. But what is more important," Yash continued, "is that we continue to finetune those products to be the best of the best."

Like its predecessors, American Stalls is a global business. It is based out of northern Virginia and manufactures all of its beautiful steel-framed products right here in the United States. It routinely does projects across North America and beyond.

"It's a total joy to build our business," Yash said. "It's been an extremely rewarding journey working alongside amazing teammates in serving equestrians. We look forward to continuing our growth and delivering our mission in building the very best stabling equipment in the world."



Visit their website at www.americanstalls.com for more details.



11100 ROCKY HIGH ROAD | SANTA ROSA VALLEY, CA Exquisite 10-Acre Equestrian Haven • Offered at \$16,900,000

Introducing an exquisite 10 acre equestrian haven in the prestigious Santa Rosa Valley. Presenting the renowned property currently home to "Q of E Farm", this extraordinary estate sets the standard for world-class hunter, jumper, and equitation facilities. With meticulous attention to detail, this exclusive property bossts 46 opulent and spacious stalls, including an in-stall Vta Floor. Each stall is a testament to superior craftsmaniship, featuring custom construction using the finest materials. Designed with your horse's comfort in mind, these stalls are equipped with gentle swoop yokes and outlitted with premium rubber mattresses. Advanced amenities such as automatic water bowls, fly spray system, lighted arena with full sound system and with video, a comprehensive security and AV system, commercial generator, high ceilings and wide barn aisles create an univaled environment of laxury. The centerpiece of this exceptional property is the state-of-the-art

Grand Prix sized show jumping arena, Sprawling over 200x300 ft, this masterpiece is adorned with specialized GGT footing and an innovative Riso Ebb & Flow watering and drainage system a seamless blend of form, function and sustainability. Incluige in the pinnacle of equestrian elegance with a host of thoughtfully designed spaces. Discover an elegantly appointed private office, a generous tack room, cobblestone floors, and an inviting upstains viewing lounge where you can witness the magic of equestrian pursuits. The property also features an oversized hay and feed room, a convenient commercial laundry room, and two well-appointed bathrooms. Furthermore, indoor and outdoor cross tie areas provide convenience and versatility. Unparalleled attention to detail extends to the outdoor areas of the farm, with a total of nine expansive turnouts. Among these, three magnificent, irrigated grass turnouts stand out, providing your horses with an idylic and lush environment and a state-of the art Eurosizer. Complimenting this exceptional equestrian sanctuary is a stand-alone equipment storage garage, boasting two exquisite two-bedroom living quarters above with 1/2 bath on ground level. Additionally, the property offers ample space for up to six large RVs and/or horse trailers, catering to the needs of the most discerning equestrian enthusiasts. It's the ultimate equestrian experience with this bespoke property crafted for passionate horse enthusiasts where every aspect of this. estate has been meticulously designed to elevate the ifestyle of both horse and rider.



Jaime Krupnick Real Estate Advisor 310.749.0703 | calDRE 02139605 Jaime.Krupnick@evrealestate.com



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FREE RIDE

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ree Ride Equestrian was created three years ago by Katie Rosenfels and Raina King. The two became friends when they met at a clinic in 2014. In late 2019 they were brainstorming business ideas and Raina mentioned the idea of starting up an equestrian clothing business. Katie had been a first-grade teacher, but had just left her job, so when Raina presented the idea to her, Katie jumped at the chance. Raina came up with the name Free Ride, and Katie loved it, because it's a name people will remember. 2020 was Free Ride's first year in business. Three years later, it is Katie at the helm, having bought out her partner in 2022.

THE Equestrian Catalog – Why did you get into this industry? Katie Rosenfels - "I have always loved design. Growing up I wanted to be an architect and would draw house and barn blueprints for my future farm! While in college I worked as a nanny and taught beginner riding lessons. I ended up getting my degree in elementary education. I graduated college young at 21 and had my own 3rd grade classroom with a class of almost 30 kids before I turned 22. It was a lot of responsibility at a young age, but I think owning horses prepares us for that. I had been teaching for seven years, and just wanted to do something different and more related to horses and design.

Ashlee Bond

THE CUSTOMER MUST ALWAYS BE HAPPY, AND THAT ATTITUDE IS ONE OF THE REASONS THIS COMPANY HAS BEEN SO SUCCESSFUL.

Katie Rosenfels with Ashlee Bond's Daughter, Scottie "I was brainstorming different ideas, and realized that I didn't really have any breeches that I really liked in my budget. Being a teacher, I was on a pretty limited budget. So designing the breeches came to mind first, and I just went for it."

Katie puts the emphasis on comfort, as she is also currently a horse show competitor. She has a six-year-old Holsteiner mare that she shows in the 1.0m classes. She knows how important it is to be totally comfortable in those show clothes, especially breeches. And there is one other equestrian who really believes in the importance of that as well.

TEC – How did Ashlee Bond become an ambassador for Free Ride Equestrian?

KR - "Ashlee and I began working together when the brand was about a year old. She bought some of our riding leggings, and I remember being so excited seeing that she had purchased from our website. Ashlee prefers riding in breeches that are more of an athletic, legging type fabric, which is how she came across FRE. We began talking and I was happy to hear how much she loved the design and fabric of our products. We began working with her and sending her products."

TEC –How did you start the process of designing breeches together?

KR – "I always appreciated that Ashlee would take time out of her busy schedule to talk to me about the products and give lots of valuable feedback. I ended up sending her just about one of everything, including prototypes because her feedback was so helpful. After talking design for a while, it seemed natural to start working on breeches that would have Ashlee's name on them!"

TEC –What was the design process like for the Bondie Breeches?

KR – "Ashlee told me all the specifications she wanted and we started designing! I like to draw and sketched the logo and the drawing for the first prototype. We went back and forth with the manufacturer ordering lots of samples until the design was perfected."

TEC –What are some of your favorite qualities about these breeches?

KR – "The 100% seamless inner leg is really amazing. It's not comfortable having weird lines on your legs after riding from the seams pressing into your skin! The Bondie breeches DO NOT do that! The waistband is wide and supportive and the shape of the back is super flattering. They are my favorite white breeches for sure."

While growing quickly, Free Ride Equestrian still has a small team: Katie and two full time employees, Mallory and Ana who help her at the warehouse. FRE finds that while managing their own fulfillment center, they are able to have the best quality control and insure an excellent customer experience. Katie also has worked with her photographer (Cassidy Brooke Photography) since the start of the business. Cassidy handles all photography, videography, and most of the social media. In addition, FRE has a handful of remote contractors that help with various aspects of the business.

They also work with a few other riders. These are sponsored, upper-level riders that are sent products, and that they work back and forth with regularly. While the management team may be small, Free Ride has a large group of supporters championing the brand. There is also an Ambassador Program open to anyone that believes in and loves FRE. They currently have around 200 Ambassadors of all skill levels, and they promote the brand as well. They have codes unique to them. When using this unique code, the customer will get a discount, while the Ambassador receives store credit.

TEC – What are your best selling items?

KR – "Our best-selling is called the Lux Breeches, which is a very light-weight breech. It is almost like a tight, but it has a zipper and a snap. Those two things make them rather unique. I would say that our second-best selling item is called the Pro Breeches, which are thicker than a riding tight, but still more flexible and a lot more comfortable than the traditional breech."

It makes perfect sense that quality and customer service takes a huge precedence over quantity sold. Even though FRE has a fair price point, they always stand by their product. If anything is wrong, they always send the customer a replacement. They work very hard in the design process to make sure the product is as well designed as possible. The customer must always be happy, and that attitude is one of the reasons this company has been so successful. Happy customers result in a positive, word-of-mouth promotion as well.

TEC – How do you decide on new items?

KR – "Usually customer request. Someone might say, 'I love this breech, can we have it in this color?' or 'Why don't you have this in knee patch?' If enough people request something then I just make it."

TEC – Where do you manufacture?

KR – "We manufacture overseas. I love the manufacturer we work with. When we first started out, we tried at least 16 different manufacturers. The one that we started with, we have used the entire time. They have been wonderful. They have always stood behind their products. They are very communicative when it comes to designing the product. It has worked out really well, and we are so glad that we found such a quality manufacturer overseas. We have never had any trouble with them."



a minimit

The takeaway point is for the customer to be happy. They want the customer to know that they care about how they feel about the product they have received, and that FRE is always listening to their feedback. They will continue to make what the customer is looking for, with the exceptional quality that has become expected.

TEC – Finally, where can we find your clothing? Are they only online?

KR – "The majority of our sales are directly from our website www.ShopFRE.com. We do have a mobile tack shop and we attend some of the shows in Florida; we go to World Equestrian Center, TerraNova, Fox Lea Farms, and a few others. We also have about 25 retailers (a combination of small and large tack shops) in the US, Mexico, and Canada. We choose retail accounts that carry FRE to focus on the in-person customer experience, while we directly reach customers from our main website with the full product line.

Katie Rosenfels



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KRISTINA NOVAK ESTABLISHES MONUMENT GLOBAL ESTATES

Life-long horsewoman, Kristina Novak has been a successful realtor in Southern California for 35 years and has recently launched Monument Global Estates to better serve her growing real estate business.

Monument Global Estates serves everyone from first-time homebuyers to very high-end clients, including well-known names and celebrities. The team Kristina has created takes pride in working hard on behalf of their clients and they take client confidentiality very seriously. The area MGE will service includes: the Central Coast Wine Country of California, Santa Barbara, Montecito, The Santa Ynez Valley, and other parts of Ventura and Santa Barbara Counties. Kristina is expanding her business to also serve Riverside Counties' Temecula Valley, Murrietta, and La Cresta. They specialize in homebuyers, sellers, investors, and the sales of Fine Homes, Ranches, and Estates. The "Monument" in their name, according to Kristina, "Speaks to our impeccable reputation in the community and over 35 years of proven real estate success."



Represented Seller, **RECORD BREAKING SALE.** Golpa 20 Acres, 7 Bedrooms 9 Bath Regency Hills Estate, Solvang. Sold for \$15,000,000





Represented Seller 1230 Fredensborg Solvang, 10 Acre View lot \$965,000

The newly launched website -

www. MonumentGlobalEstates.com states: "We provide deep insights on current buyer demands, offer access to an exclusive network of top agents and the buyers they represent, and leverage top technology tools to promote your listing. This formula sets the stage for our team to negotiate the optimal final sale price on your behalf, ensuring that you get the very best return on your real estate investment."

"Beyond data, tools, and technology, our talented team invests our unrivaled industry expertise, time, and energy into making sure you feel confident throughout your transaction. We work tirelessly to make sure you're satisfied with our service from our first meeting to the moment you sign on the line and finalize your sale."

"Most importantly, we recognize that real estate is about much more than managing transactions. It's about building relationships and supporting you through a significant life event. That's why our team prioritizes getting to know you. It's our privilege to have the opportunity to learn about your real estate and life goals and to help you achieve them. We can't wait to get started!"

After school, Kristina worked as a mortgage banker in Beverly Hills, CA, and in the surrounding areas. When her 19-year-old daughter was born in 2003, she moved to Santa Ynez to pursue motherhood for her



daughter and oversee her beautiful warmblood sport horses. From competing in the hunter/jumper show world to building her horse ranch, to her background in lending, she confidently states that she is, "The premier local expert in equestrian estates, and one of the top agents in the Valley."

Whether her clients are first-time home buyers or high-profile celebrities, Kristina loves guiding them through the home buying and or selling process. She puts the work into coordinating flawless transactions so her clients can get back to the things that are most important to them in life. Many of them rave about Kristina's professionalism and the fiduciary duty she provides to the clients she

NUMENT



represents. Testimonials from happy customers fill the pages of her new website.

While Kristina means business when it comes to matching her clients up with their dream homes and negotiating on their behalf, she also has a very friendly, kind, and calming disposition. She brings the necessary creativity that is needed today to put together an extremely effective marketing campaign to get your property sold. She has an extremely

professional way of handling both the buyer and seller in each transaction. Her clients and fellow real estate advisors will tell you she is friendly, creative, energetic, and has an intimate knowledge of the Santa Ynez Valley Represented Buyer 1510 Kronborg Solvang pool Home \$1,770,000



"Most importantly, we recognize that real estate is about much more than managing transactions. It's about building relationships and supporting you through a significant life event. That's why our team prioritizes getting to know you. It's our privilege to have the opportunity to learn about your real estate and life goals and to help you achieve them. We can't wait to get started!"

and Santa Barbara County. She recently helped her clients sell their beach house in Carpinteria to buy a ranch in Santa Ynez. Kristina prides herself on really caring about her clients and what is important to them. Kristina is also very good when it comes to negotiating on her client's behalf and understands it needs to work for both buyer and seller.

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JOHN FRENCH

By Barbara Pinnella

You would be hard pressed within our industry to find someone who does not know John French, or at least knows OF him. John has done it all in both the hunter and jumper arenas, and continues to impress. A master magician of his craft, John also gives clinics and is a highly regarded coach.

> Photo Credit: Alden Corrigan Media



His accolades include representing the United States in Nations Cups and the FEI World Cup Finals. As for the hunter ring, he won the inaugural \$100,000 ASG Software Solutions/USHJA International Hunter Derby Finals, has been World Champion Hunter Rider four times, won the WCHR Lifetime Achievement Award in 2012, was the WCHR Professional National Champion in 2019, and was inducted into the National Show Hunter Hall of Fame in 2020. And that is just the tip of the iceberg. But for those who are not familiar with how he got started, we begin with that.

THE Equestrian Catalog – Why did you decide to pursue horse training as a career?

John French – My mom was a horse trainer and I grew up on a farm in Maryland. I never really thought of it as a career as a kid, I did a lot of other things. I was in a folk group and sang. Then I did gymnastics. But I loved riding; riding cross country, trail riding, fox hunting, pony club and all that stuff.

But it wasn't until I was 14 or so that I started going to more horse shows. After my junior years I thought I would take a year off before I went to college, and as soon as the Indoors were over I took a job working for Daniel and Brian Lenehan of Southern Pines, North Carolina. I rode and groomed there. I loved working with the young horses.

TEC – So what happened with college?

*J*⁷ – Well, I realized I really didn't want to go back to school. So I worked for several people in my early to mid-20s. I was 25 when I decided to start my own business. I started up in the New Hope area. I didn't last there too long though; I didn't have many horses in training.

TEC - How did you end up on the West coast?

J - I was looking for a horse for a client and contacted a friend in California. She said she would line up some horses for me to come look at. A few days before I flew out, she asked if I would be able to show some horses at Monterey. Her trainer was sick and she needed a rider. I thought that would be fun. But that trainer was not able to return, and the horses had no real training and were getting harder and harder to ride. After several trips back and forth, Pat Warren asked if I just wanted to stay out there and take over the training at her barn. I never planned on moving to California, but it seemed the thing to do. I ended up being there about 14 years.

TEC – What were your plans after you left California?

∂7 – I decided to slow down, have some sale horses and start a business outside of the Seattle area. Again, I had no plans to move from Seattle.
 I had bought a house and settled in there.

TEC – Then how did your partnership with Kent Farrington come about?

T = 1 first got to know Kent when I was doing the jumpers. He called me up and said he heard I left California, and would I like to come work together with him? I said no, I was not looking to make another move. He said we could talk about it some more when I went to the Washington Horse Show. I had always thought highly of him so we met up there. I could tell he was a very good businessman, and that is not my strong point.

I still did not agree, but Kent kept asking. I ended up going to Florida to see his farm, and decided that this was more what I wanted to do. He has a big staff of people that deal with a lot of things; hiring and firing grooms, doing the billing, organizing the hauling, all of that. I was doing everything myself. He told me I should just be worrying about riding and have a few clients to train. I decided that sounded better. I came to Florida in 2019 just for the winter to test it out and make sure, and stayed on with him.

TEC – So he does the jumpers and you do the hunters then?

*J*7 – Yes, but he has a hand in selecting the hunters as well. I always have him to go to if I have questions on any ideas he might have on the training of a horse. He not only has a good eye for a jumper, but he also has a great eye for a hunter and he knows what a good athlete is. We have had good success with raw talent he has brought over from Europe. The horses Babylon and Milagro have turned into probably two of the best horses I've ever had.

TEC – When you were doing both the hunters and jumpers, did you prefer showing one over the other?

J− I enjoyed both. The jumpers got me a little bit more nervous. For the hunters you want to stay very relaxed, so I would try to stay very calm. For the jumpers I would get a little bit more up and nervous, and at first I thought that showing jumpers was a little too hyper for me. But there was nothing like the rush after the class was over, and you had gone fast and had a good round. In hunters you are just trying to be perfect and hoping the judge is going to like your horse.

You don't have to worry about that in the jumpers; just go out there and do it. But to get to the higher level of jumpers I had to focus a little bit more. I couldn't be schooling people in hunters. It used to b schooling over to t walk the back are jump-c

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Smind Prix. Maybe I would make rise. Or I might do my round, go hool people, then go back for the in out get to watch anybody else g

autig was helping me at the time. Bern really needed more than one horse; I have a speed horse to practice going and a young one conting up. I ended u private job with people who had a tew

that on Grand Prix day I would be

of adults and then trying to ru

hunters, but liked the jumpers a little more. When I took this job, they bought me Millennium and others. I ended up being Rookie Grand Prix Rider of the Year the first year I was doing the jumpers. The next year I went to the World Cup Finals, and also rode on Nations Cup teams.

TEC – Was there anything in particular you did not like about showing at the big shows in Europe?

When I spent two summers in Europe, at a lot of those shows you were only allowed to bring two horses. That was the only thing I did not like. I wanted to ride more than two horses. I was used to riding so many and doing so many rounds a day. Maybe one horse did not go the way you wanted him to, but you rode so many others it was alright.

But in Europe you show one or two classes a week with your two horses. So maybe four or five classes tops for two horses. If your horse doesn't go well and you have a bad day, well, that's all you have. But I enjoyed it. After I was second alternate for the Olympic Team, I thought that was as far as I was going to get, because I did not want to JUST do jumpers. I ended up parting ways with that client and having a training barn again.

TEC – What do you find the most rewarding about coaching?

J + -1 like to see the clients develop a partnership with the horse. One of the horses I brought along from the beginning and won so much on, Babylon, was sold in the barn. It is so rewarding to see the work that I did allow he and his junior rider to be successful. Her first year riding him they were Horse of the Year in the country. Pairing horses like this with the right rider is so important, and results like that prove that they were brought along the right way. TEC – Silly question; when you sang the National Anthem at the World Cup Qualifier in Thermal, were you more nervous doing that, or standing at the gate at a big hunter Derby final?

*U*⁷ − I was more nervous singing. Yes, when I was young I sang in a folk group, but I wanted to push myself at something. I felt that if I could push through the nerves of that, then I can do anything. So, I just did it to see how I would be doing something different.

It's mind over matter; the same thing I do for a big Derby. You might get nervous beforehand, but then the time comes and you get into a zone and that disappears. It's not that I don't get nervous riding, I still do. You have to have a little bit of nerves. That's what makes you good, being able to dial it down a little bit. In the \$100,000 class in February, I was pretty nervous before that, but once I walk in the ring on Milagro there is no time for that. I hate doing 10 and 11 stride lines, but they wanted to see a number there, so I did that.

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TEC – Is there something you have never done but would like to do?

*J*7 – There are plenty of things. Because we spend so much time with the horses we don't get to travel and go on vacations and things. I used to go on several Buddhist retreats, so I would like to spend more time doing things like that. Meet with the Dali Lama, go to Tibet, places like that. People don't take enough time to do those kinds of things. I think it's important to learn how to relax and let things go and be at peace.

TEC – On the rare occasion you have a little time to do something else, what do you do?

J - If I have any time to relax, I love looking at property. My partner and I have had some houses in the past that we have bought and fixed up. It's a little bit like horses. Maybe you can make it better and turn it into something people want. Normally when I get time off though, I go judge a horse show, or go look at horses.

Parting shots from John

My philosophy with the horses is that it's my job to make them want to do it for me. I had a horse last summer that people were riding for me when I got hurt, and he wouldn't go. It wouldn't do anything. It was funny that he was one of the first horses I rode when I came back, and he never did it with me.

Five years ago I thought I was going to be winding down and not riding as much, but now I don't see that happening any time soon. *II*

Photo Credit: Alden Corrigan Media

TRAINERS SPOTLIGHT Sloan Elmassian

66A Happy Horse is a Winning Horse "

loan is the owner of her own training business, Sloan Equestrian. At 24 years of age, Sloan might have chosen a difficult business to go into, but there are no regrets. She cannot see herself doing anything else. Not only does she ride, train, and compete, she does all of her own work at the horse shows and at her barn. This sometimes means having to go back home to take care of business there, then returning to the show. Here is a closer look at the hard-working, talented, and personable Sloan.

To State

Photo Credit : McCool Photography

The Equestrian Catalog – How old were you when you started riding?

Sloan Elmassian – I started at the age of three at Flintridge Riding Club, just taking pony lessons, walking around on a tacked-up horse, things like that. I didn't start really riding until I was about nine, when I got my first pony. He really put me through the wringer, but I wouldn't change it for anything. When I outgrew the pony's abilities, I got my first horse and rode him for a couple of years. I then bought Colin (Centurion) when I was 16.

Photo Credit : Captured Moment

Sloan with Chef d'Equipe of USHJA Platinum Jumper Championship winning team, Mike Endicott

TEC – Tell us about your formal education.

SE - I am a graduate of University of San Diego with a major in Law, Crime, and Justice Studies and a minor in **Business Management. Before** I went to college, my mom sat me down and asked what I wanted to do When I told her I wanted to ride, she told me that I needed a back-up plan. I told her that I didn't want to dedicate all this time to riding, and then put it on hold and go away to college and have to start all over again in four years.

She told me that she and my dad would support me if I wanted to ride while in college, but I had to go to school. I learned how to juggle both endeavors in high school, so when college came around, I had four years of practice on how to do it. College is probably the hardest thing I've ever done, but I figured that if I was being forced to go to college, I would at least pick classes that I was interested in. That's where the major in Law, Crime, and Justice Studies came in. But then mom said if I was going to eventually run a business, I should probably know how to do that. So, Business Management became my minor.

TEC – Did you ever consider doing something in the field of law?

SE – I was actually NOT going to pursue riding as a career, and I was going to work for the FBI. That that my whole plan. But then I decided that I had a passion and riding was it, so I was going to do that. So I was a sophomore-trained junior in college, and was riding as a professional, and starting my business, and getting two degrees.

I did graduate in four years. My parents are very traditional, so there was no such thing as a gap year, or five years for college. So I went to every summer school class they offered that would get me points to my degree. That is actually where becoming the first recognized collegiate athlete of an equestrian came into play.

TEC – Tell us about that. SE - I was going to have to do five years, because I couldn't register for my classes. Being a freshman and a sophomore, you are at the bottom of the pecking order for classes. So my only option was to become a collegiate athlete, but an equestrian was not seen as an NCAA sport, so I had to go through USEF. I had to get approval and show that I was representing my country. That was about a two-year process from start to finish.

TEC – How do you integrate horsemanship into your training program?

SE – To me, horsemanship is definitely the most important. Mousie (Williams) made that clear to me. So early on I learned that it was about the welfare of the horse, and what they need, not necessarily what you want. We only jumped twice a week. Even today, my kids jump two days a week, and we do flatwork twice a week. Then they get a day to ride bareback, and do all the fun things kids do. They also tack up and tack down their horses themselves, and they get regular horsemanship quizzes.

TEC – You proved that Colin was a lot more than most people believed he was. How did you do that?

SE – Honestly, it was my greatest super-power, and that would be my stubbornness, and my reluctance to accept no for an answer. Basically, Colin was supposed to take me to the 1.20m level. I think my greatest attribute I can offer to a horse is confidence, and that we are always going to go to the other side.

I think being so young and having a bit of fearlessness, and to the best of my ability, never putting him in a situation that he couldn't handle, he never felt over faced or maxed out on his abilities. We did a lot of 'firsts' together; our first 1.30m class together, our first 1.40m class together, our first Grand Prix together. So a lot of it was the confidence we had in each other.

TEC – And now you are in a similar position with Cool Hand Luka, right?

SE – I convinced my parents to import him. But let me just say that being around such great influences like Nayel (Nassar) and Mike (Endicott), who are always watching videos of horses, and getting the opportunity to watch with them and hear what they had to say, I knew what to look for. I knew what I liked and what I didn't like.

So when I saw the video of Luka I had a really good feeling about him. He would be my first sales horse, to see if I could bring him in, put some time into him, and sell him. The more I rode him the more I fell in love with him. I realized that Luka could take



me to a higher level than Colin had. I am really enjoying this journey, so he is no longer for sale!

TEC – Who are your mentors?

SE – As a professional you need to keep a full toolbox handy, and I really take something from everybody. There have been so many. I hear Mousie a lot as my voice of reason. Nayel taught me how to be critical and how to look at a round and analyze it. Lane Clarke taught me that less is more. Mike brings such a light-hearted approach to it, and he really taught me the feel. And also, how to get the most out of a horse, and I believe Mike really catapulted my career on Colin. My Grand Prix career came alive because of Mike.

TEC – Who are your sponsors?

SE - Voltaire were the first ones to approach me about sponsorship. They were actually part of my decision to turn professional. I have EquiFit, my horses are dressed in EquiFit boots as well as their bonnets, and saddle pads, but also a lot of the stuff I use at home. I have Cavalor as one of my sponsors. They are my main feed sponsor, so all my horses are on Cavalor feed, and some are also on their supplements.

I partner with two others. One is CC Fits Equine, which is all about body work. The owner Carolyn has really kept Colin going at his absolute best. The other is All Night Check.

TEC – If forced to make a choice, do you enjoy riding, teaching, or training more?

SE - Riding. But I'm blessed with the ability to be a good trainer. As a young person I never thought I would, just because I would rather get on and fix it. As I've gotten older I have found a way to vocalize the feel and teach somebody how to do things. Parting Thoughts

SE - I see a lot on social media of people posting their jumping, but what about all the stuff that goes into jumping? There is a lot of flat work and working over poles on the ground. But I have to say that horsemanship starts before you ever get in the saddle. There is the importance of having a good relationship with your horse, being proficient at being able to perform basic tasks such as wrapping, putting your horse on the walker or taking him out for a turn out, learning how to build a course, and walking strides.

I also want them to know how to hook up my horse trailer and make that emergency run to the vet if necessary. So my goal for people in my program is to make them a well-rounded horseman, both in the saddle and being able to listen to their horse, but also on the ground before any of that even starts.



Mane Concierge

When it comes to navigating the world of horses and horse showing, there are few with as much experience as Melissa. Melissa is a mom to three, an entrepreneur, a horse lover and experienced equestrian professional with over 30 years in the industry.

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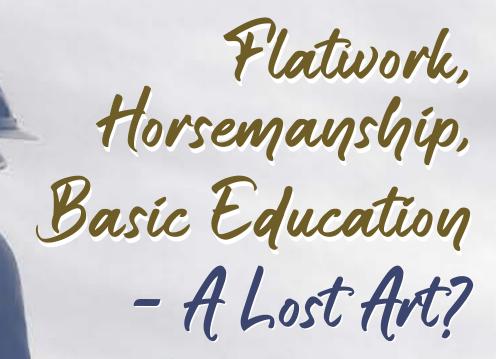
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he more we speak with people and watch classes, the more it seems that the importance of horsemanship and flatwork looks to be lacking a lot more than in the past. Just because things were done a certain way 'in the old days' does not mean they should now be obsolete.

Many people were willing to speak on the subject, and here are just a few of those ready to address the issue head on, for different reasons. We have included Bill Rube, Shelby and Randi Cashman, (for this article we spoke with Randi), Hope Glynn, Daniella Sternberg, and Natasha Traurig Ferrara.

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An equestrian his entire life, Bill has been involved in the horse industry in a variety of ways, including breeding horses to showing at the highest levels. His main focus is being able to give back to the sport he loves, and respecting the traditions that come with it.

He has worked for the USHJA, and received the USHJA President's Distinguished Service Award twice, in 2012 and 2013. He was also given the Volunteer of the Year Award in 2014 and the Moran Family Excellence Award in 2016.

And then there is the Wheeler Museum, which is dedicated to Sally and Kenny Wheeler, and started by Bill. It is located at the USHJA Headquarters at the Kentucky Horse Park. The Wheelers were instrumental in helping build the horse industry in the States, and they were given the American Horse Shows Association Lifetime Achievement Award in 1999.

As if all this is not enough, he is currently the Executive Director of the Gleneayre Equestrian Program. This program was established in 1998. Located in New Jersey, this is a non-profit program for at-risk youths ages 10-18. Through horses and horsemanship, these youths are able to develop responsibility, emotional growth, ethics, and much more.

After the first year they have the opportunity to apply for the Working Student Program, and if accepted, they are given a horse that they are responsible for. Under supervision, they learn all aspects of horsemanship, not just how to ride. It extends to the grooming and limited veterinary care, stall and tack cleaning, and even barn management skills.

All of these things are very near and dear to Bill, as he believes that it is quite important to keep the history of the sport alive today. He wants to see horsemanship passed on and not swept aside as if it is unnecessary. That is why, back in 2015, he created his Style of Riding Award.

There is a criterion for the Style of Riding Award. It is to go to the rider who best displays the American style of riding in the ring and the important aspect of sportsmanship while outside of the competition arena. The most deserving recipient will be one who serves as a role model for preserving the integrity of our sport while maintaining a standard of excellence and tradition in their riding.

"We presented every week during the 12-week circuit at the World Equestrian Center.



We alternated every three weeks between a 3' Derby, an Amateur Derby, and a 3'6" Derby. The best way to bring awareness is to lead by example. I choose to reward the equestrians with a style of riding award by sponsoring this at various horse shows."

Those chosen are given a duffel or garment bag, and a rose that they wear on their lapel throughout the handy round of the Derby to signify their achievement.

"I like good old-fashioned horsemanship. I watch the schooling area, and then the end result when they get in the ring. I take note of when they

Photo Credit: Andrew Ryback



"Good, all-around horsemen are very hard to find. I want to help change that."

come out of the ring as well. I like to see someone get off and check a leg if they must.

"I went back and forth between Wellington and Ocala, and I hate to say it," Bill continued, "but Wellington is just a different game. There are kids there that work their asses off, but for the most part, it is set up there for them to just show up, get on, and ride and get off. People treat the horse like a mini-bike.

"I want to place "the spotlight" on well-rounded horsemen and horsewomen of all ages. I believe good horsemanship equals good sportsmanship. As I said earlier, I watch what they do, and I also talk with in-gate people, schooling supervisors, and other people before I present.

"For example, Maddie Tosh was chosen because she is a rider who really tries, and goes above and beyond. She is not one of those brats that just gets on and rides; you see her doing everything. That is another aspect for this award. Those acknowledged are willing to do everything. She rides all of Betsy Parker's horses because of Hunt, her father, but she is not at all affected; very down to earth." Bill did say that he is feeling encouraged. For the first time in many years, he is witnessing good, old fashioned horsemanship making a comeback.

"While it is more evident at the grass roots level, I have noticed some trainers teaching the basics at the upper levels as well. The Style of Riding Award is my way of promoting good horsemanship. Paying it forward, you might say."

Bill wants to continue being around the business for as long as possible. He has a lot to offer, and is more than willing to do so.

Shelyy and Randi Case raining at Saddle River Equestrian out of Chestnut

JUS MIMOL

Equestrian out of Chestnut Ridge, New York, the sister team of Randi and Shelby Cashman are a force to be reckoned with. They have been around horses all of their lives, as their parents, Sherry and Peter were involved in horses.

The two met while Sherry was a harness horse racing trainer and driver, and Peter was also a driver. Fast forward many years, and you will find that both Sherry and Peter were coaches for West Point cadets in intercollegiate events in both hunt seat equitation and Western disciplines. All three children, Randi, Shelby and brother Shane competed, but it was the girls who followed their parents, choosing training as a career.

"We have a unique facility that allows a cross between grass roots and high-end equestrian sports. We are fortunate that we have trainers who are both capable and willing to teach all levels."

The basic education that the equitation brings is not only recognized by Randi and Shelby, but not surprisingly, Sherry as well. She believes that a strong base of support will create stabilization from the bottom of the foot all the way up.



Photo Credit: Shelby Phillips Photography "The bottom line is that basic flatwork and a strong foundation of flatwork is the most important thing we as trainers can do to keep our clients not only winning, but safe and always ready for the next step up."

Randi touched on a common problem that obviously fits into this article perfectly. She shared her thoughts.

"What I notice in our own facility, is that many people move to us and are progressed too quickly from the barn they came from. When they arrive, they expect to jump bigger jumps because we show at bigger shows. We often have to move kids down a division to allow them to soar back up.

"The basics are the absolute most important thing we can do to make this inherently dangerous sport as safe as possible," Randi said. "The foundation of a strong lower leg and flat work are what allows kids to move up the ranks- not just a good pony/horse."

While they do not focus extensively on dressage, their program does utilize basic dressage to improve the quality of that all-important flatwork. "While we do not teach dressage, all children benefit from a certain amount of dressage flatwork, especially as they progress to jumping.

"At the end of the day a course is just flat work with jumps in the middle. In the show ring keeping pace, using track, (modified leg yields), lead changes, collection, lengthening are all basic flatwork ideas that have a large place in any direction you go in the hunter/jumper community. Like so many others, I too read Hope's post on social media. As I did so, she just kept checking all the boxes regarding a lack of education and irresponsibility. Having already deciding to do an article along those lines, we knew we had to include her here.

Hope

Many things she mentioned rang true with us. One thing that she alluded to in her post was how scary it can be to sit and watch the lower-level jumper ring and witness firsthand how few of the riders, mainly young kids, have no concept of strides, track, or even a plan of how to ride the course at all. If they get to the jumps correctly it often looks like dumb luck. But there is another concept involved here. What is the trainers', and I use the word loosely, culpability?

"This is what I don't understand. I watch many of these classes, and wonder how putting these kids in the ring without the skills to do so is in their best interest? How can these people ignore the fact that this is also their liability?"

And this does not just apply to the rider and/or client. We have a responsibility to the horse as well. We are the horses' advocate. He cannot speak for himself. We need to know how to protect him, and put him in classes he can do his best job, and that does not mean he must win a ribbon. That is the icing on the cake. The horse needs to get a break when necessary. He needs to be treated when a problem arises, not just still compete because he is already entered. This is also the responsibility of the trainer. But if the person in charge is ignorant, they might not recognize a problem, or even care when they do see something.

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As time marches on, many of the true horsemen of the sport have retired or passed away, and she feels is part of the problem.

"Let me speak to this," Hope said. "There are many young professionals in the business that never really learned how to be a professional. They were bought nice horses, they rode, got out of the junior ranks, bought fancy drapes, and started a business.

"They never learned how to bring a horse along, they never trained a horse off the track, never lived with one at their house. Because they are hanging a fancy shingle out, people think they know what they are talking about. There are some good, young professionals out there, but there are also quite a few who have no idea how to train a horse or a client."



Hope feels that there has been a steady decline in actual horsemanship over the last 15-20 years. We wondered why she believes that to be the case.

"I think we have far more money in the industry being spent on horses, and you see less people that have a background in actually developing green horses and bringing horses along. Because of this, it has gotten easier to get in the business by just buying the setup with little to no education needed. There are people who can talk a big game, but don't actually know how to really train people and horses.

"There are not enough easy, made horses in the industry," Hope continued. "So what happens is, those horses are worth so much money that it just keeps driving the prices up. But we are not really getting anybody who is developing these horses."

She pointed out that there was a time when we had to develop our horses, because there were not enough good ones out there to be found.

"And you could be competitive on one that was a little greener," she said. "But the problem now is that the prices for good, made, fancy horses has gone through the roof, and there are not enough of them. So you might have supply and demand, but the demand is high."

Hope feels that Covid only made things worse, because it brought more wealthy people into the business who want immediate gratification, and they all want easy horses. "I am in the sales business, and I don't have anyone calling me for green hunters. I have people with huge budgets asking for made, 2'6" to 3' hunters. The majority of the people in our sport are 2'6" A/A ladies. We need to find a way to keep these horses going a lot longer. Longing every day at the horse shows takes a toll on these horses. There has to be another way."

And it is not only the beginning junior or the older A/A rider who has a problem. So many of the younger trainers cannot ride either, certainly not a greener horse or one that might have a spook or buck in them.

"I think there is a lack of horsemanship, but there is also a lack of professionals that have the skills, and choose to develop horses. So many are just looking for a quick fix, and there are not enough horses that you can buy that will stay trained and stay easy to ride.

"We need to be able to find horses and bring them along, giving them the foundations necessary, as well as train riders to be able to handle a horse that spooks a bit off the turn or is a little fresh. I don't think we are developing professionals that are like that, nor clients that are like that."

Many clients are also at fault. Trainers become 'Yes Men' in order to keep the client. They know they will just leave and go to somebody else, so they just say what the client wants to hear. Want your child to jump higher? No problem! Only want your kid in the jumper ring? Sure, hunter and equitation classes are a waste of time! "The parents want to be able to prove their kids are good at something to put on social media, showing that their kids are successful. Well, if you have enough money in this sport, you can buy a blue ribbon."

"Most of these parents only want to show off that blue ribbon at the dinner party. But there is also an influx of kids who are not athletic, and they can't find any other sport."

The reaction that Hope received since she expressed her opinions on the lack of education as well as a lack of work being put in to becoming a good rider on the part of both trainers and students makes her a bit more positive for the future of our sport. People echoed her viewpoint.

"The two main issues they brought up are that we're not bringing good enough professionals into this business and training them correctly, and that we don't have enough suitable starter horses in this country for beginner riders," says Glynn.

In Oregon, Hope gave a clinic that mentored other professionals, allowing for education to be passed along between those professional riders and trainers. This opportunity was thanks to the Colorado Hunter/Jumper Association, and provided scholarships for trainers to learn from and/or ride with other trainers in different areas in the industry.

Colorado-based trainer Ann Fouret was Hope's mentor for this clinic, and also rode in it. This provided the chance for these professionals to receive more education on teaching different types of riders as well as dealing with individual issues that horses and riders were having. What a great concept!

There is not a clear-cut answer for the problems our industry faces – yet. For those in the sport for the love of the horse and the positive experience of showing to the best of our ability, we hope things are trending in a positive direction. Danjella

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Daniella has a small number of clients in her training business. Her main focus is as a rider, but slowly she started to gain some clients. Still, she keeps that on the small side, as well as having sales horses.

"My riding has really been on young horses, and with them, you really can't jump them all the time. That's just not the way to do things. So putting the adjustability in, putting the balance in; that can all be done on the flat without putting all those miles on the legs.

"My program is a bit varied," she continued. "I do a lot of flatwork. I jump maybe once a week, maybe even every other week. And I think the reason that we are seeing people believing that flatwork isn't as important is that a lot of the time the trainers are doing the flatwork instead of the clients, and the clients just want to show up and jump."

That has always been an issue when she gets new clients in. She tells them that they will not be jumping that much. They will be jumping every other week. But then she adds these comments to those clients. "But watch, when you spend the time on your flatwork and you realize why you did things, your jumping is going to be SO much better. It is really the flatwork between the fences. Yes, you might have 12 fences, and the second you are in front of the fence and the second you are actually jumping yes, you're jumping. But in the lines, in the bending lines, in the roll back, that's all your flatwork."

Even though Daniella has young horses, she does not believe that the answer for young horses to learn how to jump is to constantly jump them. This brought up an interesting point.

"That's not really true, because we do a lot of that in the breeding. When we breed a horse we choose the best jumpers on either side, so their ability is very natural for them. It's the balance, and the connection, and all those things that need to be worked on. That's all flatwork."

Another thing that she feels is a bit of a problem is that there are trainers who do not want to pursue knowledge. "I want to continue to get better. I seek help, I look for more. I have an eventing trainer that I kind of run my business with, and obviously she does dressage. So, going to her, asking for those tips, hauling out and going to a dressage trainer; just seeking that knowledge. Put yourself in uncomfortable situations, it makes you better.

"I think that is going away. There is such a worry about retaining clients, keeping our business and keeping our secrets to ourselves. You have to always better yourself. Put yourself out there and be open to criticism. Clients come to us to learn, but I think every trainer should have a trainer."

Daniella feels there is also a need for client education. The clients need to know how to flat their horses correctly. She does not see that anymore. At the horse shows on off days, she sees the trainers flatting them, and the clients don't show up. They don't even come to watch what is being done. "I get clients from barns that jump three times a week, and the kid only rides three days a week. They don't come out to flat their horses. And you start to see the difference at the higher levels. You can tell the riders that put in the hours and the time. Their horses are more adjustable, turns are easier, and they start to win.

"Unfortunately, at the lower levels kids can get away with a lot. At least at the upper levels we can begin to see that flatwork really starts to pay off. I think that's hard for kids; they see someone bombing around at .65m at mach-10 speed and they think that's the way to go, because that kid went home with a blue ribbon.

"At least with the equitation," Daniella continued, "we have that in our back pocket that kind of brings forward good riders, but you have to have a horse that's geared toward that. Unfortunately, there are those kids whose parents just don't have the money to go out and spend six figures on a really nice equitation horse. Some kids ride beautifully and do all the right things, but they won't win. So it's easier to go just run around in small jumper classes."

Daniella does not really let her kids course higher than what they are showing unless there is a real reason for it. She feels that if the students can ride the course well at the level they are showing, then why do they need to jump two, three, or four holes higher?

"We are horsemen first; we are trainers for people second. The horse comes first. Mat is our job. We are horse traineys!"



Photo Credit: Lindsey Long Photography "If you want to move up that's another thing. When I rode in Europe, if you could ride a course at .80m well, there was no reason you couldn't ride a 1.0m well. Good riding is good riding, it shouldn't matter what the height of the fence is.

"But nowadays, kids want the blue ribbons, and they want to jump big fences and post on social media. They can show their friends how big they are jumping, but you don't see the chips two fences before that photo," she laughed. "They don't know what can happen until it happens, and then they blame the trainer."

She believes that some trainers feel that pressure to retain those clients, by letting them do what they want, and figure they can get on the horse and fix it afterwards. She thinks that people bend their standards of their business to cater to those people. It is a very hard thing to balance.

Along that same line, Daniella feels that there are those people who do believe in the flatwork and horsemanship is important, but do not keep it in their program. They still cater to their clients who want to show up and not do the work. She said that it is very important to have it as a standard; it is not negotiable. They must learn the flat work in a consistent program, not just flat one day and jump the rest of the time.

"I really want my kids to fix the things themselves on the flat. If you have an issue, we will spend time fixing it; I'm not going to get on the horse and fix it for you, and then two days later you have the same problem again. I want you to learn how to fix the problem and figure out why you are having that problem. Things like how to control the shoulder, how to properly turn your horse, how to have a nice transition, upward and downward."

Daniella made reference to Hope's social media comments, and was blown away that junior and amateur riders could not count strides in upper-level classes.

"It takes three poles, spaced four strides apart, for a kid to learn how to do strides. You don't have to jump. You could put them on a school horse! It takes very little. For me, I want my clients to become better riders. I don't want to keep buying them better horses just to jump bigger fences.

"I don't like the stigma of just recycling horses, when every time something goes wrong, new one! I think it goes back to flatwork. If you can get good flatwork on a horse, there is no reason you have to keep recycling them. but if you keep jumping the big fences badly, you are going to break them, physically and/or mentally." Natasha

Natasha is very aware that she was fortunate to have two special parents to instill the basics in her at the earliest opportunity. With the dressage background she received from her mom Christine, and the all-around fabulous education she was given by dad Bernie, Natasha learned very quickly that horsemanship came before sport – ALWAYS.

"I took care of my own horses while I was growing up," she told us, "and I still do today. We did not have grooms and it allowed me to learn the fundamentals of horse care. More importantly, it developed a strong bond with my horse(s). Today, even having my own business, I still take care of my own horse. It's very hard for me to not be hands-on with my partner. I want to know everything about my horses; they are my best friends and I enjoy the time in the stable with them."

Another advantage, although it might not have seemed like it at the time, was that Natasha had to learn things on her own. That gave her the ability to ride instinctively, and not just rely on being told what to do every stride.

"Another important factor of my education growing up was that my parents made me ride on my own A LOT. I was given "homework," videos to watch and books to read. When I was given a lesson, I had to prove that I did "my homework." In my opinion, this made me a better rider and horseman.



One of the things that she has noticed at the horse shows is the lack of care and preservation of the horses.

"This is not the mentality I grew up with: our horses and their health came before any class, ribbon, or prize money opportunity. I believe a lot of learning and practice can be accomplished by good flatwork over poles on the ground. We should not jump the legs off of our horses just for our own practice over fences. A greater dedication to flatwork and dressage fundamentals can make a world of difference in a rider's position and feeling, and consequently a difference in the horse's rideability.

"I find that missing in the education of many young riders," she continued. "Some riders are given draw reins (with no education on how to



"I had to learn about my horse. I had to "teach myself." In this way, I developed FEELING and INTUITION something I see lacking in young ridens and how some lessons are taught and micromanaged today."

properly use them, which is a form of art in itself!) or aggressive bits just to get the horses' head down, yet they have no understanding of the mechanics of frame and connection, hind end engagement, and thoroughness in the topline! I find that flatwork and understanding proper conditioning of the horse should be fundamental to a rider's education, no matter what level they jump."

Julia B'20

We discussed the problem that has been touched on already by others; those lower-level jumper riders with no concept of distance, rhythm, or pace. This subject caused Natasha to look back at her childhood.

"At a young age, my father taught me the importance of riding properly and with intention. He was a perfectionist, and even if I was showing a .80m class on a pony, my 3-stride turns had to be exactly three strides, demonstrating a perfect parallel line. I had to shape my corners. I had to make an effort to plan the lines and ride the course to the best I could of what we walked and mentally planned. "If I won by riding erratically, this was not a "win" nor correct riding in my father's book. As you can imagine, this led me to be quite frustrated as I watched my peers win by running wild and making crazy turns, then moving up the levels quickly even if they were missing to the fences and/or crashing their horses. However, I learned how to ride correctly and professionally, which later on allowed me to move up and ride the bigger levels with ease."

Natasha pointed out that she did not do much equitation, as the financial resources were limited. But Bernie always told her that, 'Beautiful riding is correct and effective riding.' She was able to learn in the jumper arenas with that dedication to ride correctly.

"I find this to be a lost art in the smaller classes, as I watch far too many riders running like maniacs over speed bumps to get a ribbon, causing accidents and certainly not demonstrating what riding is about."

Her training is based on two main things; conditioning the horse to be physically fit and mentally fresh. She wants them to be happy and enjoy their job. She doesn't want them to get bored by doing the same thing every day.

"I believe in turning out my horses and allowing them to be outside - to be a horse! I believe in working my horses out on trails and fields, on different footing and environments. (Of course, this depends on if you have access to trails and turn out.) I don't believe horses need to jump often and over big fences. For the most part, I work on flatwork, ground poles and doing gymnastics with my horses.

"When I'm getting ready for a show is usually when I will incorporate schooling over a course and prepare for the demands of a competition. I also believe in giving my horses plenty of rest and recovery, especially for the young ones. Horses need rest days, downtime, and vacation, just like we do. I program design the workload and schedule for each horse depending on their specific needs and personality. Every day is set with the intention of keeping them happy, healthy, sound, and physically fit and fresh."

Natasha does know many trainers who prioritize horsemanship above all else. She hopes that the sport can shift to that more here in the states, and not lose sight of why we do this.

"It is all for the horses, no? It's possible that today though, the sport is so expensive and many trainers that have a business these days possibly have it for the wrong reasons (money or fame over the passion for the horse), which has in turn created areas in riding and horsemanship education to decline."

She did admit that she might not be the best one to speak on this subject.

"I have been lucky enough to be raised by my parents, educated by and worked for some incredible horsemen and trainers, and have had wonderful hands-on clients in my own business. So, in a sense, I've been in and around the better part of the horse world. But I have seen the other side exhibited all too often at all levels of the sport and the industry."

She acknowledged that there are many young professionals in our sport that care for the horses, ride well, are educated and work hard, and yet they do NOT get the credit or advertisement that they deserve. But she does see a lack of knowledge in the ability to make horses.

"Developing young horses is my greatest passion, so maybe I am biased in my opinion of holding this so important. But I do not see that we are fostering young professionals to learn how to produce horses. I see too many professionals mounted very well and constantly win this way; yet, when put on a difficult horse or a very green horse, they fall apart, oftentimes losing patience and dedication to the project.

"To me, this is the greatest threat to our sport today – we are producing too many riders that are competition riders that can win on made horses, and not enough horsemen that are willing to take the time to develop a young horse or train a troubled one."

Just what is the takeaway from all this? To put it VERY simply, horses need to be broke on the flat and riders need to learn how to do that. It is all about good education for the both of them. Your horse is not a tool, he is a partner. Treat him like that!

Photo Credit: Grandpix

The Importance of **Menta Strength** in Our Sport

onya Johnston, MA, is a highly sought-after Mental Skills Coach who specializes in working with equestrian athletes. With a Masters degree in Sports Psychology, Tonya taught at John F. Kennedy University in the Sports Psychology Masters program. In 2010 she was awarded Teacher of the Year in the Graduate School of Professional Psychology at the JFK University, and was also awarded the Alumni of the Year in 2013.

"I knew I was interested in psychology because I had taken an AP (Advanced Placement) psychology class in my senior year of high school. I was also very interested in understanding the behind the scenes with performers, riders, and my friends. I helped people in high school. We each have our certain niche. Mine was giving support to folks." When she began showing regularly, Tonya noticed a trend. On Sunday she was just clocking around, and wondered why she couldn't ride on Friday like she did on Sunday? That was always a curious concept to her. But it was much later when she could put the pieces together. "I didn't really know about the field of sports psychology; it was very young in the United States when I graduated high school in the late 80's. I majored in psychology in college, but realized I didn't really want to work with people around clinical issues so much.

"But in my junior year of college, I heard what sports psychology was about. The idea of working with athletes to enhance performance, build mental strength, and help them to be more confident and consistent was a draw for me. A big light bulb went off, and I knew that was it."

Photo Credit: Holly Casner



Sports psychology was the perfect fit for Tonya. She recognized the importance of learning about yourself, and having greater awareness of what your strengths are. She was aware of how having routines to create comfort in uncomfortable settings were vital in handling pressure, be that environmental or self-induced.

"That was all very exciting for me. I opened my practice in 1993. I worked for a number of years and always tinkered with the idea of writing a book, but never really set aside the time. Then in 2008, with the financial struggles we faced in this country, my work slowed down a bit, and I thought this might be a good time write my book. I started to do that. I wrote an outline and a first chapter, and then work just took off again, so the book went on the shelf, literally."

Roughly three years later she was approached by a publisher who had heard her speak, as well as reading



some of the articles she wrote. He told her he wanted her to write a book.

"I said, 'Well, have I got a book for you!' They wanted it to be a book about fear, but I created the opportunity to expand. I explained to them that the work that I do is much more comprehensive and whole-hearted than simply tackling problems. It is more about gaining a relationship with your horse and accessing your skills consistently.

"Obviously, some people come to me who are scared, but my book is a lot more well-rounded than that. So I got to write the book that I wanted to write, and that worked for them. The book is Inside Your Ride."

Sometime this summer, Inside Your Ride will be available on Audible as well. This was a long time coming, as the book was published in 2012. The nice thing is, the basic concepts have not changed.

"There are a lot of solid, fundamental tools for everyone's mental toolbox. The idea is to understand yourself, have tools that work for you, polish these tools, and continue to be interested in how you tick. That's the thing; we're never "finished" figuring ourselves out because we are always changing. It is really important to stay interested and engaged mentally with what is available to you."

Tonya is also a very successful equestrian competitor, and with her lovely horse Galactic, she has found great success. In 2021 the pair were the World Champion Hunter Rider (WCHR) 3'6" Amateur/Owner Hunter National Champions. They were Champion in the "A" 3'6" 36 & Over Amateur-Owner Hunters for the Pacific Coast Horse Shows Association (PCHA) in 2019.

Tonya also shined in the Medal classes. She won the California Professional Horsemen's Association (CPHA) Foundation Medal Finals 22 & Over, the Foxfield Medal Finals, the Hudson & Co Jr/Am Medal Finals and the PCHA Adult Medal Finals.

"In my personal riding journey, when I was growing up I had a lot of passion but not a lot of resources, so I did what I could. I catch rode, and rode sale horses, and begged and borrowed. I had nice support from some trainers who would help me out and find me horses to ride.

"I have been showing my entire life, since I was five; there was just a gap for college. The fact that I can own a horse now and go places, and go after goals, that is such a gift. As I said, when I was a junior that was a big challenge just finding horses to ride, much less show. So I feel very grateful that my work has kind of dovetailed with my own growth as a rider.

"I am blessed to be around people that have helped, encouraged, and supported me, like my trainer, Leylan Gleeson. So here we are now, where I'm qualified for Devon and going to Devon with my horse for the first time. I'm very excited for that. I just want both Galactic and me to bring our best to that stage. I look forward to experiencing our partnership on that stage." There was a time when Tonya also played volleyball, but her profession has carried her into many, many other sports as well.

"There is such a wide range of sport. You know, when I started my practice, the internet wasn't really a thing, right? So to have a private practice in this niche that was new, I had to work with a variety of sports, or I wouldn't have been able to sustain myself.

"As the internet came on, and I was presenting at different associations, my name really arew. At this point I really work primarily with hunter/jumper folks. But in the beginning, I worked with tennis players, golfers, swimmers, volleyball players and teams, rowers, surfers, professional bowlers. I had a very interesting client who did ultra mountain biking, these 24-hour races. I worked with a bull rider. So it is an interesting variety that keeps it going, but my main focus is in the hunter/jumper world."

We were curious as to whether there were certain things in particular people needed help with.

"Confidence and focus," Tonya said. "Another common thing would be people feeling like they are nervous, and wanting help with that around competition. One more big thing that limits people is the fear of failing. But there is really such a quilt of different aspects of it.

"People just see opportunity, and that's how I like to look at it. Instead of looking at it as 'Let's just go fix problems,' my question is, 'Where is your growth? Where is the opportunity there? How can we bump up your proficiency in a straight forward way?'"

But don't think for a minute that those with great success already behind them don't want to improve. Tonya has worked with many big names who have realized that there is still more to be gained.

"It's not about people who are not successful. Those people still want to work on their mental game. It's so important in sports, and performance of any kind, just looking at how you approach it, how you talk to yourself, all of that is so crucial. And the thing about mental skills coaches, not everybody is for everybody. In this day and age, you have options."

And just in case you are wondering if there was ever a time when she herself felt she might need some help for the show ring, here is your answer.

"Oh yes, and I still do," she laughed. "I think that anybody who wants to be the best at something is going to be learning and growing, and looking at all possible avenues to help them improve."

Visit Tonya's website at tonyajohnston.com

Photo Credit: High Desert Sports Photo

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Equestrian Super Moms!

Anyone who has children know how much time must be spent with them. There is school, outside activities which often necessitates driving them from place to place, and all the other things a parent wants to do with and for their children. Now add horse shows to the mix for the moms, and you have another dimension that is also time-consuming. We spoke with four horse show moms to get their takes on how they get it all done:

VH	Vanessa Hood – Husband Gavin – One daughter Milly, age 11
KP	Keri Potter – Husband Adrian Dollarhide – Three daughters, step-daughter Grace who is 22, CC 18 years old, and Charlotte, age 11.
LA	Lindsay Archer – Husband Matt – Two daughters, Lillie age 11, and Addi who is 12.
TD	Tina DiLandri Yates – Husband Jonathan (goes by Craig) – Daughters Penelope Scarlett, almost five, Harriet Grace who is three-and-a-half, and a little boy who is now almost two.

THE Equestrian Catalog – Do you both ride, show, and teach on a regular basis?

Vanessa Hood – I am the only equestrian in the family. Gavin is an entrepreneur who also has a busy career and travel schedule (though COVID has turned both of our schedule's upside down for a while!). I ride full-time, showing and training with my horses. I would love to teach in the future. For now, I am focused on learning and gaining as much experience as I can in the sport. **Keri Potter** – It definitely is a difficult balance between family life and work life, especially with a sport like ours where we have to travel a fair amount. I have been quite fortunate to have amazing live-in nannies over the years that have been part of our family helping us raise our kids. I am sure I could not have done it without them and in such a healthy, loving, positive way.

Lindsay Archer – When the girls were little, I was both riding and teach-

ing. We were very fortunate; Matt and I had a nanny who helped us with the girls. But I found in particular, that having the girls really brought a lot more perspective to everything. I think that made us appreciate the riding and teaching more, because they showed us the reality of where the priorities were.

Tina DiLandri Yates – Yes. At the moment I'm not riding because of my pregnancy, but I'm training.

Tina DiLandri Yates Photo credit: taken by family

TEC - How do you balance all three (or two) of those things with children?

VH - I try to take it one step at a time. We recently moved to Wellington which has been game-changing in this respect because for five to six months of the year, I can compete almost continuously and still be at home with my family.

KP – I have been able to keep my business relatively small so I can spend the time I have at home with my kids when I am there. I have been able to organize my work during the school hours so I can take afternoons off to be with them when I am not at horse shows. My husband, Adrian, and I have always scheduled a "date night "on Tuesdays. This gives us time to catch up and spend some quality time together. We have been pretty religious about our Tuesday nights but had to put a pause on it during Covid.

LA – I think the horse world can be all-consuming when you are in it. When you have kids, it makes you realize that it's important and it's great, but there are a lot of other things in life more important.



TDY – Balancing all three things is a challenge. I am a laid back, go with the flow type of person so when things aren't going as planned, I try and take everything in stride. When you don't sleep all night, babies are up crying, or whatever the circumstance is, you have to be able to adapt and just say okay it is what it is; find the inner strength and just keep going!

TEC - What is the hardest part of doing your job and taking care of a family?

VH – I'd say the biggest challenge is managing all the travel. I'm in a phase in my career where I want to work and push as hard as I can which means I have to be on the road showing for the other half of the year. I'm still figuring out how to balance everything. I find it helps to have a rough idea of the schedule for the year and then finalize the plan one week or month at a time. Show jumping is an unpredictable sport; there are a lot of ups and downs in terms of where you are as a rider and where your horses are, so I find that staying flexible with scheduling is best. It can be overwhelming to think in too broad strokes, like how will I do this next year and the next? It's easy to get overwhelmed. If I just think about what plans we need to make next, I find that things generally work out well. There are always going to be challenges and sometimes tough decisions when balancing family and show jumping, but I believe it's possible to do both well. I'm inspired by Laura Kraut because she is a mom, (a great person!) and she is successful at the top of the sport.

LA - Having a schedule is very important. Before Covid we would be home for two or three weeks and then we would go on the road for a week or two. When we would go to the Desert Circuit the kids would always come with us on independent studies for school. The other shows were close enough to home that they would do school during the week and meet us on the weekend. They knew the routine; Matt and I would be gone a little bit, but then we would be home. CoVid changed all that, but routine is what enables everyone to get into a rhythm that seems like our version of normal.

TDY – The hardest part about this job is always being on the go. There are mornings when I'm not there to make them breakfast, do their hair, get them dressed and there are afternoons I'm not there until almost dinner and bath time. The first few years of their life are so important for development that I try my best to be the most hands on that I can be. **KP** – I think the hardest part about being a horse rider and trainer and balancing family life is leaving town and leaving all of the responsibilities to my husband and nanny. We were able to fine-tune this over the

years so it got a lot easier but it is always hard to say goodbye at the beginning of a week. Luckily a lot of the horse shows are pretty close so if possible, on weekends my family will come to visit me and spend some time where I am riding.



TEC - Do you and your husband split the work with the child or children 50/50 or do you have another way that works?

KP – Adrian is a very hands-on dad but also has a very demanding job as a doctor and advisor of his hospital. When I am home, I try to take most of the family chores. I do love cooking every night, picking the girls up from school and taking them to their afterschool activities and being a part of their lives in that way. Before I leave for the week, I make sure he has dinners in the fridge for the rest of the week and we lock in the nanny on her responsibilities. We definitely have it down to a very well-oiled machine! But it took a lot of years to perfect it!!! On weekends he is very hands-on with the kids when I am gone and even when I am there. I am super lucky to have a super supportive partner. We are a great team! **VH** – Yes, we share evenly the responsibility of balancing our family and careers - we're very much a team in that way. We are also fortunate enough to have childcare help with Milly which makes balancing much easier. And we mess it up sometimes! Then we learn and adjust. I think the key is that we share the philosophy that it is possible to thrive personally and professionally.



LA – Our business has always been on the smaller side, and we do every aspect of it; from the management of the farm at home, to the employees at home. I do all of the bookkeeping and horse show entries, while Matt does the transportation and manages all maintenance on the farm.

As far as the riding goes, we split that up 50/50. There are definitely horses that are his type, and the other way around. So, all of it is under our control. We have come up with routines that allow us to do what we are best at. We know what each person is good at, and divide the duties up that way. But ultimately, we do share the work, both with the business and the girls. That is what has worked well for us.

TDY – Sometimes you feel like a terrible mom or dad for not being there 24/7 but that's not reality; we have jobs and need to make a living. I am also not afraid to admit that I need my time away from them. I need time to do the job I love. Craig and I are fortunate to have help in order for both of us to continue our jobs.

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Blenheim EquiSports continues to offer top sport at the FEI and USEF Premier Hunter level. Highlights of the 2023 show season included the exciting Longines FEI Jumping Nations Cup [™] USA (held in May), the Adequan/USEF JR Hunter National Championships – West, a Longines FEI Jumping World Cup[™] North American League Qualifier, two weeks of WCHR competition, USHJA International, National, and Pony Hunter Derby events; the Whitethorne Equitation Challenge; Medal Finals and so much more.



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Elisa Broz and Kardenta Van't Meerhof Desert International Horse Park, Desert Circuit V, Thermal, CA, February 12 \$145,100 Premier Equestrian CSI3* Grand Prix Photo: High Desert Sport Photo

Gregory Wathelet and Berline Du Maillet Z Desert International Horse Park, Desert Circuit VI, Thermal, CA, February 17 \$145,100 Pomponio Ranch CSI4* 1.50m Welcome Prix Photo: High Desert Sport Photo



Kent Farrington and Orafina Desert International Horse Park, Desert Circuit VI, Thermal, CA, February 19 \$226,000 Adequan CSI4* Grand Prix Photo: High Desert Sport Photo



Vanessa Mannix and Carmela Z Desert International Horse Park, Desert Circuit VII, Thermal, CA, March 3 \$5,000 Bridgeport Farms CSI3* Two Phase Photo: High Desert Sport Photo



Katie Laurie and Django Desert International Horse Park, Desert Circuit VII, Thermal, CA, March 5 \$145,100 FEI 1.50m Grand Prix CSI3* Photo: Jana Kay



Nick Haness and Estimated Prophet Desert International Horse Park, Desert Circuit VIII, Thermal, CA, March 10 \$50,000 Butet USHJA International Hunter Derby Photo: High Desert Sport Photo



Gregory Wathelet and Ace of Hearts Desert International Horse Park, Desert Circuit VIII, Thermal, CA, March 12 \$145,100 Go Rentals CSI3* 1.55m Grand Prix Photo: Jana Kay Nick Haness and McQueen Desert International Horse Park, Desert Circuit IX, Thermal, CA, March 17 \$100,000 WCHR West Coast Hunter Spectacular Photo: High Desert Sport Photo



Avery Glynn and Zeren Desert International Horse Park, Desert Circuit IX, Thermal, CA, March 18 R.W. Mutch Equitation Championship Photo: High Desert Sport Photo



Conor Swail and Vital Chance De La Roque Desert International Horse Park, Desert Circuit IX, Thermal, CA, March 19 \$226,000 Marshall & Sterling CSI4* Grand Prix Photo: Jana Koy



Lisa Goldman-Smolen and Ivaro N Hits Ocala, Ocala, FL, March 26 Great American \$300,000 Grand Prix Photo: ESI Photography



Katie Taylor Davidson and Kingsley Blenheim Spring Classic I, San Juan Capistrano, CA, April 6 \$15,000 UHSJA National Hunter Derby Hunt & Go Photo: McCool Photography



Camilo Rueda and Indus van het Keysereyck Blenheim Spring Classic I, San Juan Capistrano, CA, April 6 \$25,000 CSI2* 1.45m Silver Tour Speed Stake Photo: McCool Photography



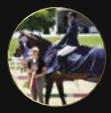
Camilo Rueda and Indus van het Keysere



Camilo Rueda and Indus van het Keysereyck Blenheim Spring Classic I, San Juan Capistrano, CA, April 8 \$50,000 CSI2* 1.45m Silver Tour Grand Prix Photo: McCool Photography







Cathleen Driscoll and Floyylia Kentucky Horse Park, Kentucky Spring Horse Show, Lexington, KY, May 10 \$38,700 1.45m Welcome Stake CSI3* Photo: Shawn McMillan Photography



Ali Ramsey and Bonita VH Keizershof Z Kentucky Horse Park, Kentucky Spring Horse Show, Lexington, KY, May 11 \$38,700 Kentucky Spring Classic 1.45m CSI3* Photo: Shawn McMillan Photography



Lillie Keenan and Agana van het Gerendal Z San Juan Capistrano International, San Juan Capistrano, CA, May 11 <u>CHF68,00</u>0 Welcome Speed CSI5*



Photo: McCool Photography

McLain Ward and Kasper van het Hellehof San Juan Capistrano International, San Juan Capistrano, CA, May 12 CSIO5* Longines Grand Prix Photo: McCool Photography



Conor Swail and Vital Chance De La Roque

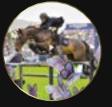
San Juan Capistrano International, San Juan Capistrano, CA, May 12 \$40,000 CSI2* Winning Round Photo: McCool Photography



Quinten Judge and HH Zorro Z Kentucky Horse Park, Kentucky Spring Horse Show, Lexington, KY, May 13 \$145,100 Hagyard Lexington Grand Prix, CSI3* Photo: Shawn McMillan Photography



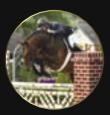
Keri Potter and Bisou San Juan Capistrano International, San Juan Capistrano, CA, May 13 \$77,300 CSI2* San Juan International Grand Prix Photo: McCool Photography



Mathias Fernandez Cuevas and Emotion des Truffers San Juan Capistrano International, San Juan Capistrano, CA, May 13 CHF35,000 CSI5* Speed Photo: McCool Photography



Team USA – Karl Cook, Laura Kraut, Chef d'Equipe Robert Ridland, Lillie Keenan, and McLain Ward San Juan Capistrano International, San Juan Capistrano, CA, May 14 Longines FEI Jumping Nations Cup CSI5* Photo: McCool Photography Christopher Payne and Reign Kentucky Horse Park, Kentucky Spring Horse Show, Lexington, KY, May 14 USHJA International Hunter Derby Photo: Shawn McMillan Photography

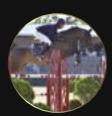


Cathleen Driscoll and Go With The Flow

Kentucky Horse Park, Kentucky Horse Shows Spring Classic, Lexington, KY, May 17 \$38,700 Welcome Speed 1.45m CSI3* Photo: Shawn McMillan Photography



Luis Pedro Biraben and Chacco Bumpy Kentucky Horse Park, Kentucky Horse Shows Spring Classic, Lexington, KY, May 18 \$38,700 Kentucky Spring Classic 1.45m CSI3* Photo: Shawn McMillan Photography



Lauren Balcomb and Verdini d'Houtveld Z Kentucky Horse Park, Kentucky Horse Shows Spring Classic, Lexington, KY, May 20 \$145,100 Mary Rena Murphy Grand Prix CSI3* Photo: Shawn McMillan Photography



Lane Clarke and Venom Temecula Valley National I, Temecula, CA, May 27 \$75,000 Grand Prix, II. 2(a) Photo: Captured Moment Photography



Michelle Berry and Mecho Van't Kiezelhof Temecula Valley National II, Temecula, CA, May 27 \$75,000 Grand Prix, II. 2(a) Photo: Jana Kay



McLain Ward and Alanine De Vains HITS-on-the-Hudson I, Saugerties, NY, May 28 \$100,000 FarmVet Grand Prix Photo: ESI Photography



McLain Ward and Alanine De Vains HITS-on-the-Hudson II, Saugerties, NY, June 4 \$100,000 FarmVet Grand Prix Photo: ESI Photography

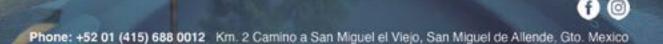




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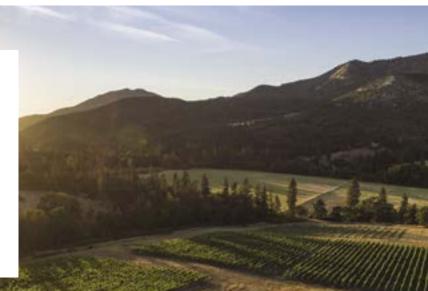
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