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## AN INSIDER'S VIEW

### *of the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics*

BY NANCY JAFFER

*The U.S. haul of equestrian medals from the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games is a dazzling array of gold, silver, and bronze, all hard-won under difficult circumstances that posed a challenge unique in the history of the global championships.*

The definitive test is set at every Olympic and Paralympic Games, with riders' personal reputations and the honor of their country at stake in a competition watched by millions around the world. The complexities of the COVID-challenged Games in Tokyo, Japan took that test to another level, however, not only for athletes and their horses, but also for the diligent US Equestrian (USEF) support staff and leaders who played such a big role in the country's success. At the same time, the United States Equestrian Team (USET) Foundation stepped up to help, as expenses soared due to difficult logistics and all the changes required for participation in Tokyo.

The issues started in 2020, with the onset of the pandemic, and postponement of the Games to 2021. The original plans dealing with qualifiers, team selection, quarantine, flights, room reservations, and countless other details had to be scrapped. USEF staffers basically had to start over; then they hustled to keep up as things continued changing with alarming regularity.

On the sport side, there was work to be done in figuring out how to deal with the three-rider format, which did not provide drop scores for teams, creating extra pressure by making every performance crucial.

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Dear Friends,

In our previous United States Equestrian Team (USET) Foundation newsletter, we recognized the breadth and depth of the talent in our sport's High Performance pipeline. This summer at the 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo, Japan, we witnessed the culmination of this pipeline and the many years of training and preparation, in combination with the tenacity of our sport's leaders, athletes, and team members, as everyone navigated through and overcame what seemed like insurmountable challenges due to COVID-19.

Yet, by the end of August, our equestrian teams prevailed and made it home safely with an abundance of Olympic and Paralympic medals between our dressage, jumping, and para dressage teams, and a successful performance by our eventing team. Doug Payne, in particular, made an impression as the highest-ranked U.S. eventing rider at the Games despite being a first-time Olympian. I'm pleased to feature him and his success in this issue.

We witnessed history as our U.S. dressage team claimed a silver medal—the first time our team brought home an Olympic medal of that color since 1948. History was made again when the U.S. para dressage team claimed the team bronze medal, and world number one para dressage rider Roxanne Trunnell landed individual gold twice and set a world record with a score of 86.927 percent. The jumping team also earned its second consecutive Olympic team silver medal.

Our Olympic and Paralympic team's alternates and traveling reserves also had a unique but incredibly important job this year. Each of these athletes trained as if they were going to compete, and though they did not, they contributed to each team's success from start to finish.

The pride I feel for our nation after these Games is second to none.

As US Equestrian (USEF) Director of Sport Will Connell notes in Nancy Jaffer's article about the Games, we have the team at USEF and their momentous efforts to thank for overcoming the logistical challenges and changes required to compete in Tokyo. I agree, and I want to acknowledge one more special group of individuals that made this Olympic and Paralympic dream a reality, and that is the horses' owners.

Without the dedication of our passionate owners, the greatness of equestrian sport in the U.S. would not be possible, nor sustainable. In this issue, we recognize our Olympic and Paralympic horse owners and take a peek behind the curtain to better understand what has driven some of them to take on this role in the sport's landscape and what makes a successful partnership between an owner and an athlete. I am honored to be able to work with these individuals who care so deeply about the horse and the sport, and I'm extremely grateful for their unwavering support.

Over the summer, we also applauded the success of our teams in non-Olympic disciplines including para driving and vaulting and had much to celebrate as our nation's young jumping and dressage riders brought home medals at the 2021 FEI North American Youth Championships (NAYC), proving yet again that the pathway to High Performance is thriving.

This issue also pays tribute to Mason Phelps, Jr., an undeniably generous supporter of the U.S. equestrian teams before his passing earlier this year. His generosity will live on through the \$1 million legacy gift he made to the USET Foundation and through an endowment fund that has been set up in his name to continue the support he provided throughout his lifetime to the U.S. equestrian teams of the future.

We also remember Bert Firestone, a lifelong horseman who was respected in multiple equestrian industries including Thoroughbred racing and fox hunting as well as for his pivotal governance roles with the USET and USET Foundation.

As we head into the final months of 2021, I want to express my gratitude and appreciation for all of our supporters that continue to stand behind our country's athletes despite nearly two years of uncertainty and challenges. Across all disciplines, we have already come out stronger and more prepared than ever to sustain and build on our incredible achievements. I am heading into the fall with great excitement and optimism and hope you will be, too.

Sincerely,

Bonnie Jenkins  
Executive Director



*The United States Equestrian Team Foundation (USET) is a philanthropic partner of US Equestrian (USEF). The USET Foundation funds U.S. teams and programs through charitable gifts and donations and makes grants to USEF annually.*



# THE TOKYO OLYMPICS AND PARALYMPICS

*"I've done a few Games and championships; I have to say it was kind of at the last minute we got this one done,"*  
said

## USEF DIRECTOR OF SPORT WILL CONNELL

*Continued from page 1*

Connell was the British Equestrian Federation's performance director prior to coming to the USEF in 2014. He was in the driver's seat, coordinating all of the constantly moving parts involved in the Tokyo effort.

Citing "huge logistical challenges in the build-up" and a "crazy amount of administration," Connell emphasized everything that needed to happen would not have happened "if it hadn't been for the team at USEF."



Photo courtesy of Dutta Corp.

*U.S. team horses spent time in Aachen, Germany, before flying to Tokyo, Japan for the Games.*

For instance, there was only six weeks' notice about having to change quarantine plans for the eventing, dressage, and para dressage horses. They were supposed to stay at the USET Foundation headquarters in Gladstone, New Jersey. As airlines revised their schedules due to COVID, a problem developed in finding direct flights from the U.S. to Tokyo that could assure the horses' welfare.

"Fifty hours door-to-door was not an option," Connell explained.

So those teams flew to Europe before heading to Japan, and wound up doing their pre-export quarantine (PEQ) in Aachen, Germany, as

did the show jumping squad. Its members had been competing in Europe, but also wound up moving to the Aachen showgrounds, forced into a sudden detour after the farm where they were to be based suffered massive flood damage.

"These have been the most expensive Games I think we have ever done. Having the funding we did was critical in being able to pull this off," Connell stated. He noted that USEF CEO Bill Moroney and USET Foundation Executive Director Bonnie Jenkins regularly discussed the situation as they stayed on top of it. Connell briefed the USET Foundation board to keep members up to speed on what was needed financially.

"When we were forced to go to Aachen [for PEQ], that was a huge addition to the budget. The funding support we got made it possible to deliver the sport packages that helped us win three team medals," he explained.

And then there were the volumes of time-consuming paperwork involved in changing flights and reservations, as well as copious requirements from the organizers.



Photo by Nancy Jaffer

*Will Connell at his desk in Gladstone.*

"The Japanese need for detail was unbelievable, even before COVID came along," Connell pointed out.

A major concern upon arrival in Japan was, of course, steering clear of COVID, which meant members of the U.S. group needed to remain isolated in their "bubble" for the duration. That was key; several hundred people



Photo courtesy of Dutta Corp.

*The logistics of getting to Tokyo were costly and complicated as teams needed to fly not only the horses, but feed, tack, and other supplies.*



Photo by Taylor Pence/US Equestrian

*U.S. jumping horses arriving at the venue in Tokyo*

from around the world who were accredited for the Olympics wound up testing positive for COVID, including more than 20 athletes who missed their events due to positive tests.

"We didn't want to lose the chance to compete by being silly," explained Connell.

"It was difficult for everyone across all sports, being in that cocoon."

The U.S. Olympians spent their time

together at the hotel or at the venue. Para equestrians stayed in the Athlete Village with managing director Laureen Johnson and her crew, because the facilities there were so user-friendly for their needs.

In any event, restrictions imposed by the COVID-wary Japanese meant no opportunities for sightseeing, visiting restaurants, or socializing with other teams; all the things that usually

are such a big part of the Games. And of course, the public was not permitted to attend the competitions, which made the Baji Koen Equestrian Center with its rows of empty seats look like a lonely place in video and photos. However, those associated with the teams and horse owners who were able to be on hand supplied enough applause and cheers to offer something of an auditory backdrop after each round or test.



Photo by Taylor Pence/US Equestrian

*Eventing horses arriving at the venue in Tokyo (front row L to R) Mai Baum with groom Bridget London, Vandiver and Jenni Autry, (back row L to R) Z with groom (for Vandiver) Courtney Carson, and Tsetserleg with groom Stephanie Simpson (not visible)*



The American riders coped beautifully within the boundaries that were set, mastering a situation far different than their usual competitive mode.

"The ability to adapt was key," said Connell.

As he pointed out, the U.S. and Great Britain were the only two nations earning team medals in three of Tokyo's four equestrian sports, which included para dressage. For the U.S., those medals came in show jumping, dressage and para dressage; for Great Britain, it was eventing, dressage, and para dressage. (The British also got individual gold in show jumping, but did not finish as a team in that discipline.)

In the case of the Americans, "The [silver] team medals in dressage and jumping were a real kind of demonstration of a team pulling together and pulling a medal out of what certainly could have been 'not a medal,'" said Connell.

The dressage team of first-time Olympian Sabine Schut-Kery on Alice Womble's Sanceo, with veterans Steffen Peters on Four Winds Farm's Suppenkasper, and Adrienne Lyle on Betsy Juliano's Salvino had to forego what should have been an important part of their preparation, competing in Europe before the Games. COVID again was the reason.



Photo by Annan Hepner/Phelps Media

*Adrienne Lyle, Steffen Peters, and Sabine Schut-Kery*



*Steffen Peters with Suppenkasper, Adrienne Lyle with Salvino, and Sabine Schut-Kery with Sanceo*

Photo by Annan Hepner/Phelps Media





Photo by Shannon Brinkman

Doug Payne and Vandiver

As a result, Connell said, "We really thought we'd be fighting for bronze. Then to realize we could actually make a grab for silver was incredible."

It was the first time since the London Olympic Games of 1948, with an all-Army squad competing, that a U.S. dressage team had claimed a medal of that color at the Olympics. The effort was guided by Chef d'Equipe Debbie McDonald, who rode on the history-making silver medal team at the 2002 FEI World Equestrian Games in Jerez de la Frontera, Spain.

In show jumping, veterans Laura Kraut

on St. Bride's Farm's Baloutinue and McLain Ward on Beechwood Stable's Contagious were joined by Jessica Springsteen, making her Olympic debut, with Stone Hill Farm's Don Juan van de Donkhoeve. They gave U.S. show jumping its second Olympic team silver in a row; Ward was also on the 2016 Olympic jumping team in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Team alternate Kent Farrington, another Rio 2016 veteran, helped out in the warm-up area. The squad, under the direction of Chef d'Equipe Robert Ridland, jumped off with Sweden, which edged the U.S. by a mere 1.3 seconds to take the gold—the opposite of

what happened in a tie-breaker at the 2018 FEI World Equestrian Games in Mill Spring, North Carolina, where the U.S. won the championship.

In Tokyo, sportsmanship prevailed as Connell acknowledged, "the best team won; undoubtedly, the Swedish were the best team." He praised the expertise of Spanish course designer Santiago Varela, whose routes and fences highlighting Japanese culture were key to the way show jumping worked out.

The eventers did not medal, "but they finished as a team, so that pointed in the right direction," said Connell, noting that had not been the case at the last Olympics five years ago. Doug Payne, another first-time Olympian, had the top U.S. placing, 16th on Vandiver, the mount he owns with his wife, Jessica, and Debi Crowley. His teammates were Olympic veterans Phillip Dutton on Z owned by Evie Dutton, Ann Jones, Suzanne Lacy, Caroline Moran, Simon Roosevelt, and Thomas Tierney and Boyd Martin with Tsetserleg owned by Christine, Tommie and Thomas Turner. Working with them was Chef d'Equipe Erik Duvander.

Connell praised the efforts behind the scenes of the disciplines' managing directors for their contributions to the Olympic teams' placings.

"I can tell you categorically that if it hadn't been for Lizzy [Chesson] in jumping or Halle [Griffin] in dressage, they [the squads] wouldn't have won the medals. They are as much part of it as the chefs [d'equipe]," he emphasized, while also citing the work done by the USEF Eventing Managing Director Jenni Autry in keeping her team going.

One huge plus for equestrians was the quality of the facility at Baji Koen. The park had been used for the 1964 Tokyo Olympics, but of course was marvelously updated for these Games, with climate-controlled stables, a galloping track, indoor arena, and fabulous footing.

"The facility is fantastic, no doubt about it. It's one of the best equestrian facilities we've seen in terms of what it will deliver in legacy," said Connell.

All the equestrian competitions were held at Baji Koen except the eventing cross country, which ran at Sea Forest, a former landfill on the water about an hour away.

"Having to move to the cross country [the night after the eventing dressage concluded] was challenging. The truth would be, probably with no spectators, the whole logistics of getting around Tokyo was a lot easier," Connell noted.

He came home for a short break after the Olympics, then turned around and headed back to Tokyo for the Paralympics. It was a test of the initiative to improve the country's results in those Games. No American had won a para dressage medal at the Paralympics since Vicki Garner-Sweigert took two golds in the 1996 Atlanta Games, the first time the Paralympic program was held in conjunction



with the Olympic program. At that time, riders were aboard borrowed horses. The current system involves riders training for months or years on mounts that they really get to know, paving the way for better performances.

Before Connell joined USEF, "The structure around para dressage was not effectively focused on being competitive on the world stage. I don't think it was for lack of trying. It was perhaps not as structured as it needed to be. Maybe the system really hadn't gotten behind it in understanding what can be created in para dressage," said the sport director, who knew about that firsthand because Britain became the leader in the discipline.

"It's not just about the athletes winning at the top level. It's about increasing people's ability to compete and linking them with therapeutic [opportunities] and promoting the therapeutic benefits of riding. You have to have a program, and the program has to have long-term aims and goals. Maybe giving it a bit more publicity and getting a bit of success is attracting more funding as well."

The U.S. para dressage program has made great strides since the 2016 Paralympics.

"We claim to be a leading nation in equestrian and being 12th in para on the world stage is not, for me, where we needed to be," he said about his reaction to the Rio placing.

"When people realized what the possibility was, people did get behind it."



Photo by Shannon Brinkman

Laura Kraut, McLain Ward, and Jessica Springsteen

They got to work. The USEF and U.S. Para Equestrian Association Centers for Excellence were designated to develop riders for the discipline. In 2017, Michel Assouline was hired as head of para equestrian coach development and high performance consultant. Two years later, he launched the USEF Para Equestrian Dressage Coaches Program.

The eventual result was two individ-

ual gold medals in Tokyo for Grade I rider Roxanne Trunnell (riders are graded according to their degree of impairment) on Karen Flint and Flintwoode Farm LLC's Dolton. Ranked number one in the world, she won the individual competition, then set a record of 86.927% in taking the freestyle with her performance to music from the movie, "Forrest Gump."

She also was part of the team that won



Photo by Taylor Pence/USEF

Laura Kraut with Baloutinue, Jessica Springsteen with Don Juan Van de Donkhoeve, and McLain Ward with Contagious





Roxanne Trunnell

the bronze medal, a milestone for the U.S. in the discipline, with Rebecca Hart on Rowan O'Reilly's El Corona Texel and Kate Shoemaker on Solitaer 40, a Hanoverian she owns with Deena and Craig Shoemaker.

Beatrice de Lavalette, who lost her lower legs in a terrorist attack on the Brussels, Belgium, airport in 2016, was fifth in Grade II for the U.S. as the Paralympics began. Her score in the individual test on Elizabeth and Nicholas de Lavalette's Clarc was 70.265%, marking the first time a U.S. Paralympic equestrian had earned over 70% at the Games.

"The quality of horses at the Paralympics this year has taken another huge step forward," said Connell.

"The next step for us is to get our athletes to Europe to compete against the Dutch, the Danish and the British. They're used to competing against each other. It's difficult for our athletes to be really clear in their effectiveness when they're competing in the U.S., because it's basically the Canadians and us."

With the right athletes, set up, coaching, structure, and other details in place, "you can build a program that will deliver medals, and I think we showed that," he said.

The time between the Games and the next major competitions has been reduced by the 2020 postponement. The world championships for dressage, show jumping, para, and vaulting are in Denmark in 2022, while the eventing, four-in-hand driving, and endurance will be held in Italy, followed by the Paris Olympics in 2024.

Before then, Connell said the way the Games were planned for equestrian sport undoubtedly will be the subject of many meetings. The International Federation for Equestrian Sports (FEI) has already said it will take a long look at how the competitions in Tokyo went and what revisions should be made.

The question many people are asking about the Tokyo Olympics is: Was it worth it? Polls showed a majority of the Japanese people were against holding the Games during the pandemic, and some suggested cancelling them even days before they began.

"I think that's something that will be discussed and debated for many months to come. If I'm honest, I can't put my hand on my heart and say it was 100% worth it, but I can't also put my hand on my heart and say it wasn't worth it," commented Connell, emphasizing that "the Japanese did a fantastic job with all the venues, and there's a great legacy, so that's good.

"I think people could be inspired by the way these riders dug deep to get those medals. People can be inspired by the ability of athletes to perform—and I'm talking cross-sports [when] there's no spectators, and all the other challenges when you're locked down in your room.

"There are many inspirational things to take away from it."



Roxanne Trunnell, Kate Shoemaker, and Rebecca Hart

Photos this page by Taylor Pence/US Equestrian

Laura Kraut and Jessica Springsteen (photo by Taylor Pence/US Equestrian); Adrienne Lyle (photo by Shannon Brinkman); Laura Kraut with Baloutinue (photo by Taylor Pence/US Equestrian); Kate Shoemaker and Solitaer 40 (photo by Taylor Pence/US Equestrian); Beatrice de Lavalette and Clarc (photo by Taylor Pence/US Equestrian); McLain Ward, Laura Kraut, and Jessica Simpson (photo by Taylor Pence/US Equestrian); Steffen Peters and Suppenkasper (photo by Shannon Brinkman); Roxanne Trunnell and Dolton with Andrea Woodard (photo by Taylor Pence/US Equestrian); Sabine Schut-Kery and Sanceo (photo by Shannon Brinkman); (Back row L to R) Christie Erickson (Sabine's groom), team vet Dr. Paul McClellan, team farrier Kenny Bark; (Front row L to R) Debbie McDonald and Christine Traurig (photo by Taylor Pence/US Equestrian)







# OWNERS

## FORM THE BACKBONE

If this year's Olympic and Paralympic Games in Tokyo showed us anything, it demonstrated the power of a team effort. US Equestrian (USEF) discipline directors have guided their respective programs through tumultuous times, the coaches and the grooms worked tirelessly to keep both horse and human athletes in top form, the vets and farriers ensured the horses were healthy and sound, and of course, the riders have trained diligently for years in order to represent the United States in a brilliant fashion.

There's no question that it takes a village to prepare for and perform at the Olympic and Paralympic Games, yet the team effort in equestrian sport is markedly different than other sports because of one very critical factor: the horses' owners.

Equestrian sport can be an expensive endeavor due to costs associated with producing, caring for, and competing these phenomenal equine athletes. What's more, in the U.S. in particular, no government funding is provided to our teams.

### *According to Barbara Roux,*

who co-owns Laura Kraut's 2020 Tokyo Olympic jumping mount, Baloutinue, with her husband David out of St. Bride's Farm in Upperville, Virginia, "sponsors" will always play a role at the elite level. "Owners and sponsors will always be part of the journey for talented riders," she explained. "It's a very difficult sport to be self-sustaining as an individual, so partnerships will always be necessary."

That said, why does one get involved in the world of ownership in the first place?

For Roux, the impetus for the now-five-year partnership with Kraut was initially born out of a desire to be part of the American team. Her first foray into ownership was with Irish Olympic show jumper Kevin Babington. Because the experience was so positive, it further solidified her desire to become an owner for the U.S.

"I very much enjoyed our time together and our working relationship and I respect him tremendously," said Roux of her time supporting Babington. "He's one of the finest equestrians I've ever met. However, my goal was to become part of the American team. It was always a goal, and I just kept pursuing that. When the opportunity to sponsor Laura presented itself, I jumped at the opportunity."

### *Robin Parsky, owner of Kent*

Farrington's Olympic mount, Gazelle, knew early in life that she'd have a role in helping American show jumpers achieve greatness on the world stage. "I started being interested [in ownership] when I was very young and my father owned racehorses," Parsky explained. "[Rather than own racehorses] I knew wanted to own horses that show jumped for the country so that they would raise the [U.S.] flag and it would be really distinctive."

### *Caroline Moran, one of the six*

owners of Phillip Dutton's 2016 Olympic bronze medal eventing mount, Mighty Nice, and a part owner of Dutton's 2020 Olympic mount, Z, was introduced to the discipline thanks to her good friend, the late Bruce Duchossois. Originally a leading amateur hunter rider, Moran quickly fell in love with the discipline, but it was ultimately the desire to support the U.S. that drew her to ownership.

"It is the highest honor to represent Team USA," she shared, elaborating that owning a horse that goes on to represent the country on some of the largest stages in the world is icing on the cake. "It is the ultimate dream of a horse owner to have an equine athlete that qualifies for a World Championship or Olympic Games."

### *In the case of Betsy Juliano, the*

owner of Adrienne Lyle's Tokyo 2020 Olympic dressage mount, Salvino, her interest in high performance dressage began while she was training as an amateur rider with George Williams who had been competing at the top level. "I've always enjoyed watching the process of training as it turns into performance, so I started to buy horses for George," she shared.

However, once Lyle's 2012 Olympic mount Wizard retired, Akiko Yamazaki, owner of Steffen Peters' 2020 Olympic mount Suppenkasper, felt that the U.S. needed another high performance horse and rider team and approached Juliano and others about purchasing a horse for Lyle. Juliano agreed that supporting the U.S. at this level was something she wanted to continue to do and as a result, she became a part owner of Salvino before fully acquiring the horse.

# Supporting

# AN AMERICAN DREAM



# OF WINNING TEAMS



## *Karin Flint, owner of world*

number one Roxanne Trunnell's Tokyo 2020 Paralympic para dressage mount, Dolton, explained that she became involved in para dressage because of a neighbor who had a daughter competing in the sport. Over time, Flint—who'd previously been involved in the hunter/jumper discipline only—began to attend para dressage competitions and became increasingly interested in the discipline and becoming involved in our country's high performance team.

Eventually, she was approached to sponsor Trunnell and purchase an FEI-level horse to propel the talented rider's career as well as our U.S. teams to podium finishes.

Flint didn't have to think twice about it. To be able to support Trunnell—who Flint regards as a very serious competitor—and to have a hand in helping the U.S. Paralympic team achieve great success made the decision an easy one.

"It's an honor to be [representing the U.S.] at the Paralympic Games this year," said Flint. "We're just having the most wonderful time of our lives."

These individuals, and all of the owners of the 2020 Olympic and Paralympic mounts, undoubtedly thrive off of the camaraderie that is inherent in playing an integral role of Team USA. But what does it really take to have a successful partnership between athlete and owner? For most, it's rooted in the ability to see eye to eye on the care and management of horses just as much as on the competition goals.

## OWNERSHIP IS A PARTNERSHIP

Roux said that her primary focus was supporting the American team. Once Roux got to know Kraut, it was her horsemanship and philosophy that sealed the deal. "The partnership between owner and rider is so important," shared Roux. "You need to be in sync with how horses are managed and treated, and how decisions are made."

Juliano also emphasized that being on the same page about the management of the animals was a critical factor in her decision to purchase horses for Lyle. "Adrienne is extremely involved in the care and oversight of horses," she stated. "I've watched Adrienne for many years, and it's why I want her to ride my horses. If I have a horse in her care, I know I don't have to worry."

For Parsky, selecting a rider for your horse is very much about giving the horse every opportunity to succeed. Because she had supported Farrington's ride on Blue Angel prior to purchasing Gazelle, she felt confident that Farrington's program would be a fit for this year's Olympic mount. "In my opinion, Kent is at the top of the list of professionals in terms of his care [of the horses] and the dedication of his excellent staff," Parsky noted. "I knew he had a great program and wonderful people on his team so I knew the horse would have the best care and that made all the difference."

Moran commends Dutton for both his care of the horses and his communication with the owners. "Eventing is a dangerous sport," she said. "The horse care and attention that those [equine] athletes get [in eventing] is beyond measure, especially in Phillip's barn."

"Phillip is a great communicator," she continued. "Any little thing that has to do with any of the horses he sends in a group text message to all of the owners and he's constantly on the phone [with us]."

For owners, understanding the goals for their horses and the rider's pathway to achieving those goals with their horse is key.

"With Laura, [we share the philosophy that] it's about the long-term goal," Roux stated. "She takes her time to develop the horses and isn't afraid to make a change in their programs if she thinks it will help them, even if it means spending more time to figure a horse out."

Moran shared a similar sentiment. "Phillip plans out his year but he's very good at pivoting if the slightest little thing doesn't feel right."

## TEAMWORK MAKES THE DREAM WORK

For the owners of the horses that went to Tokyo, having their horses compete at the Olympic and Paralympic Games was a crowning achievement that came to fruition thanks to years of partnership and teamwork. The owners also acknowledge that they are one part of a much larger group of people—including grooms, trainers, and equine healthcare professionals to name a few—that all contribute to making the American dream a reality.

Although the owners of our 2020 Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic horses each have their own stories about how they were introduced to the idea of horse ownership, every individual took on the role for the love of the sport and the horse, and because they were inspired by our country's elite riders, the teams behind them, and the prospect of helping achieve greatness for the U.S. equestrian teams. In large part thanks to our owners, as horse lovers and fans of the sport, we can look forward to U.S. team success for years to come.

Juliano says she was particularly touched by her friends, family, and colleagues back home on American soil that showed their support for the U.S. teams throughout the Games. "When we were lucky enough to win a medal, [non-horse people] could see why all of this strategy and dedication was happening [in the years leading up to the Games]," she explained. "I'm incredibly touched by everyone [back home] that was up at 4:00 AM watching the competition. It was an unexpected, fantastic feeling. To see everyone be so behind this effort was incredible."

– Kara Pinato Scro





"Clearly there's no drop score, but I wanted to be as best as I could possibly be," he recalled. "I absolutely would have loved for the team to have done better so we were standing on the podium at the end of it, and frankly if that meant I wasn't the top [American rider], that would have been fine too. Being that the cards didn't play out that way, then I've got to look back and be proud of it. At least I know

"I know I've been lucky enough to receive a number of the developing grants by the USET Foundation," he remarked. "I would not have been here without those grants because I wouldn't have been able to make those [international competition] trips without the support that they provide. That 'foundation'—laid by the USET Foundation—is without a doubt a reason that I'm sitting here right now."



*Photo by Annan Henner/Phelps Media*





*Doug Payne and Vandiver*  
Owners: Debi Crowley, Doug Payne,  
and Jessica Payne

Background photo by Arrian Hepner/Phelps Media; Inset photo by Taylor Penes/US Equestrian





*Phillip Dutton and Z*

*Owners: Thomas Tierney, Ann Jones,  
Caroline Moran, Simon Roosevelt, and Suzanne Lacy*

*Photos by Shannon Brinkman*







*Boyd Martin and Tsetserleg*  
*Owners: Christine Turner, Thomas Turner,*  
*and Tommie Turner*

Background photo by Annan Hepner/Phelps Media; Inset photo by Taylor Pence/US Equestrian





*Kent Farrington and Gazelle*  
*Owner: Kent Farrington and Robin Cleary Parsky*

Background photo by Shannon Brinkman / Asset Photo Group Media / Lauren Papp





*Jessica Springsteen  
and Don Juan van de Donkhoeve  
Owner: Stone Hill Farm*

Background photo by Annan Hepner / Phelps Media, Inset photo by Shannon Brinkman







*McLain Ward and Contagious*  
Owner: Beechwood Stables, LLC

Background photo by Anrian Horner / Phelps Media, Inset photo by Shannon Brinkman





*Laura Kraut and Baloutinue*  
Owner: St. Bride's Farm

*Photos by Shannon Brinkman*







*Roxanne Trunnell and Dolton*  
Owner: Flintwoode Farms LLC  
and Karin Flint

Photos by Taylor Pence / US Equestrian







*Rebecca Hart and El Corona Texel*  
*Owner: Rowan O'Riley*

Photos by Taylor Pence / US Equestrian





*Kate Shoemaker and Solitaer 40*  
Owners: Kate, Craig, and Deena Shoemaker

Photos by Taylor Pence / US Equestrian





TOKYO 2020



*Beatrice de Lavalette and Clarc*  
Owners: Elizabeth and Nicolas de Lavalette

Photos by Taylor Pence / US Equestrian





*Sabine Schut-Kery and Sanceo*  
Owner: Alice Womble

Background photo by Annan Hepner/Phelps Media; Inset photo by Shannon Brinkman







*Adrienne Lyle and Salvino*  
Owner: Betsy Juliano, LLC

Photos by Shannon Brinkman





*Steffen Peters and Suppenkasper*  
Owners: Akiko Yamazaki  
and Four Winds Farm

Background photo by Annan Hepner/Phelps Media; Inset photo by Shannon Brinkman



# CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR U.S. ATHLETES AT THE

2021 FEI Para Driving World Championships,  
the CDIO-Y Nations Cup competition hosted at Future Champions,  
and the 2021 FEI Vaulting World Championships for Juniors and Seniors



Photo by Pictureblind.de - Jürgen Seidel

Tracy Bowman and Albrecht's Hoeve's Lars won gold at the 2021 FEI Para Driving World Championship in Schildau, Germany.



Photo by Foto Ruchel

Katherine Mathews, Christian Simonson, and Melanie Doughty won the bronze medal at the CDIO-Y Nations Cup competition hosted at Future Champions in Hagen, Germany.

## VAULTING WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS FOR JUNIORS



Photo by Les Garennes

Persephone Brown and Danica Rinard were the top U.S. pair in the Pas de Deux division with a sixth-place finish.



Photo by Les Garennes

The U.S. claimed silver in the Squad competition at the Vaulting World Championships for Juniors. The U.S. Squad included Melanie Ford, Emma Milito, Augusta Rose Lewis, Rhianon Hampton, Giana Massaro, and Bryleigh Thornton with longeur Jacqueline Lux and her own Goldjunge.



Photo by Les Garennes

Melanie Ford and Ronaldo 200 with longeur Andrea Boe finished in 13th place out of 56 competitors in the individual female division.

## VAULTING WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS FOR SENIORS



Photo by FEI/Lukasz Kozmicki

Daniel Janes and Haley Smith secured the bronze medal in the Pas de Deux division.



Photo by FEI/Lukasz Kozmicki

The U.S. Vaulting Team earned bronze in the Squad competition. The U.S. squad was made up of Haley Smith, Geoffrey Woolson, Daniel Janes, Emily Rose, Emi Yang, Hannah Wildermuth along with longeur Carolyn Bland and her own Diva 506.



Photo by FEI/Lukasz Kozmicki

Hannah Wildermuth (flyer), Daniel Janes, and Emily Rose.



# ALTERNATES

## *The Unsung Heroes of the Olympic and Paralympic Games*

Serving as a reserve or an alternate rider for the U.S. equestrian teams on the largest stages in the world is an incredible feat and honor, yet it can be a role that comes with mixed emotions. These talented riders may have just missed the mark to make the team, yet they are required to train and prepare alongside the selected members as if they would be competing. However, this role is not without great importance and purpose. Horses are fragile and the sport is physically intense. At the drop of a hat, a team horse could become injured and the reserve rider will be expected to rise to the occasion.

For the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games in particular, the new format of a three-person team and no drop score created a considerable amount of uncertainty and, for the reserve spot in particular, an added pressure to be ready to perform.

Across disciplines, the reserve riders on our Olympic and Paralympic teams were up for the challenge and delivered grace under pressure and unwavering support for their teammates. Despite not competing for the U.S. at this year's Games, each walked away with immense gratitude for the opportunity and more gusto than ever to continue to represent the U.S. in international competitions in months and years to come.

### NICK WAGMAN, DRESSAGE

For the first time in his career, Wagman was in contention for a spot on a U.S. Olympic dressage team. Ultimately, he was selected as the traveling reserve, a role that he took seriously.

"Of course, I was trying to make the top three," shared Wagman, "but being fourth you have to understand that you may not compete but it's still an enormous honor to be part of the team and also know that you might have to substitute for someone."

The U.S. equestrian teams spent time training at a multi-day pre-export quarantine (PEQ) in Aachen, Germany, before flying to Tokyo, Japan. Wagman noted that he prepared as if he knew he'd be competing, and he worked hard to remain in that mindset so that he could be ready to trot down the centerline at any moment.

Unfortunately, once in Tokyo, Wagman's mount, Don John, owned by Beverly Gepfer, sustained a small injury that meant they wouldn't be able to fill in if the team needed a substitute.

"It was certainly a blow to the team and to everyone supporting us," said Wagman. "I felt [bad] that I couldn't fulfill the competitive role, but I knew I could be here in spirit and every other capacity to root and cheer for my team."

"It wasn't a hard thing to do because you're so wrapped up in representing the United States, and you're swept up in the moment of the Olympics," he continued. "All you care about is that everybody on your team is healthy and goes down the centerline to the best of their ability."

Wagman's efforts to support his team on foot didn't go unnoticed. Betsy Juliano, owner of Adrienne Lyle's Olympic mount, Salvino, was moved by Wagman's camaraderie and



Nick Wagman and Don John

dedication to the team. "Nick impressed me to no end," she stated. "Traveling as the reserve in this situation isn't always the easiest, but he was fantastic, supportive, and a great professional. I really admired his emotional fortitude, and I think everyone on the team would echo this."

Looking back, Wagman is grateful for the opportunity to travel to the Olympic Games as the reserve rider and noted he gained a lot of knowledge and experience from his unique vantage point as an observer and not a competitor.

"Going to Tokyo and going to the Olympic venue for the first time in my life, it was an honor to be there. You realize that it was the pinnacle of what we do," he remarked. "You really get that sense of we're here as a team and the team is what becomes the main focus."

"The reserve is, especially with the format of a three-person team, a really important role," concluded Wagman. "I hope that all reserve riders feel as valued as they should be because they are every bit a part of the team as everyone else."



# SYDNEY COLLIER, PARA DRESSAGE

Sydney Collier is no stranger to the Paralympic Games having served on the para dressage team at the 2016 Paralympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The 2020 Tokyo Paralympic Games, however, was the athlete's first experience in the alternate position. Though she did not travel to Tokyo as a reserve rider, she did travel to Aachen for PEQ as the first alternate.

Like Wagman, Collier noted that her training during PEQ was just as intense as it would have been if she were on the team, but acknowledged the role is a challenging one, mentally.

"[Being an alternate], you do all of the same work you would if you were on the team, but you're not guaranteed any of that glory," she explained. "The only reason that you would [get that glory of being on the team] is if someone else's dream and goal comes to an end and that is crushing for me. So, my goal was to be the biggest supporter I could possibly be for the team members and everyone in Aachen."

Collier also noted that she went into Aachen with the mindset that the experience would be an opportunity to showcase all of the hard work that she and her horse, All In One ("Alle"), owned by Georgina Bloomberg, as well as the entire team behind the pair, has put in over the years.

Collier noted that once she was home and had time to reflect on her experience as the alternate, she couldn't help but feel appreciative of everything it taught her. "It formed me into a better person and rider in the end," she said. "I want to express my gratitude to Georgina for making my journey with Alle to Aachen possible. Riding as a team at PEQ really demonstrated why we do this to begin with. It's about the pure love of the time in the saddle, the relationship with the horse, and what the [U.S. team] has accomplished. It was amazing to do it alongside such talented people and in the end, I came out more determined than ever."



*Sydney Collier and All In One*

Photo courtesy of Sydney Collier

# TAMIE SMITH, EVENTING

Tamie Smith was initially selected as the "first alternate"—the position next in line after the traveling reserve—for the U.S. Olympic eventing team behind Doug Payne. However, when Liz Halliday-Sharp's horse was injured during the team's mandatory outing, Payne moved into the team spot and Smith then became the traveling reserve.

"Being selected as a team member or even an alternate is always an honor," she shared. "You are one of six people in the entire U.S. who have been given the opportunity to represent your country, and every member is imperative for a successful team result."

Having been part of the U.S. eventing team at the 2019 Pan American Games in Lima, Peru, Smith said she had an idea of what was to come, but that being the traveling reserve this year was much more difficult mentally than what she expected.

"At any moment during the competition they can call you up to sub in for one of the other teammates," she explained. "So being mentally prepared to compete is a tough thing, but it is what you do for your country."

In the end, Smith walked away with a sense of pride for her country and the whole team, as well as feeling more prepared than ever to represent the U.S. in future international competition.

"We had a great team of riders, grooms, coaches, owners, and the entire support crew who helped make the Olympics happen. The amount of work involved contributed to a very successful event, and I was honored to be a part of Team USA at the Tokyo Olympic Games," she concluded. "I know it has prepared me for future championship competitions and will make me not only a better competitor, but a better teammate." — Kara Pinato Scro



*Tamie Smith and Mai Baum*

Photo by Taylor Pence/US Equestrian



# Simonson and Kment Sweep Gold Medals at North American Youth Dressage Championships

*The 2021 FEI North American Youth Championships (NAYC) hosted the best young dressage riders on the continent, and two of those entries rose to the top across team and individual competition. Sweeping the gold medals in the Young Rider division was 19-year-old Christian Simonson of Region 7, while 15-year-old Lexie Kment of Region 4 took home three gold medals as well in the Junior division.*

## YOUNG RIDER DIVISION

The Region 7 team was led by Simonson and Zeaball Diawind, a nine-year-old Danish Warmblood gelding owned by Christina Morgan, who received a 73.588% to earn the highest score of the class. Miki Yang and Donovan, a 13-year-old Hanoverian gelding owned by Four Winds Farm, scored the team's second highest mark with a 68.970% in their first appearance at NAYC. Katherine Mathews and Solière, a 17-year-old Hanoverian stallion owned by Peridot Equestrian LLC, received a 67.677%, while Erin Nichols and Handsome Rob AR, a nine-year-old Dutch Warmblood gelding owned by Diane Nichols, also received a 67.677%. They finished with a combined score of 210.235.

The Region 1 Team of Hannah Irons and her own Scola Bella, a 12-year-old Hanoverian mare who scored 68.765%; Allison Nemeth and Tiko, a 10-year-old Danish Warmblood

mare owned by Karen Nemeth on 68.412%; and Megan Peterson and her own Amoretto, a 16-year-old KWPN gelding who received 64.912%, finished the Young Rider Team Test on a total of 202.089 for the silver medal.

The Region 4 team of Tillie Jones and Qi Gong TF, a 12-year-old Hanoverian mare owned by Tillie and Tish Jones with 68.735%; Averi Allen and Superman, an eight-year-old Hanoverian gelding owned by Jonni Allen with 65.471%; Nicolas Beck and his own Campari, a 14-year-old KWPN gelding with a score of 65.529%; and Emma Lavin and her own Bella Mia, a 10-year-old Swedish Warmblood mare who scored 62.000%, won the bronze medal with a score of 199.735.

Simonson and Zeaball Diawind rode to a personal best score of 75.353% to win the FEI Young Rider Individual Final. The silver medal went to Miki Yang and Donovan, who rode to

69.294%, while Tillie Jones and Qi Gong TF earned the bronze medal with 68.588%.

In the FEI Young Rider Freestyle test, Simonson and Zeaball Diawind picked up their third gold medal, shattering the NAYC record with a 78.935%. Allison Nemeth and Tiko earned a 73.330% for second place, while Jones and Qi Gong TF secured the bronze medal with a 73.170%.

Simonson noted his appreciation for "the whole team" that has helped him along the way, noting, "My trainer Adrienne [Lyle] is one of the most patient, amazing people I've ever met, [along with] my groom Monica [Stanke], my parents, [and] my sponsors. I felt like everyone was here today riding that test with me, and that was a special feeling."



*Region 1, Region 7, and Region 4 earned Silver, Gold, and Bronze, respectively, in the Junior Division at the 2021 FEI North American Youth Championships.*



## JUNIOR DIVISION

The team from Region 4 bested the FEI Junior Team Test by almost five points, finishing with a score of 202.667 for team gold. Kylee Kment and Honor, a nine-year-old gelding owned by Jami Kment, led the team with the highest score of 69.606%. Lexie Kment and Montagny von der Heide, a 17-year-old Trakehner gelding owned by Laureen van Norman, received a 67.394%. Ella Fruchterman and Holts Le'Mans, a 10-year-old Danish Warmblood gelding owned by Ella and Todd Fruchterman, rounded out the team's total score with a 65.667%.

Region 7 finished in second place to take the silver medal with a team total of 197.787 following rides from Nicole Ellsworth and Rower Be, a 21-year-old Rhineland gelding owned by Elizabeth Keadle with 66.121%; Josphine Hinnemann aboard Breanna, a 21-year-old Hanoverian mare owned by Kathleen Raine, Jennifer Mason, and David Wightman with 64.151%; Lily-Rose Bacon and Warm Night, her own a 14-year-old Oldenburg gelding with 67.515%; and Ellanor Boehning with Banderas SK, a 15-year-old KWPN gelding owned by Ann and Ellanore Boehning with 63.727%.

The three-member team from Region 3 earned the bronze medal. Kat Fuqua and



Photo by US Equestrian

Kylee Kment (Region 4), Lexie Kment (Region 4), and Kat Fuqua (Region 3)



Photo by US Equestrian

her own Dream Girl, a 13-year-old KWPN mare, earned the team's highest mark with a 67.364%. Misha Cohen rode Fuerstenglanz, a 15-year-old Oldenburg stallion to a score of 64.000%, with Elaine Grubbs and Enebro XIV, a 17-year-old PRE gelding earning a 62.939% to add to the team's overall tally.

Lexie Kment and Montagny von der Heide began their journey to a sweep in the FEI Junior Individual Final, besting a class of 27 entries with a score of 68.941%. Kylee Kment and Honor were second with a 68.941%, while Fuqua and Dream Girl captured third with a 67.912%.

Rounding out their third gold medal of the week, Lexie Kment and Montagny von der Heide, in their first competition together at NAYC, won the FEI Junior Freestyle test with a score of 74.775%.

Julia McDonald (Byron Center, Mich.) and Lehndorff van de Vogelzang took second place with a 71.850%, while Fuqua and Dream Girl picked up their third bronze medal with a 71.150%.

"It's so amazing to hear that anthem playing for me," said Lexie Kment. "It's amazing. To be here with Kylee, it's a new dream come true."

Kylee Kment added, "We are competitive, but at the same time, whatever happens, it's amazing how we are so happy for each other either way. She is just so supportive, and we're sisters at the end of the day and love each other!" – Adapted from US Equestrian press release





# Jumping Riders Impress at 2021 FEI North American Youth Championships

*The United States' Zone 4, led by Chef d'Equipe Kim Land, won three out of four team gold medals available at the 2021 FEI North American Youth Championships for a banner week.*

## YOUNG RIDER DIVISION

Zone 4 made a comeback to top the gold medal spot on the podium after sitting in fourth place following the first day of team competition. In Round 1 on Day 2, they recorded a clear team total. The team finished on 15.79 faults for victory in the \$40,000 Young Rider Team Final.

The Zone 4 team consisted of Erika Jacobson and Everton, a 12-year-old KWPN stallion owned by Barn Rat LLC; Riley Delbecq and Julesraimus de Barisy, a 12-year-old BWP gelding owned by Equine Finesse BVBA; Violet Lindemann Barnett riding Alanine de Vains, an 11-year-old Selle Francais mare owned by AS Sporthorses, E.J. Peeters, and Abdel Said; and Ashley Vogel on her own 12-year-old Zangersheide mare Bellissimo Z. Zone 2 won the silver medal on 20.21 faults, while the team from Canada took bronze with 27.98 faults.

Through their winning performances, the top two nations from the Young Rider division also qualify for the 2021 FEI Youth Nations Cup Jumping Final, set to take place at the Peelbergen Equestrian Centre, in Kronenberg, The Netherlands, on September 23-26, 2021.

Mimi Gochman (USA) and Celina BH, an 11-year-old Holsteiner mare owned by Gochman Sporthorses LLC, led the Young Rider standings throughout the competition. The pair was the only combination to complete all five rounds with no faults to earn gold in the \$25,000 Young Rider Individual Final.

Mimi Gochman followed in the footsteps of her older sister Sophie Gochman, who earned the Young Rider Individual gold medal in 2019. This was Mimi's second NAYC gold medal; she won her first in the 2019 FEI NAYC Junior Individual Final. Gochman also added a team silver medal with Zone 2 to her haul in 2021. Sweetening her win, Gochman will compete for the United States on the North American team at the 2022 FEI Youth Jumping Competition in Aachen, Germany.

The future is bright for Gochman, and she spoke fondly of those



*Daniel Rihan Goyeneche (MEX), Mimi Gochman, and Violet Lindemann Barnett*

behind her that has gotten her to where she is today. She said, "I have the best team, and my horse is phenomenal. I don't know what I would do without her. I wouldn't be here without [my trainer] Ken [Berkley]. It's exciting to be back [at FEI NAYC], and I really enjoy learning from all the riders that come as well."

Mexico's Daniel Rihan Goyeneche earned the silver medal with La Cantera Stables Inc.'s Chousa Sho Z with 5.18 faults, while Violet Lindemann Barnett won the bronze medal on Alanine de Vains on 5.28 faults.



*In the FEI NAYC Junior Team Final presented by Grand Traverse Resort & Spa, Canada earned silver, USA Zone 4 earned gold, and USA Zones 5 and 6 earned bronze.*



## JUNIOR DIVISION

In the \$35,000 Junior Team Final presented by Grand Traverse Resort & Spa, the Zone 4 team took home the gold medal on a total of 10.15 faults. Hailey Royce and Sonic Boom, a nine-year-old SWB gelding owned by Daniel Michan; Ansgar Holtgers Jr. and Elina, a 12-year-old KWPN mare owned by Gut Einhaus LLC; Reid Arani and Ziezo, a 17-year-old KWPN gelding owned by Islay Jumpers LLC; and Zayna Rizvi with Excellent, a 12-year-old KWPN gelding owned by Peacock Ridge LLC, recorded a dominant win by more than 10 faults. The team from Canada took silver with 20.62 faults, while USA Zone 5/6 won bronze with 27.48 faults.

Zayna Rizvi made it a double-gold performance for the week when she and Excellent recorded five clear rounds to win the gold medal on 2.46 faults in the Gotham

North FEI North American Youth Jumping Championships \$10,000 Junior Individual Final. Her teammate, Ansgar Holtgers Jr. aboard Elina, won the silver medal on 4.54 faults, while Lea Rucker of Canada riding Evita won the bronze with 6.46 faults.

With her win, Rizvi secured a quota place for one U.S. athlete to join the North American team at the 2022 FEI Youth Jumping Competition in Aachen, Germany.

"I made a lot of new friends, and I think that we bonded as a team really well," said Rizvi of her NAYC experience. "I love doing events like this, where you can practice for bigger things in your future, and this was a great experience for me. My horse is so amazing, and he always tries his hardest for me. I want to say thank you to North Run and Arturo [Vidal] and my parents for supporting this dream, Kim [Land], of course, for being the best Chef d' Equipe, and everyone at USEF."



Photo by US Equestrian

Ansgar Holtgers Jr., Zayna Rizvi, Lea Rucker (CAN)

## PRE-JUNIOR DIVISION

In the inaugural year of the Pre-Junior division, the United States' Zone 4 team stood on top of the podium with the gold medal. Mia Albello and her own Cocominka EST, a 10-year-old Rheinlander mare; Caia Watridge riding Iselle van Orshof, a 13-year-old SBS mare owned by Ludo Philippaerts and Stoeterij Dorper; Trinity Beitler on her own Coconut, a 13-year-old Holsteiner gelding; and Lawson Whitaker with Brownie and Cream, a 12-year-old Holsteiner mare by Reynaldo Roberto Daza Cardozo, finished on 10.79 total faults. Mexico North took home silver for their total faults of 16.09, with the United States' Zone 10 narrowly behind them to claim the bronze medal on 16.93 faults.

The United States' Albello was the only athlete to begin Saturday's individual competition on zero faults, and she continued her



Photo by US Equestrian

Caroline Mawhinney, Mia Albello, and Xaviera Maurer Buch (MEX)

faultless streak, recording an impressive five clear rounds throughout the week for the gold medal with Cocominka EST.

Caroline Mawhinney (USA) and her own Stella Levista received the silver medal after five clear rounds and just 1.46 total faults after the first Table C competition. Mexico's Xaviera Maurer Buch won the bronze medal on Con Rouet with 2.37 faults.

Albello said, "When [my trainer] Margie [Engle] and I talked [before the second round], she said 'Get everything out of your head and ride each jump like a single jump. When you cross those timers, you keep cantering because anything can change in a single moment.' That was exactly the plan we rode, especially in the second round where there were even more nerves. Going through those timers and keeping all of those rails up was pretty emotional for me knowing that I had won the gold and would be wearing the gold proudly today."

## CHILDREN'S DIVISION

It was the combined Zone 8/9/10 team that claimed gold in the Children's Team Competition, including teammates Lilah Nakatani on Dianett, her own seven-year-old SWB mare; Leila Diab riding Unang de Kergane, her own 13-year-old Selle Francais gelding; Jordan Gibbs and Douwe, a 13-year-old KWPN gelding owned by Mountain King Ranch LLC; and Reagan Tomb with Elba 41, an 11-year-old Hanoverian mare owned by Greg and Reagan Tomb. The team finished on just four total faults through three rounds of competition. Mexico South finished with the silver medal, while Mexico North took the bronze after a jump-off when both teams finished with eight faults. In the FEI Children's Jumping Final, the top U.S. finisher was Campbell Hudkins on Firefly, an 11-year-old KWPN gelding owned by E. Kraak and O.E. Dragman, in fourth place. – Adapted from US Equestrian press release



Photo by US Equestrian

Lilah Nakatani, Jordan Gibbs, Leila Diab, and Reagan Tomb from Zone 8/9/10 team won the gold medal.



# MAKING HIS MARK:

## Remembering and Celebrating

# MASON PHELPS, JR.

In May of this year, the equestrian world mourned the loss of Mason Phelps, Jr., a longtime supporter of the United States Equestrian Team (USET) Foundation and equestrian sport as a whole. Mason's commitment to the United States equestrian teams did not cease with his passing, however. His generosity and thoughtfulness will live on through the \$1 million legacy gift he made to the USET Foundation. Countless athletes will benefit from Mason's generosity through an endowment fund that has been set up in his name to continue the support he provided throughout his lifetime to the U.S. equest

His contributions reached nearly every corner of the industry and included being a high performance athlete, trainer, judge, event and philanthropy director, public relations executive, and governance leader.



*Mason Phelps began riding at a young age.*

Mason's passion for horses began at a young age when his grandmother, Peach Taylor, took him foxhunting with the Genesee Valley Hunt in New York. At the age of 16, Mason was invited to participate in his first training clinic with the USET in Gladstone, New Jersey.

Mason quickly became a top high performance athlete in eventing. In 1967, he competed at the European Eventing Championships in Ireland, and in 1968 he was named the



*Mason Phelps aboard Gladstone in 1967 at the European Championships in Punchestown, Ireland.*

traveling reserve for the U.S. Olympic eventing team at the Olympic Games in Mexico City, Mexico. That same year, Mason earned the U.S. Combined Training Association's—the precursor to the United States Eventing Association—Rider of the Year award.

Though he was a decorated eventing athlete, Mason was also a force in the world of show jumping, first as an assistant trainer at Flintridge Riding Club in Pasadena, California, and later running his own training facility for hunters and jumpers until he retired from competition in 1990.

Mason's equestrian pursuits didn't stop at riding and training, however. Known for his ingenuity, Mason was the guiding force behind countless events—both competitions and fundraisers—that helped the sport grow and evolve into the industry we know today.

In 1976, Mason founded the American Jumping Derby, later known as the International Jumping Derby, at his family's Glen Farm in Newport, Rhode Island. The competition was a popular stop for top U.S. riders for 13 years.

As a former high performance athlete, Mason understood the importance of hav-

ing a clear pathway that would help guide young, talented riders to the top of the sport. Seeing an opportunity to support developing jumping riders in the U.S., Mason built upon on the country's existing equitation offerings and, in 1978, he founded the New England Horsemen's Association Hunt Seat Medal. Over time, this medal became the New England Equitation Championships—one of the country's most highly-regarded regional equitation championships.

Mason was also dedicated to building the sport's prominence in the U.S. He played a role in bringing the first FEI World Cup qualifiers to the country, and he helped organized the first FEI World Cup Jumping Final in the nation in 1980 in Baltimore, Maryland.

In the early 1990s, at the Winter Equestrian Festival (WEF) in Wellington, Florida, Mason created innovative classes including the first equitation class for previous winners of the Maclay Equitation Championship and Medal Finals; an equitation class for past U.S. Olympic, Pan American Games, and Nations Cup athletes; and the first hunter classic for the American Hunter Jumper Foundation, held in the International Arena. Mason was Director



of Equestrian Operations at Palm Beach Polo & Country Club in 1993 and served several years as President of the National Horse Show, reestablishing its prominence at its new home in Lexington, Kentucky, following its time at Madison Square Garden in New York City. In 2012, he also helped organize the World Dressage Masters Palm Beach in Wellington, Florida.

A significant part of Mason's efforts to sustain the sport's success was rooted in philanthropy. In the late 1970s and 1980s, Mason produced a driving event for the Newport Preservation Society. The event was held over three days and included as many as 16 four-in-hand carriages that drove to Newport, Rhode Island, mansions for lunches, teas, and dinners. In the 1980s, he hosted the Newport Roundup—a Newport, Rhode Island, charity event for equestrians that was later replicated at the Palm Beach Polo & Country Club in Wellington, Florida, as a fundraiser for the USET.

Notably, Mason organized the extravagant and hugely popular Denim and Diamonds benefit gala which, over the course of its five incarnations, raised millions of dollars for the USET and its work supporting high performance programs. Mason was also a founder of

the charitable organization now known as the Equestrian Aid Foundation (EAF).

His roles in governance included serving as the American Horse Shows Association (AHSA)—the precursor to USEF—Zone 1 chairman for eight years as well as serving on the boards of the AHSA, USET Foundation, and Show Jumping Hall of Fame. Mason was also president of the New England Horsemen's Council and the Rhode Island Horseman's Association. As an AHSA R-rated judge, Mason judged numerous horse shows including the AHSA Medal Finals at the Pennsylvania National Horse Show in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

In 2001, he brought his knowledge and expertise to the world of media and communications when he founded equestrian public relations firm Phelps Media Group, and subsequently the equestrian news site Phelps Sports.

Mason's passion for the horse and the sport was apparent in the achievements throughout his lifetime, and his work has left a lasting impact on the U.S. equestrian industry that will not be forgotten. — Sourced from *Phelps Media Group and The Chronicle of the Horse*



Mason Phelps, former President and Chairman of the Board of Directors of the National Horse Show.

Brian Moggre, Jennifer Burger, Mason Phelps, and FEI Delegate.

Photo courtesy of Phelps Media





# REMEMBERING BERT FIRESTONE

Bertram “Bert” Robert Firestone passed away on July 12, 2021, in West Palm Beach, Florida, at the age of 89. Firestone was a lifelong horseman, respected for his accomplishments as an owner and breeder in the Thoroughbred racing industry as well as his support of the U.S. equestrian teams and hunt clubs in Virginia and Ireland.

In his youth, Bert attended the New York Military Academy where he was on the show jumping team before attending the University of Virginia for his undergraduate studies.

After graduation from college in 1954, he worked for a New York brokerage firm before turning his focus to real estate development with the formation of Firestone Properties. In 1973, he married Diana Johnson, granddaughter of Johnson & Johnson founder Robert Wood Johnson, who was also an accomplished equestrian with a lifelong passion for horses.

While the two worked in real estate development together, they also had incredible success in Thoroughbred racing in Europe and in the U.S.—most notably earning seven Eclipse Awards as well as owning Genuine Risk, the second filly to win the Kentucky Derby and only one of three fillies to win to date. Together, in 1980, they were voted the Eclipse Award for Outstanding Owner and in 1982, they were inducted in the Virginia Thoroughbred Association Hall of Fame.

In addition to success with their horses, from 1989 to 1991, Bert and Diana owned both the Calder racecourse and Gulfstream Park. They also owned and operated Catocin Stud in Waterford, Virginia, before buying Newstead Farm in Upperville, Virginia. Not just formidable figures in racing, the couple competed in show jumping and also fox hunted in Virginia with the Piedmont and Middleburg Hunts. They were also Joint Masters of the Kildare Foxhounds in Ireland.

Their love of horses continued with their children, Alison Firestone Robitaille, an accomplished U.S. show jumping rider, and Matt Firestone, a successful eventing athlete for the U.S.

Bert’s love of horses and horse sport of various disciplines led him to various governance roles in support of the U.S. team. From 1994 to 1995, he served on the National Advisory Committee for the United States Equestrian Team (USET). In 1996, he was elected to USET’s Board of Trustees and served until 2015, at which point he was named an Honorary Life Trustee.

Bert is survived by his wife Diana; daughter, Alison; sons, Matt, Greg, and Ted; three stepchildren, Lorna, Chris, and Cricket; and several grandchildren. 🐾



*Diana and Bert Firestone*



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