

BY JENNIFER ROBERTS

# BEYOND *the* CLASSROOM

Equine Professionals Reflect on What They Learned from Riding in College

**A**s you head off to college, your main focus is on learning, earning your degree, and working toward your future career. While time spent in lectures, labs, and study groups are essential, college is more than that.

A healthy social life is imperative, as we mature so much during the years that we spend in college, but for equestrians that goes beyond the parties and the difficulties with roommates. Horseback riders learn to compete as a team in a normally individualized sport, learning from and leaning on each other.

Not only do college riders walk away from their education with a degree and lifelong friendships, but also with newly acquired skills from competing as a team, both on and off the horse. We spoke with a handful of professional horsemen and women this month as they assessed how intercollegiate riding influenced their careers.



Beezie Madden credits competing on an IHSA team as helping with her current success.

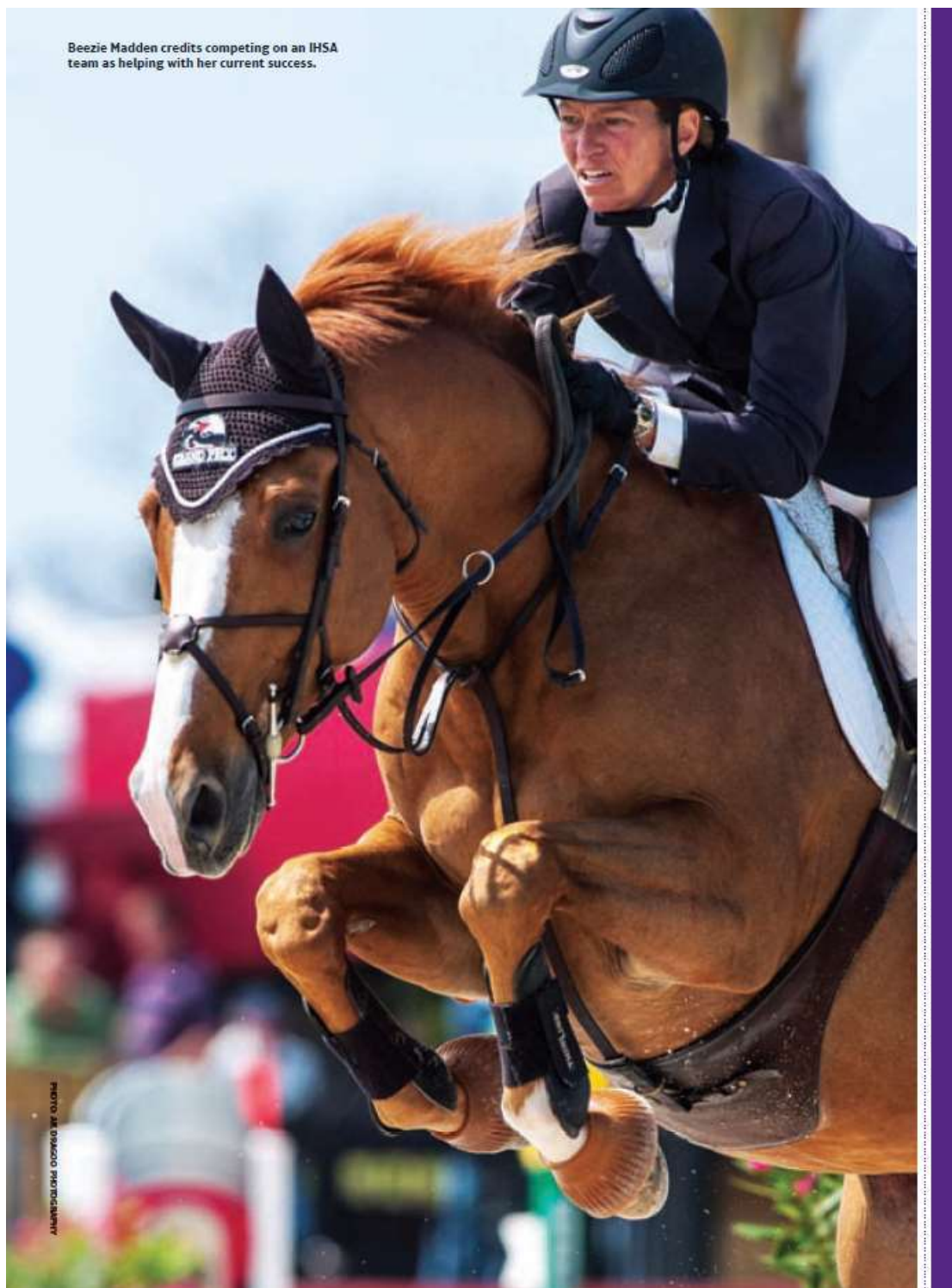


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## OLYMPIC DREAMS

Before Elizabeth "Beezie" Madden was an Olympic medalist and the United States Equestrian Federation (USEF) Equestrian of the Year, she was competing with the Intercollegiate Horse Show Association (IHSA) team at Southern Seminary Jr. College in Virginia where she graduated as valedictorian with a degree in liberal arts.

It's really no surprise that Beezie continued riding while in college. She tells us, "I grew up riding with my parents who owned a stable. I got my first pony at the age of three, and I have been riding ever since."

In college, Beezie certainly made her mark winning the esteemed Cacchione Cup as an individual, as well as helping her team make it to National Championship honors in the team rankings.

Now, Beezie rides for her husband John Madden of John Madden Sales in Cazenovia, NY. Just last year, Beezie won the 2013 FEI World Cup Finals Championship as well as being named the 2013 USEF Equestrian of the Year. Simon, the horse that she won the World Cup Finals on, was also named the 2013 USEF Horse of the Year.

Beezie explains that competing with her IHSA team directly translates to her successful showings at the Athens, Beijing, and London Olympics. "Riding in college allowed me to experience riding as a team member and learn how to help make the team cohesive. I think this helped me with competing on a team, which is very different than how riders normally compete!"

However, it was the 2006 World Equestrian Games in Aachen when Beezie felt the full extent of what she learned in college. "At Southern Seminary, I learned how to hop on a strange horse and execute a course with it," Beezie explains. "The World Equestrian Games format includes switching of horses between the top riders in the final phase. We only get two warm-up fences with each horse before we take them into the arena over an international course at the highest level of competition."

## EQUITATION ASPIRATIONS

Kalyn Healey Fogarty graduated in 2006 from Stonehill College in Easton, MA, with a degree in biology and a minor in biochemistry. However, after college she didn't find a job in a lab—instead, she continued toward her dream of being involved in the horse industry.

She now owns Artemis Training and Sales, a hunter/jumper training barn in Long Island, NY, named after her beloved equitation mare Artemis. Kalyn teaches riders of all ages, but focuses mostly on those looking to compete in the Short Stirrup through Big Equitation divisions in the local and A circuits.

While she was active on the A circuit prior to college, she found riding on the team a welcome change of pace and a wonderful learning experience. "After competing on the A circuit in high school it was a nice change to compete on the IHSA and Varsity circuit. Riding as a member of a team

## FUN AND GAMES

Kalyn Healey Fogarty laughs when asked about memories from college that will stick with her. "At Nationals in Harrisburg when I was a senior, I was walking down the long chute toward the entrance of the ring. I was on deck. The owner/handler of the horse I was riding suddenly tells me, 'Sometimes when you are two strides away he doesn't know that he is supposed to go to the jump and leave the ground.' I looked at the lady like she was crazy. She was telling me that the horse basically didn't understand what jumping was as I was about to jump him around a 3'6" course. Then she continued, 'But usually if you kick him really hard it's fine and he figures it out.' Great. We had a lovely round and ended up third. I felt the hesitation that the owner described, but luckily he decided he knew how to jump that day!"

where every rider's points count was a very unique experience compared to the individual nature of riding outside of college. It was very special to have a team of girls who all rooted for each other and helped each other both in the ring and outside of it."

Taking the Stonehill College team by storm, she was a member of the 2003 National Championship IHSA Team, as well as winning ribbons in the open over fences at multiple Varsity Tournament of Champions. As a senior, Kalyn was the bronze medal winner in the Individual Open over Fences at the IHSA 2006 National Championships.

She attributes much of her success after graduation to what she learned while competing in college. "I learned that hard work and mental preparation is just as important as talent. Riding in college was very different than riding on the circuit. You don't get to practice on the horse that you draw or use your own tack. You don't get the advantage of a warm-up jump or get to pick the bit that goes in its mouth. You have to study the horse while someone else warms it up. No matter how great your eye is or how many ribbons you once won in the Medal and Maclay classes, you are on a level playing field with your competitors. It is necessary to study the horse in other ways—watching it with other riders, noting how the other riders were successful or unsuccessful on the horse. This taught me to go beyond relying on natural talent and really breaking down my riding into a methodical and thoughtful plan. This has translated into my professional life in many ways. I am able to watch my students and pick up on the subtle things that they are doing on their horses and help them to grow as riders."

Kalyn is already proving that she puts thought and hard work into training her riders and horses. One of her students was awarded fourth place in the prestigious USEF Medal Finals in Harrisburg, PA, this past October. In addition to this, her pony riders have ribboned in the pony hunters at the USEF Pony Finals, Devon Horse Show, and Washington International Horse Show; while her equitation students have qualified and ribboned at the Pennsylvania National Horse Show, Marshall and Sterling Finals, and Professional Horsemen's Association (PHA) Finals.

However, the ability to analyze horse-and-rider teams



Kalyn Healey Fogarty with two of her students.

“The IHSA is the great equalizer in our sport. You do not have to come from a lot of experience or money to be accepted. Everyone has the same chance to do well.”

— Tom Brennan —

was not the only thing that Kalyn gained while on the Stonehill team. “Being team captain also helped me learn how to explain things to teammates and act as a motivator and inspiration, which I use every day in my professional teaching.”

#### SELF-DISCOVERY

Unlike Beezie and Kalyn, Tom Brennan was not aiming for the professional legions prior to his experience in college. Graduating in 2004 Cum Laude with a degree in psychology from Stonehill College in Easton, MA, Tom had a very limited involvement with horses before college. He says, “I took lessons at a local barn and had some friends with horses, but we did not go to shows. We had a lot of fun, though!”

Riding for four years on the Stonehill College IHSA/ NCAA Equestrian Team with coach Shella Murphy, Tom started in the Advanced Walk/Trot/Canter division and moved up to the Open division before he graduated, a testament to his dedication and talent. Tom tells us, “I went to Nationals three times and captained the 2003 National Championship team. I participated in the first NCAA championships before boys were disqualified from competition. We participated in the Tournament of Champions series with a lot of success. The IHSA is the great equalizer in our sport. You do not have to come from a lot of experience or money to be accepted. Everyone has the same chance to do well.”

Tom is currently the professional rider and trainer at Tony Workman's Winter Hill Farm in northern Virginia. In addition to his responsibilities for the clients at Winter Hill, Tom has a small “r” judge's card and tries to involve himself as much as possible in the governance of the sport. To that end, Tom has been the chairman of the Young Professionals



Tom Brennan and Gramercy Park.

Committee, vice chair of the International Hunter Derby Task Force, and is a member of both the USHJA Hunter Working Group and USEF National Hunter Committee. Tom is also the commentator for the USEF Network for the International Hunter Derby Finals.

Tom says that much like Beezie and Kalyn, he is able to attribute much of his success to what he learned riding on the team. “I do a fair amount of catch riding for people at horse shows. I could not be as calm and confident about it without my experience in the IHSA. The college riding experience also forces you to look at the bigger picture—to see how a group of people can work together to accomplish a larger goal.”

He has seen his fair share of victories since leaving the IHSA ranks. “Intercollegiate riding is very valuable for someone who intends to make a career in this industry. It both teaches and forces you to be adaptable.” His adaptability has proven to be a component to his success, being

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named the 2012 World Champion Developing Professional Hunter Rider and riding Gramercy Park to the title of 2012 World Champion Hunter Horse of the Year. In addition to these honors, he has earned the titles of WCHR Regional Champion 2010-2013, 2013 Gulfport International Hunter Derby Champion, 2013 Gulf Coast Winter Circuit Champions – Green Working, Performance Hunter, and Regular Conformation, and tri-colors and Indoors in Green Working and Green Conformation divisions.

Technical skills and the ability to adapt were not the only things that Tom gained from his time on the team. He also fostered lifelong relationships. “I learned early on to surround myself with good people in this business. This is as important as talent and work ethic. Nothing goes perfectly and the people around you—peers, employees, and clients—see you through the problems that come up. “On another level, this industry has inherent difficul-

#### CHOOSE THE SCHOOL FOR YOU

“Whether you’re a rider or not, you must be able to envision yourself at every school that you apply to. You must ask yourself the question, “Will I be happy here?” You will be spending the next four years there, not your parents, not your college counselor or your trainer... you must be happy and comfortable with your decision. You know what you are looking for and what is most important to you in your schoolwork, social life, and riding endeavors. Take the reins in your college decisions!”

—CJ Law, Mount Holyoke College.


ties, making it hard to have a “normal” personal life. My college equestrian team exposed me to the people that have become my family and friends for a lifetime. Not only did I meet my wife, but also I made such close friends that we still talk regularly and go on vacation together.”

#### BEYOND SHOW RINGS AND RIBBONS

When heading off to college, you may be focused on your academics (and should be!), but don’t discount the leadership skills, the analytic abilities, and the lifelong friendships that you will form while competing in college.

Not every equestrian in college goes on to be a horse trainer; many choose to continue riding, but only as a hobby. However, the skills that they learned while competing on the team continue to help them as they continue on their career path.

Sharalyn Lima, a graduate of Endicott College and a member of their intercollegiate team, now works at the Interscholastic Equestrian Association (IEA) and calls upon her experience daily as she discusses the program with aspiring high school riders. Kristen Kasper, an alumn of Mount Holyoke College and an assistant project manager at Florida NextGen Test Bed and research assistant at NEAR Lab ERAU, finds that the time management skills she learned on the team are now an essential part of her daily life.

No matter where your career takes you, the time you spend on your college equestrian team is time well spent. 

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