



Sweet and smart, fierce and fast are among the apt adjectives for Bay Area hunter/jumper rider.

by Kim F. Miller

Life at the University of Notre Dame in Indiana is going to be a little different for Adele Bonomi. The San Francisco resident starts her freshman year at the prestigious school in August and is excited, even though she expects it to be four years without a major constant in her life: horses.

“Horses have always been the consistent thing throughout my life,” reflects Adele, a student of Sonoma Valley Stables in Northern California’s Petaluma. “The barn has always been a place where you can go and all your worries melt away. It’s so nice because we all live in such a fast-paced environment.”

Now 18 and competing as an amateur, Adele had high school years that were faster-paced than many. In addition to A circuit equestrian competition, she was a star track and cross-country runner for her all-girls high school, Convent Sacred Heart. Juggling Notre Dame-level academics, two time-consuming sports and regular thought-provoking articles for the school

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newspaper required fast-twitch mental skills, stamina and follow-through.

Being a genuinely nice person was not a requirement, yet that may be Adele's most distinct trait, notes Skyler Allen. Skyler, 17, joined Sonoma Valley Stables last December and remembers Adele from well before that.

"Even when I barely knew her, she was super sweet to me," she recalls of being about 12 and at a different barn. "I was quite shy and Adele would always invite me to sit with her group." In group lessons and at shows, Adele offers compliments and congratulations that reflect an understanding of their goals. "She really cares about everybody at the barn."



Also, "Fierce!"

Adele started riding at 8 and has been with Sonoma Valley Stables since 2015. Horses may be in her blood, thanks to her mother, the lifelong rider and performance psychologist Darby Bonomi, PhD. Younger sister Clara is also an accomplished equestrian. Along with sharing and swapping horses over the years, Adele switched her emphasis between hunters, jumpers and equitation over that time.

Hands-on horsemanship is a constant regardless which division she's focused on. Participating in the USHJA's Emerging Athlete Program reflects Adele's genuine interest in the full scope of horsemanship, notes Skyler. Her knowledge of horses and willingness to share it with barnmates, along with her "beautiful riding," make her a positive role model, Skyler adds.

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Sweet. Great role model. Beautiful rider. Also, “fierce” says trainer Ned Glynn. “She is sweet and gentle with her horses and very athletic and competitive. She is a fierce competitor.

“She does her own grooming and her horses are always turned out immaculately. Above all, she always puts her horse’s welfare first and, as a rider and horsewoman, makes correct decisions based on that. I don’t think I’ve ever seen her get upset with any of her horses and she always takes responsibility for how they are doing.”

Adele recalls becoming especially passionate about horsemanship, and the thrills of the jumper division, while grooming for professional Amanda Flint at the Colorado Horse Park a few years ago. “I had just done the 3’3” Junior Hunter Finals and the Colorado show was very jumper focused. I thought it was incredible. I had a chance to hack some jumpers around and to watch all the classes and I got very interested.”

A small, fiesty jumper named Charley VDL, imported by Amanda, intensified Adele’s interest. Winning the 1.2M Classic at the Giant Steps Charity Horse Show in 2018 highlights a partnership through which she built up considerable confidence. “He was not a big horse, but he was super speedy and could make all the inside turns. He gave me a lot of confidence.”

Equitation was the main focus of Adele’s final junior year in 2019 and into 2020. That culminated in her Circuit Championship in the 18-35 Equitation division, for the second half of the Desert Circuit in Thermal. She excelled in the Hunter ring, too, finishing 7th in the West Coast Junior Hunter Finals aboard Little Wing.

Patience is a gift of all the horses she’s ridden, Adele reflects. “Horses can get hurt. Not every horse is right for you. Then when you do have the right horse, everything just clicks for you.”

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