



***Setbacks don't alter Maclay Regional winner's goal of ever-improving horsemanship.***

*by Sydney Callaway*

I have known Genevieve Meyer for many years, as we have competed together in the equitation and jumper ring on several occasions. I can always spot her by her intent focus and perfectly polished boots. Genevieve is a hardworking young girl with a dream of riding professionally and the drive to get there. We all know the saying "hard work beats talent when talent doesn't work hard." However, when you put hard work and talent together, not even the sky can limit this young rider.



## The Result

Genevieve recently made headlines for taking home a big win in an equitation class, the Maclay Regionals for Zone 10. This is a qualifying class for the Maclay Finals held in Kentucky every November. The equitation world is a subsection within the hunter/jumper community where only the most stylish, cool headed and poised riders come out on top. Do not be fooled, winning a medal class is never as easy as it looks. I competed in equitation for many years and can say, first and foremost, the equitation ring can make or break the mental toughness of a rider.

“It is easy to get wrapped up in posing,” Genevieve states. “I think it is important to remember that the equitation should just be a tool to prepare the up and coming riders for the jumper ring. I think the equitation is a great tool to learn how to handle the pressure, and to really get a strong riding foundation that you can always go back to.”

This point Genevieve makes about how to handle pressure is something we can all relate to. In the equitation ring, the focus on perfection reaches a height akin to ballet. The qualities that make a great show jumper can often hurt a rider in the equitation ring, as the emphasis has become increasingly on slow, methodical, controlled movements from both rider and horse. “The emphasis should be placed more on riding to train your horse, and to always work towards a better riding horse,” Genevieve states. “You shouldn’t be focusing on having a perfect round as much as making the perfect effect.”



Ann Karrasch, one of her longtime trainers, endorses this approach. “It was exciting to have all of that hard work pay off and for her to be able to go out there and ride the ride she wanted to ride, to keep her position and everything the way she wanted, was a huge bonus for all her hard work. We always want to do well but it is always with the mind set to be the best rider she can be. For her, doing the equitation is to learn how to be a smooth, well connected rider.”

## --Mental Aspect

Focusing on being a smooth, well-connected rider is easier said than done. It's only natural to get wrapped up in the results, the exact plan, the need for perfection. Going into the Maclay Regionals in September, Genevieve had been having rough year. Setbacks included hurting her arm, a concussion, a burst appendix during Spruce Meadows and colic surgery for her horse Coral Reef Cruise last year. This year, her top junior jumper Coral Reef Santos Utopia experienced a career ending injury.

"I think what was most exciting was that she was able to come back and win despite all the hardships," Ann explains. "It is from those experiences in life that allow you to be able to look through those tough moments and keep a positive outlook. It can bring you down or you can use it to grow. We have always tried to encourage her to not let it bring her down. When things are unfair [with Cruise getting sick, or her best horse breaking down – blowing out a tendon and never jumping again] I try to tell her to focus on what she got from that horse. The ability she has to act the way she did in those situations, those are the things we are striving for – the horsemanship.



"It's easy to get caught up in the competition. From the beginning her mom and Vinton and I instilled that the horses come first, no matter what. Those moments where it was really hard, she was able to do the right thing for the horse."

### **Values: Horsemanship Above All**

Indeed, the training of the horse and the growth of ourselves as horsemen and women is what we should all keep in mind, whether we are in or outside of the show arena.

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