

Temecula trainer takes full advantage of the USEA's Future & Young Event Horse programs.

by Margaret Rizzo-McKelvy

West coast event rider Erin Kellerhouse has extensive experience in both the USEA Future and Young Event Horse Programs, thanks to the folks at Gateway Farm and Peacefield Farm, who trust their talented youngsters to Erin's program and care.



Liz Jenner and Laurel Ritter of Gateway Farm mostly breed Warmbloods that have had proven success in the event world. Located in Acampo, the farm provides Erin with most of the young horses that she starts, which she either sells or takes on as her own to compete through the levels.

Additionally, Peacefield Farm in Temecula has handed over many Thoroughbreds for Erin to retrain, resell and compete. With multiple wins throughout her time in the program, Erin knows what it takes for a talented young event horse to succeed.

Erin, whose business is Swift Ridge Eventing, was encouraged to compete in the Young Event Horse divisions by her husband, organizer Robert Kellerhouse, who runs events at the Woodside Horse Park in Northern California and Galway Downs in Temecula. Erin's training barn is based at Galway Downs, too.

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“When the program first started, my husband really wanted me to try it out with the youngsters I was bringing up at the time. I was really happy I did it because it was such a great introduction to eventing for the 4-year-olds,” says Erin.

“They were able to put in a dressage test and jump some jumps before doing the regular one-day horse trial division the next day. Also, hearing what the judges thought of my horses was a major plus.”

Erin has had the privilege of experiencing the program aboard multiple horses. In particular, two of Cheryl Reynolds’ homebreds, named RockItMan (Blauer Vogel – Christie) and Roxabelle (Sharp Victor – Christie), have gone on to have successful eventing careers. Additionally, an undeniable standout horse in her string is bred by Gateway Farm and owned by Erin: Rondelet (Rascalino – Welteje’) a 5-year-old Hanoverian mare that Erin competed in the 4- and 5-year-old YEH classes. At the time of publication, Rondelet tops the 5-year-old YEH national leaderboard, and with a recent win in the 5-year-old division at Galway Downs, Erin describes her as everything you would want in an event horse.



“Rondelet is a beautiful mover and could easily do just straight dressage,” Erin says. “She has a great jump and a little more blood than a typical Warmblood would have. She has a great brain, is very trainable, has the right build and is very light.”

Having numerous horses progress through the program, Erin appreciates the judges’ feedback the most. “I love reading the comments about my horses’ movement and jumping form to see where I can help them improve. I also appreciate how the judges really want to see the horse figuring out the jumping questions and don’t want the rider to help them too much. They want you to ride them forward and let your horse take care of the rest—they will really reward you for that!”

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Erin explains that horses that have completed not only regular Training-level events, but have also gone through the 5-year-old Young Event Horse classes are more than prepared to make the step-up to Preliminary. Erin comments, "I think by the time your 5-year-old competes at the YEH Championships, they're really ready to move up. You're jumping some Preliminary height fences and questions. Going from the regular qualifiers to the Championships is a great progression for the horses."

Erin offers some great advice for those amateur riders looking to take their baby to their first Young Event Horse competition. "You need to be prepared! Don't think you're going to be going around an introductory course. Make sure you've gone cross-country schooling, jumped a few courses and ran through your dressage test a couple times so that you set your horse up for success. That way, they leave feeling confident in their ability to be an event horse!"

To learn more about Erin and her program at Swift Ridge Eventing, visit www.swiftridgeeventing.com. Article printed with permission from the United States Eventing Association and it originally appeared on USEventing.com