

Olympian Lauren Billys encourages boundary pushing & partnerships at Napa clinics.

Over a rainy October weekend, Olympic eventer Lauren Billys shared her Rio de Janeiro experience with riders at Hilltop Stables in Napa. Lauren's story of giving up everything to pursue her dream to ride in the Olympics and her teaching style inspired riders to push their personal boundaries and become better partners with their horses.



In her third clinic at the stables, Lauren explained, "As a riding coach, I think every horse has a purpose and I want to help riders find their horse's purpose. It helps us be better teammates with our horses no matter what they can be good at. When you go to competitions, when you are in new situations, the stronger you are as teammates, the better you can be together."

Hilltop Stables owner and trainer, Linda Betts, met Lauren in 2014 through their mutual riding coach, Bea di Grazia. Since then, Lauren has been invited to teach several clinics at the barn.

"I love to come here to teach at Hilltop Stables," Lauren says. "It's unique to come up here where there are good school horses, nice arenas and all ages to teach. I feel honored that Linda has me teach her students."

And Lauren is still a learner. "I've learned so much about riding through teaching others," she says. "It's been a different way for me to practice learning more about horses by being on the ground watching riders."

A parent at Hilltop Stables, Melinda Ellis, writes, "Lauren has taught my son Leyton many valuable skills that have improved his riding technique and bolstered his confidence. Lauren is a

knowledgeable, experienced and accomplished trainer who is genuine, kind and an incredibly positive role model for young riders.”

Adult rider Janice Mathews reflects on her ride in the recent clinic. “Lauren has a wonderful ability to translate her riding knowledge to her students. When something doesn't quite click, she gives you another way to understand her point until you get it. She is always supportive and encouraging.”

Mantras

In preparation for her Olympic pursuit, Lauren worked with visualization coach Marcus Washington. Today, she shares his wisdom with students, encouraging them to create a personal mantra. Lauren used two mantras in Rio when she needed to bolster her confidence and calm herself.

One mantra, “Eye of the Storm,” is perfect for her “because I want to be that center calm area when there's chaos happening around me,” Lauren shared. “I want to be confident, be certain about where I'm going and have a plan to execute, but also have an edge to me. When I feel insecure, or in that moment of pressure, I can say my mantra and it makes me feel my edgy confidence.”

Lauren's other mantra, “It feels like home,” comforted her when she was with her horse at the Games. “I was in a scary and unfamiliar place, unfamiliar atmosphere with all these unfamiliar people, but when I was around Purdy it felt like being home. I feel at peace when I ride and I know exactly where I'm going and what I'm doing.”

Whatever mantra riders need, “They should be able to grab it like that,” Lauren explained. “So when you're at a horse show, sitting at a start gate or in a lesson and need that confidence, you can just say your mantra to yourself to help you get to the next level.

“As a child, I was always competitive to the point of being awkward and way too intense,” she continues. “I thought that was a bad thing about me... but at my first Pan American Games, I found that the people around me were exactly like me. There's a reason we're made to be this

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Written by Laurie Budash

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way and we have to find places in our lives where that is successful.”

More Olympics & Clinics



The riders who won at the Olympics have been there many times. Lauren would like to look back someday and say she has ridden there many times too.

During her visit at Hilltop Stables, Lauren described the challenge she faced choosing a career. Having double majored in enology and chemistry at Fresno State, Lauren was going to make a difficult decision when she returned home from Rio. Should she use her knowledge for winemaking in business, or continue pursuing a career with horses? When she rode across the finish line on the cross-country course in Rio, she knew. From then on, her life would be devoted to horses, teaching other riders and the sport she loves – three-day eventing.

On November 1, Lauren opened her own training facility at Stonepine Equestrian Center in Carmel Valley with 18 stalls for school horses and boarders. Her Olympic partner, Castle Larchfield Purdy, will join her along with her 2020 Tokyo games hopeful, Marseille.

Hilltop Stables will host clinics with Lauren every other month beginning Dec. 3 -4. Linda Betts looks forward to having her students and those from the surrounding area ride in them. “I feel my students benefit from her lessons as I have when riding with her. Lauren comes with a positive confident approach to teaching so you feel good about what you’ve done.”

Lauren will teach group and private lessons in dressage and jumping during the clinics. All ages and levels of students are welcome, including those who ride hunter-jumpers or strictly dressage. Overnight stalls will be available.

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To sign up for Hilltop Stables clinics with Lauren, call Linda Betts at 707-258-8874. Visit www.hilltopstable.com for more info.