



Oakhurst Coaches Journals

On May 01, 2015 the Oakhurst Coaching staff were challenged by Head Coach Ruth Allum to write weekly Coaching Journals, chronicling the adventures, travels and day to day life of the Oakhurst Show Team and family. Alternating between Coaches Ruth Allum, Helen Richardson, Blair Nicol and Megan Jenner, weekly Journal entries are posted on the www.oakhurstfarm.com website for everyone to enjoy. Including pictures and competition results, the online Journal has become a valued record of memories from the past year.

This compilation of all of the 2015 entries is effectively our Oakhurst Yearbook. Congratulations to our Coaching Team for accepting the challenge, and to our entire Oakhurst Team for embracing the Journals every week!

Cover layout and design by: Emma Richardson

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When we hold our Show Team meeting in January, I sit in the room feeling an awesome rush of adrenaline that carries me through the whole show season. The feeling of excitement, anticipation and genuine delight that fills me when riders who affiliate themselves with our program leave the start box/ turn down centre line/ or realise the dream in whatever way is important to them is indescribable. And I am lucky to have surrounded myself by an inspired group of coaches that drive these students and myself to be better every day.

In my fictitious world of rainbows and unicorns I had always hoped of having a pool of coaches who have amazing expertise that I could draw on to make me the best possible teacher my students deserve.

Well shut the front door!!! I am blessed with Helen Richardson, Blair Nicol and Megan Jenner to draw on to make me sharp, current and critical of what I do on a daily basis as a coach. All certified. All invested. And yes, all hopefully planning on replacing me one day 😊.

My hope/dream/passion/drive is to create coaches who will surpass me. It seems defeatist right?? In my opinion, success has been achieved when we teach someone else to be better than we have been. And hey, the big news from our coaching staff this week is that our coaches will be wading into the blogging experience! Every week we will be rotating through our amazing coaches in order to tap into what they are doing, and what excitement they are finding throughout their week. Keep an eye on the "Coaches Journals" section of our website for weekly updates.

For me this week, I am of course excited to have jumped into our show season with a clinic last weekend with Diana Burnett, and this coming weekend with a huge extravaganza of Dressage fabulousness at our ESD show on Saturday and Derby awesomeness in our Upper Canada Derby on Sunday! Summer is definitely feeling close, signs of spring are everywhere.

Personally one of the biggest spring fancies for me is the daffodils that adorn themselves throughout the property. The guy who planted those around the property was my dad... Robert F. Allum. And to be honest, every time I wear the OAKHURST flag I thank my parents... my dad from 'MILE OAK FARM' and my Mom from 'HURST GREEN FARM', hence OAKHURST Farm. The daffodils were my parents planting originally but I propose that this fall we all plant some. Who's with me? Who else has their parents to thank for their ability to indulge in this sport?



I am eager to see everyone this weekend at our 'Spring into Summer' shows and am delighted to watch the Mother's Day celebrations that will take place!





P.S. Who has heard of the Oakhurst Dressage team?

Are you scared??

You should be!

We have team jackets!!!



Phew, that was a busy weekend at Oakhurst! Our ESD Dressage Show saw competitors ride more than 80 dressage tests on a very warm and sunny Saturday (May 09). It was wonderful to see so many people take advantage of the opportunity to ride their eventing dressage tests before the first Event this summer and even more exciting to see so many more competitors venturing into the dressage ring to ride "Dressage, Dressage" tests - including a few members of our Silver Dressage Team, who gave their test rides a trial run before their first official outing in a few weeks.

On Sunday, May 10th, we held our first Upper Canada Derby of the season. The weather changed completely and it was overcast and cool all day - perfect for jumping! The Derby was a HUGE success, with 183 rounds (small error when we posted 177 last night - we were tired!) being ridden between 9AM and 5PM. The Oakhurst Whipper-In (Ruth!) did an amazing job of sending a continuous flow of horses and riders, keeping the ring constantly busy. I was pleased to hear from so many people that they love the format, the competitors learn and improve through the day and the format provides for continuous entertainment for the audience. After such a wonderful weekend, I can't help but feel like show season has really started - 2 weeks to our next outing seems too long!



Zoe Richardson riding Nike in the ESD Dressage Show at Oakhurst, May 09

Photo by: E.M.Richardson Photography



Megan Jenner riding Malibu Barbie in the Upper Canada Derby at Oakhurst, May 10

Photo by: E.M.Richardson Photography

Aside from the excitement of the weekend, my time recently has included a lot of coaching education, evaluation and certification. As most of Team Oakhurst knows, certified coaching is a passion for several of us in the barn. I often hear people ask why they should bother getting certified, or why they should look for a certified coach. I often reply "would you put your child in swimming lessons with an uncertified swim instructor? No? Then why would you put your child/parent/grandparent on a 1000 pound animal without verifying that the person teaching has had some education and been approved by some sort of governing sport body as capable of providing a safe and educational environment?"

I think the big difference between most sport coaches and equestrian coaches is that most sport facilities (pools, rinks, gyms, etc.) are publicly owned and managed. Most barns and stables are privately owned. Anyone can buy a barn, advertise that they "coach" and teach children whatever they like. Our students are lucky - the 4 coaches at Oakhurst are all active in the coaching system in Canada. We are all certified by the NCCP (National Coaching Certification Program). We all have to attend several hours of education every year to remain certified. We also have a current First Aid certificate at all times. We are continuously attending clinics to share ideas with other coaches and learn the latest and greatest techniques for educating our students in our sport.





Taya Davison riding Nike in the ESD Dressage Show at Oakhurst, May 09

Photo by: E.M. Richardson Photography

There is a lot of work required to become and stay certified. There should be. I would like to think that the student I am coaching is getting the most out of their time with me. I owe it to them to be teaching them skills that will 1. keep the horse and rider safe, 2. keep them advancing and learning, 3. keep them on track to achieve their goals, 4. keep them enjoying the sport for as long as they want to be involved. I feel like the more I can learn as a coach, the more I can help realize those goals.

Watching Oakhurst's own working student (now Instructor of Beginners!) Megan Jenner over the past year, I can confidently say that the Certification process has changed the way she teaches, for the better. Megan had done some teaching when she arrived. She was a good teacher, don't get me wrong! But over the past 9 months or so, she has learned so many things about teaching lessons that have made her a more confident, more knowledgeable and more proactive coach than when she arrived. We have many evening discussions about how to teach - how to react to different issues, how to develop progressions so that lessons develop from a starting point and build to a completed concept at the end. Megan pointed out to me last night that this truly has been an "apprenticeship" for her - with her certification validating all of the concepts she has learned.

The coaching team at Oakhurst is very special group. We work together a lot. We spend time telling each other what works and what doesn't in our lessons. We discuss how to coach each other's riders if one of us covers for another. We compare notes on lesson plans and how each of us can use the exercise set for the week for our own students. I often sit in the ring during Ruth's lessons and ask her a ton of questions after the lesson - "Why did you do that exercise?", "Why did you set the exercise like that?", "Was that for the horse or the rider?", "How can I do this for my students at a different level" or "What part of this is essential for my Pre-Entry crew to understand" and on and on, so that I can set my students up to succeed both now and as they progress.

I hear arguments that the certification process is too rigid and does not take style into account, coaching is an art. I agree with part of the sentiment. Coaching IS an art. Riding is an art. If you gave Ruth, Blair, Megan and I the same lesson topic and asked us to teach a lesson, we would all teach the lesson differently. We have different styles, a different eye and different delivery. But we would make sure that the essential core of that topic is taught. We would all provide the safest environment possible for that lesson. We would all ensure that we only ask students to do things they are capable of. We would each look for that learning moment when the students say "ohhhhh, I get it". I don't think the certification process changes our personal style. It just teaches us the essential tools to help prepare students who will ride for a lifetime. Our students will progress, improve, understand the fundamentals of



Blair Nicol riding Africa in the Upper Canada Derby at Oakhurst, May 10 Photo By: Emma Richardson



riding and be "thinking riders" who are capable of analyzing their own performance, planning competition seasons that complement their horse and setting short and long term goals.

The path to becoming certified is long and hard work. I would hope so, horses are big animals and we are putting loved ones on them and getting them to go very fast and jump big solid things. We should have to prove we know our stuff. Parents wouldn't expect any less in the other 60+ sports that the NCCP certifies coaches for.

So I guess when someone asks me "why be certified?" I have to wonder why a coach WOULDN'T want to be certified?

*Zoe Richardson & Tatum Nelson celebrating their wins in the ESD Dressage Show at Oakhurst, May 09
Photo by: E.M. Richardson Photography*



New foals are so exciting! There’s nothing quite like the anticipation and the guessing game that comes with a pregnant mare. Plenty of long conversations in the barn aisle with everyone sharing their two cents to whether you’ll be getting a colt or a filly and what kind of color and markings you’ll end up with. I’ve always admired the breeders who have the knowledge to put quality horses on the ground and the strength to send them out in the world and on to new adventures.

One year ago I began plotting and asking myself where will my next horse come from? How will I prepare for the future? After much deliberation and discussion I put my hopes of breeding a mare (Jasmine who was owned by Ruth and campaigned by Mark to the Preliminary level) into a reality.



It's hard to say what the most special part of this memory has been so far when every moment has been captured so perfectly. Almost like it's been etched in my mind to last me a lifetime.

Fast forward to May 5, 2015 where I was introduced to Alice ‘High Five’ an impossibly long legged filly with one white sock. I can’t express to you the surprise and excitement I felt when I first saw HER.

A day that began like any other shortly turned into a day I’ll never forget. You plan for months (11 to be exact) in advance but the initial shock of seeing your dream turn into reality really takes some time to sink in. We seldom have moments in life that are truly surprising in the best way imaginable.

The advent of new life always brings new hope. As with any new offspring/baby it brings along responsibility and the challenge that it provides me with, to set her long term development goals. Looking forward to the future I can’t begin to express how fortunate I am to be surrounded by a team of people whose knowledge and guidance has directed me to this wonderful opportunity.



“Alice” has got in touch with her Disney side and is full of curiosity! Much to Jasmine’s dismay, she is quick to wander off on her own to investigate everything that moves.

Photo by Cheryl Denault Photography



These opportunities to learn and develop continue here at Oakhurst with Equine Canada Rider level evaluations taking place on Monday May18th. Congratulations to Tatum, Zoe, Ania, Emma, Kenzi, Kiernyn and Taya, who successfully achieved their rider levels! The rider levels are important to long term equestrian development (LTED) as they encourage us to pursue our passion with knowledge and inspire others to follow suit. Leading by example and an excellent example at that! Thanks to Ruth, Helen and Meg for evaluating, it was a successful day for all. High fives all around!

I can only hope for continued success as we prepare for our first event of the 2015 Canadian season at Grandview Horse Trials(May 23, 24) in Orillia, the general buzz around the barn has been exciting knowing that the next 20 weeks are what we thrive and live for!

It's a new beginning, new foal, new season and new set of challenges! I can only hope that with these new beginnings we can put into motion what we've all learned and move forward with each new day.



I am reminded on a daily basis how lucky I am to be doing what I love.

Photo by Emma Richardson

Until next time,

Blair



Well it's official, show season has begun! The Oakhurst Eventing team headed off to Grandview Horse Trials, in Orillia. The new Oakhurst Dressage team traveled off to Mountain Star Silver Dressage Show this past weekend.



*L to R: Megan Jenner, Jenna Mayhew, Elisa Mayhew, Kristin McLaren & Helen Richardson at Mountain Star Stable Silver Dressage Show
Photo by: Emma Richardson*

The Oakhurst event team loaded up the trailer Friday morning with six horses and riders ready to go. With coach Ruth by their sides, support from other Oakhurst team members and good weather everyone had a successful good first outing. Way to go Blair, Leah, Mark, Devon, Misha and Rebecca on having a successful first event of the season!



*Devon Svoboda & Abbigael – XC at Grandview Spring HT
Photo by: Cheryl Denault Photography*

The new Oakhurst Dressage Team had their very first outing this weekend. Entering new territory can be a bit nerve raking but the team had a very successful day, coming home with Champion in First level, Reserve Champion in second level and high point Adult Amateur! Great job Kristen & Annie and Jenna & Kip! Not to mention Helen's amazing coaching and making everyone feel comfortable in an unknown place. A personal achievement of mine was backing up the truck and trailer into the last parking space available! Whew! And we even got complimented on our awesome team jackets!





Kristin McLaren & Panamerra warming up for their Second Level dressage debut!

Photo by: E.M. Richardson Photography

This past weekend we had teams of horses and riders go out and do what they love. Everyone of those teams have different weaknesses and strengths. The beginning of the adventure of a new partnership can be scary, yet very exciting. You wonder if this will be the horse to help you reach your dreams? It can take months of learning each others buttons, strengths, weaknesses until you have finally formed that bond, that trust, that unspoken connection. Then the two of you can take on the world together, until the day has comes when parting ways must happen and new bonds must be formed. In the end it doesn't matter what level you reach with your partner what matters is the things you learned from them along the way.



Blair Nicol & Africa - Show Jumping at Grandview Spring HT.

Photo by: Cheryl Denault Photography

I am so excited to take on this show season with my new partner in crime, Portia. Even through the days of frustration, I wouldn't ask for any other team mate to assist me in the 2015 show season. Here is to concurring the 2015 show season with our team mates!

Good luck to the Oakhurst Show Team this weekend at Meadowvale!



When I ask my son (13) or daughter (9) what they want to be when they grow up they either come up with what may at first seem like an outlandish idea (*bush pilot, Russian spy etc...*) or I get the simple, 'I don't know'. As if to say, 'WOW, how could you possibly think I have any idea what I want to do with my life at this age'... I remember a distinctly defining moment in my life (*approximate age – 10 years old*) when I asked my uncle Paul (*early 40's at the time*), what he wanted to be when he grew up... without missing a beat he said, 'rock star'. I remember feeling so relieved that there was no age limit on when you had to figure out what you wanted to be, and that the sky was the limit in terms of choices!



Laura Gravelle and Yarraman (Yogi) at the Meadowvale Derby 2015.

Pic by: E.M.Richardson Photography

I can absolutely say at this point in my life that I know what I am good at. Exploring this can be a valuable exercise in introspection that I think we should all do. I'll start us off with a few examples from my life:



Disney trivia: I feel like I could hold my own against Cinderella, I mean seriously she's not as smart as she looks



Math: When faced with even the simplest math equation my mind drifts off into grocery lists and lesson plans



Board Games: I have an unbelievable ability to win board games by simply outlasting the competition. No one leaves my table until I win, success!!



Cooking: Even the most simple of tasks in the kitchen can turn into a flaming bag of popcorn for me. True story, at the last horse show the hotel we stayed at had complimentary bags of microwave popcorn... somehow after only a minute in the microwave, mine turned into a terrifying fireball of flames as charred popcorn smelling smoke filling our hotel room. Don't worry, everyone was fine (*except the popcorn*). Let's be realistic, I can't be good at everything, it wouldn't be fair to everyone else ☺



Coaching: If you look up the definition of 'Coaching' one of the explanations you might find is that the term coaching is brought into play, 'to describe the process used to transport people from where they are, to where they want to be'. For me coaching isn't a job I went into in order to subsidize my own riding dreams. I made a very conscious decision to be trained, evaluated, certified and then to continue training in order to give my athletes the best I can possibly provide them. I wake up at night





Chelsea Arden & The Sky's the Limit (Skylar) at the Meadowvale Upper Canada Derby.

Pic by: E.M.Richardson Photography

Oh yeah, and I haven't even told you how cool our coaches are!! Over the last month we have read blogs from Helen, Blair and Megan that have been informative, thought provoking and entertaining! Keep up the good work ladies, I am thrilled to have the opportunity to work with you and am impressed with how you have stepped up to the challenge... wait until you see what I have in store for you next month!

Just an FYI to the 13 riders we have going to the 'Eventing at the Park Horse Trials' this weekend... When I say we are leaving at 8:00am (*for example*), I actually mean 7:45am. 😊

This weekend we had 10 horses loaded on 3 different trailers in under 10 minutes, team work makes the dream work... the pressure is on!

Until next time, I leave you with this:

Coaches: Make your athletes better at whatever already makes them good.

Riders: Be patient, Excellence takes time.

Ruth

thinking about how to help move my athletes forward, and the feeling when one of them crosses the finish line (figurative or literal) is absolutely indescribable. The biggest adrenaline rush for me is being a participant in helping transport people from where they are, to where they want to be.

I remember reading once that 2% of the population is PASSIONATE about what they do in order to make a living. I am so glad/relieved/lucky that I get to say I am in that 2%.

This past weekend we took a group of 14 riders to a local Derby as a training competition opportunity. For some of the riders it was chance to get to know a new mount before their first Horse Trial, for some an opening to school over some different fences and for a few it was their first break into the world of showing. Our athletes ranged from 9-29 years of age, and they were entered in classes varying from cross poles to 3'0" and yet they all worked together, they all cheered each other on and they were all active participants in each other's successes. To say that I am proud of them is an understatement.



Kieryn Davison & King Stag (King) at the Meadowvale Upper Canada Derby.

Photo by: E.M.Richardson Photography



This past weekend we had our first outing at a local Horse Trial - Eventing at the Park at Wesley Clover Park in Ottawa, ON. Such a beautiful venue - with some exciting new changes and upgrades - is always a fun outing for our competitors. The Oakhurst Show Team brought 13 competitors ranging from Pre-Entry to Pre-Training this weekend. The weather was beautiful - sunny with a cool breeze to keep the bugs off. Couldn't ask for better!



Emma Richardson & Knight in a Jag competing in their first Horse Trial together.

Photo by: Dean Richardson

I realized as we worked through the day, that most of our team were new combinations, or challenging new levels - everyone was pushing their comfort zone a little - which is always great to see! Some of our successes were great - like the many successful first outings with new partners. A few of our team struggled a little getting used to the challenges presented. But through the successes and learning (character building moments!) I was thrilled to see our team work together. I heard teammates celebrating successes, helping prepare each

other for their individual phases of competition and commiserating with those who experienced setbacks - sharing stories of times they fell and found a way back up to the top. I think we all left this weekend a stronger, more cohesive team. I know that everyone left feeling good about some parts of their day and ready to jump into the fray and try again very soon.

The other thing I was proud to see this weekend was the number of Team Oakhurst members who volunteered their time to help at the Event. I saw 6 Oakhurst students out judging Cross Country jumps all day. Their commitment to help keep the sport thriving in our local area makes us very proud. Although I also remain sure that every time a team blue & yellow helmet cover sailed past them on cross country, they gave an extra loud cheer of support!

Over the past few weeks, with the start of cross country lessons and riding with more speed outside, I have heard a few students mention control - and whether they have enough. Control is a word full of meaning. The dictionary definition of control is: to exercise restraint or direction over; dominate. When we are riding, how much CONTROL do we, or should we have? When Ruth and I evented as teenagers, the saying was "You don't need to HAVE control, you just need to know you can GET it." As a teenager, I think I interpreted those words a bit differently than I would now.



Nadia Miller & Nike competing in the Entry Division.

Photo by: E.M. Richardson Photography

At 15, I was riding a big (tank like) chestnut gelding (who used to pull logs out of the bush somewhere in the depths of Quebec) named DeeJay. I recall riding him at an Event at Farm of the Mountain (now Venturing Hills) in Luskville. Halfway around the course we had a long trek across a field to a large X made



of telephone poles. Halfway across the field, enjoying the gallop, I thought "well, I don't HAVE control, let's see if I can GET it". "Nope". "Can't get control." (I weighed about a hundred pounds. He was used to pulling logs a heck of a lot bigger. I'm not convinced he knew I was even up there.) So my 15 year old brain made the brilliant decision to head towards the jump, because they always slow down to jump, right?. Not right. I must have flown about 10 feet in the air over that jump. DeeJay left me behind and galloped off to the finish.



Megan Jenner & Portia competing in their first event together!
Photo by: E.M.Richardson

In those days, if you fell off and you caught your own horse (and could get back on without help), you could keep going. DeeJay did a lap of the field and then galloped back to me whinnying. I guess it took him about a mile before he realized I was no longer up there. I was not thrilled to see him coming back (I believe I threw my crop at him to make sure I didn't have to get back on), I was OK with the long walk of shame at that point. At least I was in control of my speed when I was walking.

To me, the saying "You don't need to have control, you just need to know you can get it" meant that I could ride without any control some of the time. Now, after many, many years and many horses, my understanding is somewhat changed. We never ever want to have that feeling of being out of control. We need to know that when we ask, the horse will listen and come back. BUT...There are some things we can control and some we can't. Here's how I see it:

We (the rider) can control:

Pace: Our horse doesn't know the times or speeds for the level we are going. It is up to us to decide how fast we must be going and when that pace has to change. Allowing galloping stretches, or balancing to coffin canter are up to us. We need to make sure we put the horse in the pace needed to do the job we present.

Direction or Steering: We are the only one in the partnership with a course map. We need to make sure we are the captain of the ship and get the team from point A to point B. Straightness into every obstacle is up to us. The horse doesn't know where we are going, so we have to give them a clear path.

Balance: It is up to the rider to let the horse know that there is an obstacle coming that requires their full attention. That 6, 8, 10 (whatever you use!) stride balancing zone before a jump is vital to preparing your horse for his part of the job. If he doesn't sit up and pay attention coming in to every obstacle, it is very easy for the partnership to fall apart (as I found out trying to use a jump to slow down a freight train all those years ago!).



Leona Noble & Little Miss Snuggle Monster on the Pre-Entry XC.
Photo by: E.M.Richardson



The horse has to control:

Footwork: It's up to your horse to jump the jumps, drop off the banks, etc. They need to figure out how to get their feet set up to navigate the obstacle successfully. If we try to make the take-off and landing up to us as well, we don't let them do any of the thinking. The best horses are the ones that have to think, know where their best takeoff point is and know how to get out of a sticky situation. The more you can give a horse the right setup - pace, direction and balance, and let them take care of the jumping, the stronger they will become at figuring out the best way from one side to another.

Jump Effort: We can't lift them off the ground. As much as we would like to, the most we can do is stay out of their way and let them determine how high to jump. For some horses that is the bare minimum (My dad had a horse named Mac who we joked was blind and jumped by braille. If the jump was 2 feet high, he jumped 1'11. If it was 4 feet high, he jumped 3'11. Every time.) For some horses, that's a good 6+ inches over the height of the obstacle (Look at any picture of Sokit2ya jumping. Ever.) We can give them the pace, balance straightness and make sure they have energy - they have to lift the team off the ground.



*Janan Steward & Mowgli competing in their first Horse Trial and completing all 3 phases successfully, they are now hooked on Eventing!
Photo by: E.M.Richardson*

Cross Country is a test of endurance, but to me it is also a test of teamwork. Riding is a partnership. Both partners have jobs. And both partners need to rely on each other to do those jobs to help each other. We can't control every step of every ride. If we try, we will not be successful. We can't get every step right 100% of the time. Let your partner take some responsibility. Give them the tools (pace, direction & balance) to achieve success for your partnership. Let go and let them do their part - make them thinking horses just like Ruth, Blair Megan and I challenge you to be thinking riders.

I'd like to change the saying.

I propose: "Control what's yours to control, trust your horse to do the rest"

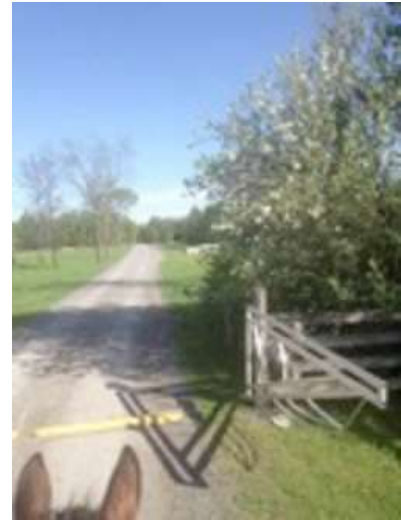
Helen



"Life is like a never-ending highway embedded with speed bumps and stop signs."

Have you ever been driving down the road and you see a sign that says "Bump Ahead" and then shortly after "Bump"? You may think to yourself "why on earth would you need to be told about a bump when you can clearly see it, however sometimes it really does need to be spelled out for us. Whether it is driving or riding, speed bumps do impact us.

Speed bumps can serve as a valuable metaphor in teaching riders about sound decision making. It's sometimes important to slow down and consider any "signs" indicating the need to alter one's training. Sometimes our goals don't go according to plan and we are forced to analyze and adjust.



"Success is not measured by the heights one attains, but by the obstacles one overcomes in their attainment". Leah Vrieling & Gandalf galloping on the Training Cross Country at Little Bromont.

Photo by: Cheryl Denault Photography

After each competition I fill out a post performance work sheet. This work sheet encourages me to be up front about my performance (where I had success and areas that need improvement). Are there things I can alter or influence to improve my performance? I believe that this has a positive impact on how I perform, coach and train.

While I can't speak for all riders, I definitely know when I'm approaching a speed bump with my training. Rather than deny it and stick to a predetermined training program, I make the necessary adjustments to carefully and cautiously negotiate the situation. Before too long, I'm back on track with my SMART goals, but with a greater understanding of how to avoid a similar situation moving forward.

Am I going to let those speed bumps deter me from my goal? Or might I consider whether those speed bumps might serve some greater purpose?



Kenzi Mitchell & Top Gun in the Entry Division Show Jumping at Little Bromont HT.

Photo by: Cheryl Denault Photography





Devon Svoboda & Abbigael on the Pre-Training Cross Country at Little Bromont HT.

Photo by: E.M.Richardson Photography

Self reflection, while it can be challenging, ultimately allows us to move forward. I am constantly reviewing and referencing my yearly training plan (made at the beginning of the year - I have already made multiple copies!) and adjusting accordingly to each horse. While most speed bumps that we encounter are clearly visible, there are, on occasion, some that we don't see. Having a plan A, B, C,...Z will better prepare us for things that are unseen.



Laura Gravelle & Yarraman finished 4th in the Entry Division at the Little Bromont HT.

Photo by: Cheryl Denault Photography

On Friday, June 12th, six horse and rider combinations (and a support team like no other) travelled to Bromont, Quebec to compete at Little Bromont Horse Trials. All eager to compete and cheer each other on, from Entry to Training level. While everything may not have gone according to plan, I was amazed and proud of how everyone came together. It was a real TEAM effort, from our coaching staff, parents, grooms, riders and photographers. We can't thank you enough for all you did!



Speed bumps, while they make you slow down, they also make you appreciate when you get to a smooth patch of road.



All in all, working within our resources, building trusting relationships and learning to work with a team helps us map the road ahead so we can start to predict speed bumps, slow down and jump over what could have been a barrier.

I leave you with this....



This car rolled from the upper parking lot, down several hills to come to a stop in the side of the barn all of the event horses were stabled in. No one was injured. Except the car. Photo by: Cheryl Denault Photography

Too bad the driver of this car at Little Bromont did not see the "Speed Bump" sign.

Blair



On June 20th, 2014, I packed up my horse trailer and truck, just after midnight, and my parents and I drove out of Windsor, Ontario starting an eight hour drive to Oakhurst Farm. We arrived to Oakhurst around 10 am (we defiantly got lost driving up). Driving up the drive way, I felt a roller coaster of emotions, from so excited to extremely nervous.



June 20th, 2014 - I have finally arrived at Oakhurst!

The next couple of days, I experienced my first Horse Trial by heading to Touch A Rainbow Horse Trials with the Oakhurst Team. I walked all the courses and watched the event happen, taking in the experience. Observing all the different tack, rules and schedule of eventers and just trying to figure out how this whole eventing thing works.

Flash Forward to June 20th, 2015, there I was once again course walking the Entry cross country course for the Touch a Rainbow Horse Trials. This was my first time going Entry ever with my pony Portia. Wow! Has this year flown by!



Tatum Nelson and Oh Chez in the Dressage Ring at the Numech ESD Dressage Show on June 20. On their way to being the Peewee Walk Trot Rider Reserve Champion and Peewee Overall Reserve Champion for the day!

Photo by: Cheryl Denault Photography

Speaking about Touch a Rainbow, Oakhurst headed to North Augusta at 6am Sunday morning with 10 horses and riders. Many of our horses and riders made upgrades at this event, which made it a very exciting day. We had many victories and learning experiences on Sunday.

Now, victories don't just happen, we must have our support system around us and this weekend our support system was on point. From multiple parents and family members helping out every rider there to our fellow peers grooming for us. Not to mention the awesome coaches there who stood outside in the pouring rain for us. There were many Oakhurst team members who gave back to our sport by volunteering their time jump judging at the event, who I heard huge cheers from as I cantered past!



The support from the Oakhurst team has what made my first year at Oakhurst so successful. Right from day one I was greeted into the family. Friendships were made with fellow riders and the support I receive from the other parents is unbelievable. The Oakhurst staff has not only welcomed me in but has taught me more than I ever thought I could learn.

I feel I owe both Ruth and Mark the world after they have both put so much effort into educating me. Helping me with my riding, coaching, horse education, sharing their knowledge with me about running a business and teaching me things who would've guessed I needed to know; like wiper snipping! I definitely am not the only one who has learned tons from these two!

Without this support group I couldn't have achieved many of the things I did this past year like completing my first event ever! Or becoming a certified coach and now having my own handful of students, who made me very proud this past weekend.



Zoe Richardson and Nike in the Dressage Ring at the Numech ESD Dressage Show on June 20. On their way to being the Peewee Walk Trot Rider Champion and Peewee Overall Champion for the day!

Photo by: Cheryl Denault Photography



Some of the Oakhurst Show Team waiting at the finish line at Oakhurst Horse Trials 2014, as they cheered me on after finishing my first event

Our walk/trot dressage team headed off to our first off-property ESD dressage show at Numech Equestrian Center on Saturday. Our walk/trot team, Zoe, Tate and myself, brought home walk/trot champion and reserve champion, peewee champion and reserve champion and lots of red ribbons.

Also competing for Team Oakhurst was Cheryl Denault and Bright Holiday (Oscar) who brought home 1st level champion at Oscars first off-property show.

Overall Oakhurst brought home many ribbons and lots and lots of prizes! Yay!



Tatum Nelson on Oh Chez, Megan Jenner on Malibu Barbie and Zoe Richardson on Nike at the Numech ESD Dressage Show on June 20, 2015. Photo by: E.M. Richardson Photography

So what made our weekend successful and my first year at Oakhurst unforgettable? Our family. Overall I have to thank every member of the Oakhurst family and team in truly making me feel that I live the dream.

Megan



So, one sleepless night I lay awake thinking about Dressage... c'mon, Eventing fans, don't stop reading! It's common knowledge that I have been an Eventing coach for over 20 years and Eventing will always remain my primary passion. However, last year we hosted the Eastern Zone Silver Dressage Championships and as the whipper-in for the day I was obliged to watch an entire day of dressage... non-stop... with no cross country phase imminent. As I watched and watched and watched, I was struck by a light bulb moment (or sun stroke, whatever): we do dressage at Events all the time, maybe just maybe our dressage would be competitive at dressage shows too!



Zoë Richardson & Nike, Tatum Nelson & Oh Chez at the Numech ESD Dressage Show

Once I'd recovered from the sunstroke, I started in on the research required to recruit, instruct and outfit a team of Oakhurst Prancers. I even made a PowerPoint presentation in order to entice some of my Event riders (potential prancers) to the team. Once conscripted our team began practicing. I think it's important to note at this point that our Dressage team ranges from athletes as young as 9 years old competing in the Walk/Trot divisions at ESD shows to horse and rider combinations on the Silver circuit working towards competing at Third level within the next month.

I am going to be honest, when we first started this journey I had only a basic understanding of the names and requirements of the varying levels of Dressage competition... heck we have Training level in Eventing and there is Training level in Dressage, maybe they weren't that dissimilar. 😊 After reading through the rule book for the first time I decided that a Chef de Mission for this team was required. I drafted a super smart person with an exceptional knowledge of the rulebook and thank goodness I did! The uncanny thing is that at 3am when I have questions about how scores translate from percentages to penalties, or what the heck Renvers is I get a response almost instantly!



Chef de Mission: Cheryl Denault & Bright Holiday. Photo by: Alexa Bresnahan



Kristin McLaren (Panamerra)

Due to conflict with the Eventing schedule, this weekend marked the first Oakhurst Silver Dressage team outing that I was present for and wow it was noteworthy. We took 5 horses to the Dewmont Silver Dressage show and the first couple of times I was jokingly asked by another coach if I was 'at the right show' it was cute.

Who's seen the movie Happy Gilmore? Watch it if you haven't so you are up to speed, but for those of you who have, do you remember when Happy goes to his first big golf tournament and introduces himself by saying, "I'm a Hockey player, but today I'm playing golf". This is definitely how I felt as I began the day, an Eventing coach playing Dressage coach for the day...



however as each of our riders sashayed down center line and tests were executed as we had practiced I started to feel like my golf swing was improving. And then as scores got posted and it was obvious to the world (and me) that Eventers can prance, I began embracing my inner golfer, however I draw the line at goofy pants. We learned how to putt, UH OH!

Other than all the ribbon winning (which I enjoyed greatly), one of the cool things that happened at the show on Saturday was the constant trickle of Oakhurst Eventing fans that came out to the show to support to their friends by holding horses, watching dressage tests taking pictures, holding water bottles and cheering! Their encouragement did not go unnoticed. ❤️



Leah Vrieling assisting with equipment and pony holding



Our gang of fearless supporters clearly enjoying themselves. (from left to right: Cheryl, Megan, Mark, Jenna, Eric, Helen, Tatum, Elisa)

Without a doubt, the thing that makes me the most honoured in this voyage is that my riders have had the confidence in me to help lead them to their prancing dreams. Although there has been a steep learning curve for me personally (which I have enjoyed immensely) I stand by my unwavering commitment to making my riders the best that they want to be whether they are playing hockey or golf or a bit of both.



*Barb Eamer & Black Magic
Photo by: Emma Richardson*

The pride that I feel for the athletes who have faith in me to prepare them is abounding, they continue to exceed my expectations and constantly push me to be the best I can for them.

This weekend we are off to the Upper Canada Derby at Meadowvale where we will be all about jumping and galloping, pucks on the ice ladies, we'll be there to play!



I leave with a quote from a genuine genius, Dr. Seuss:

*"You're off to Great Places!
Today is your day!
Your mountain is waiting,
So... get on your way!"*

Enjoy every day and push yourself to be the best you,
you can be.



Ruth



The past few weeks has been full of shows and events for the Oakhurst Team. Every weekend we head to at least one dressage show, event or derby. It has been a very busy summer already, and we are only just starting July! This past weekend we took a small group to the Upper Canada Derby at Meadowvale Farm in Carp. The day was bright and sunny. (And hot. Very hot.) After walking courses and looking at the questions being asked of the gang we had there, Coach Ruth made the smart decision with the team to drop everyone down a level from the level they had originally entered.



Tatum Nelson & Nike after their successful X poles course!

The name of the game for your coaches at these shows is confidence building and successful outings. The great thing about everyone on the team, was that no one argued the decision to compete "below their level". Everyone took the change of plans in stride and reorganized their game plan to ride at a different level. Everyone came away feeling very successful at still having challenges to overcome and building confident and positive rides with their partners.

At the same time, the whole team pulled together and worked to cheer each other on at whatever level they rode, doing whatever they did. It's always so wonderful to see how our team, and maybe all eventers, are so adaptable. We can change plans quickly and adjust to different scenarios without any real drama! We all worked together to help each other be successful.

One of the common topics I have been hearing students talk about the past few weeks is "What level should I be at?".

This sometimes sounds like "When should I be upgrading, because so-and-so upgraded last week?", or "but shouldn't I be going level "X" by now? I've been at this level for longer than someone else?" or "How long until I can go Prelim/Intermediate/to Rolex, etc.". Or even "I SHOULD be doing this by now, because I have been riding for "X" amount of time."

Those questions are common and asked often.



Alexa Bresnahan holding Strider & Candy for Misha Wylie - total teamwork to get their corking done!



But before I can give any answers, let me explain a few things...



Emma Richardson helping the Oakhurst Team horses to a cool drink.

Riding horses is not a sport like gymnastics with a very short window of competitive ability. If you haven't got it all figured out by the time you are 15, you don't need to panic.

When coaches and Sport people talk about equestrian athletes, we talk about Long Term Equestrian Development. We know you can do it for many, many more years! Yes, you may learn skills more quickly when you are younger and developing muscles faster. But there is no age limit to riding.

Ian Millar is 68 years old. He is going to the Pan Am's in a few days representing Canada in the Equestrian Show Jumping. Eva Maria Pracht won a Team Bronze Medal at 51 years old with the Canadian Team in dressage at the Summer Olympics in Seoul in 1988.

George Morris - born in 1938 (76 years old - still giving clinics he rides in) - considered the founding father of hunt seat equitation - was recently quoted in an article, when asked why he still rides, as saying "because after 70 years of riding, I am finally STARTING to understand horses a bit".

Still sceptical? Need a few eventing examples?

- Mark Todd (New Zealand) won the Team Bronze Medal for Eventing in 2012 at the London Olympic, at age 56.
- Andrew Nicholson - also on the Bronze medal winning New Zealand team at the London Olympics was age 52.
- Mary King (Great Britain) won a team Silver Medal for Eventing in 2012 at the London Olympics, at age 51.
- William Fox-Pitt won Badminton this year at age 46.

Trust me. You've got time. I bet at 15, these athletes had a LOT more learning to do!



Zoë Richardson & Nike after their successful X poles round!



The question of when to upgrade, what level you SHOULD be at has SO MANY variables which can affect it.

- What experience does your horse have?
- What experience do you have?
- How did your last outing go?
- Which way is the wind blowing today?
- How often do you ride?
- What do you WANT to do?
- What do you feel ready to do?
- Did you eat the right breakfast and wear the lucky underwear this morning?
- What will you get out of going to another level?

And so many more variables!



Nike after his X Pole rounds, hanging with Tatum Nelson & Zoë Richardson. Such a serious bunch.

We often see, in our sport, athletes taking a step forward, then a step to the side, then a step forward, then maybe a step back for a bit. We don't necessarily progress in a straight line from one level to the next without some blips and bumps along the way.

The biggest thing to remember is that every year is ONE out of (hopefully) MANY. Many, Many. (Sorry dad's, but hopefully they will get jobs that help fund the learning and competing!) Don't sweat the steps back or to the side, they are helping you build a bigger base of knowledge to lean back on when you get further along your path.

And don't compare yourself to the other people around you - everyone is going to grow at a different pace. You might progress more quickly or slowly than someone else this year, but who knows what will happen next year. Sometimes it might seem that you are not progressing, but you are always learning. Every day is a different ride. Even on the same horse you can get different attitude/weather/fitness/energy level/hormones/etc.

The Oakhurst Team is awesome at cheering each other on, no matter what level we are working our way through. In 40 years, you'll all be so much stronger, wiser and more confident than you are now, and you'll wonder why you stressed so much about doing this show or that event at one level or another. Every horse is different, every rider is different. Several of our team members have had to change direction and take a few steps to the side or back this year. The general vibe I get from all of them is "I'm just excited to go out there at ANY level, I thought I'd really miss going "X" level, but actually, I just miss doing this!"

That's a great attitude!





Watching all of our competitors embrace the level they were competing at Meadowvale - even if it was not the level they thought they were ready for, and still come away smiling and feeling that they had a wonderful time out was a great reminder that, in the end, it's all about having fun.

Just remember:

You don't HAVE to do this. You GET to do this.

Helen



I grew up on a Dairy farm (Cavencrest Farm) in Kinburn and spent my childhood outdoors learning about what it takes to run a farm. At the age of seven I was introduced to the 4H program, thanks to my encouraging uncle. At the time I had only been surrounded by cattle and crops but was eager to learn more about all things agriculture. I had five older cousins already enrolled in the program, whose enthusiasm and dedication positively influenced my experience. I would have never imagined that the experiences I had being a part of that program would serve a purpose in my chosen career, until now!



"For the things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them." Aristotle

4H was a positive youth development program that gave me the ability to understand the fundamentals of working with large animals, strength in speaking in front of large audiences, discipline, and goal setting. It was the confidence boost I needed to work/train hard as an athlete and follow my dream as an professional equestrian. Our motto "learn to do by doing" is something that I can put into perspective and constantly reference working with horses.

We talk quite frequently about long term equestrian development in our blogs, but what about long term athlete development?

Athlete development focuses on the developmental age of athletes as opposed to chronological age. Young athletes develop physically, intellectually, emotionally, neurologically at different rates. Want to learn more? On Monday August 3rd we are holding an athlete development clinic here at Oakhurst. With guest speakers and catered breakfast, I can't imagine a better way to spend your holiday Monday!



Importance of Loving What You Do

As an athlete, it goes without saying that lifelong drive and determination have been more influential in forecasting long term success. Unless you are working on something you love, it is hard to find the discipline to demonstrate drive and perseverance with confidence. To be a great athlete, you truly have to love what you're doing!

With that being said I was privileged to bear witness to an unbelievably passionate group of competitors, grooms and spectators who traveled to Tandalee Horse Trials in Knowlton, QC this past weekend. Led by Coach Ruth, we had 10 different horse & rider combinations ranging in levels from entry through to training. The show ran over two days, with dressage and cross country on the Saturday and show jump following on Sunday. This gave us a perfect opportunity to put our ICING skills to the test!



The Oakhurst icing crew working on "Black Magic" (Candy)



Eric Nelson watching Africa cool her feet after Cross Country



Similar to our traditional three day event, after finishing what is regarded as the most demanding phase (cross country) on Saturday, we were left with the task of managing our equine partners cool out and recovery. Every member of our large team contributed to how our horses recovered. When horses and riders finished their cross country round they returned to stabling where it was all hands on deck at the cool out station. Our goal is to bring the horses temperature down by sponging water on-and in the next stroke taking it off.

Hence the term: Wax On, Wax Off! Thanks to Eric Nelson for the reference! From filling water buckets/ice boots, holding horses, untacking and getting soaked our crew made sure every horse was cooled out and comfortable.



Left to right, Coach Ruth, Yarraman (Yogi), and Chelsea enjoying Tandalee HT

'It takes a village' and a 'whiteboard' so I've learned, and I couldn't thank everyone enough for everything you did to help! You truly made it a positive experience and ultimately ensured our horses felt great going into show jump on Sunday!



Pre-Training Junior riders, left to right, Alexa Bresnahan on Aragon, Walker on Rookie and Kiernyn Davison riding King Stag

So go out there and do it, maybe it will work and maybe it won't but most of all, understand that the little things can build the path to success. You become more aware of the value and significance of details and understand that the little and seemingly insignificant things are the building blocks to success!

All the best,

Blair



Riders, do you remember your first time on a horse? Or parents, do you remember the first time watching your child in a lesson? I remember my first time, I attended Summer Horse Camp at Nova Equestrian Centre, where I had my first lesson on a paint pony, learned the different colours of horses and even got to ride bare back. At the end of the day, I went home and felt pretty confident that I was now a professional rider and a horse expert. Was I ever wrong!



Jump #1 on the 2015 Pan Am Games Eventing Cross Country Course.

Over the last week, I have watched numerous different riders, from walking and trotting, trot pole courses to running the Pan Ams 2** cross country course.

Watching this large range of ability made me realize that we all have to start somewhere and then we all have to keep pushing ourselves to move forward and chase our dreams.

Last week I was able to continue on the camp experience, by being the camp coordinator at Oakhurst's Summer Horse Camp. The camps are a great introduction to the sport of riding and the horse atmosphere. The riders faced challenges on the horses and expanded their knowledge off the horse.

Over all we had a very fun and busy week. We were riding, running and making crafts constantly. Not to mention we had our very own Pan Am Games!

At the beginning of the week each camper chose or made up a country to represent and completed challenges throughout the week.

On Friday we had our very own closing ceremonies (complete with Anthems and Flags) to celebrate everybody's accomplishments.



Oakhurst Summer Camp 1 2015 – Camp Games Closing Ceremonies.

The following Saturday I had the privilege to travel down to Will O'Wind farm to watch the Pan Am's Equestrian – Eventing Cross Country. The riders had to complete a 2** level course. I watched some of North America's top riders gallop past me and was in "awe".

They make it look so easy! But just like the riders in camp, these riders were facing a challenge, just at a much different level. I cheered our Canadian Team on, in my red and white attire. Over all our Canadian team brought home a bronze medal and our very own Jessica Phoenix brought home silver! Did you know Jessica is visiting Oakhurst this week? Come check out the Jessica Phoenix clinic happening at Oakhurst!





Team Oakhurst – Alumni and current students and family. The Oakhurst Team attending and volunteering at Pan Am's was very large – we had a great get together at the end of Cross Country!



Kristin McLaren and her sweaty prancing pony Panamerra (Annie) warming up for their debut at the 3rd level at Numech Silver Dressage Show on July 19th.

To finish off the busy week, on Sunday we headed off to Numech Silver Dressage Show with Kristin McLaren and Panamerra (Annie).

Even in the blistering heat they finished their first ever, third level dressage test on an amazing 62% and brought home many red ribbons!

Every rider has to start somewhere, even Jessica Phoenix! Then we continuously push ourselves and keep setting new goals, maybe our goals are to master the posting trot or win a medal for our country. We never stop learning and improving in this sport. Every horse is a different ride and everyday we get a different ride out of our horse.

You would think after enough time we would finally know everything about our horses but then they throw another surprise at us, and we are faced with a new learning experience. And I think that is what makes our sport so special!

You can learn much more on how our athletes develop throughout our sport by attending Oakhurst's [Athlete Development Clinic on Monday, August 3rd](#). Which takes place right after the Oakhurst Horse Trials and the awesome competitors party. Don't forget about the silent auction happening at the competitors party, check out the website for details!

Can't wait to see you there!

Megan



Canada's Bronze Medal winning Canadian Eventing Team on the podium at the 2015 Pan Am Games.



This summer marked an exciting time for sport and athlete development in Canada with Toronto being the host of the Pan Am Games, and the opportunity for so many of us to be involved as volunteers was priceless.

Being married to the Eventing Director for TO2015 meant an action packed couple of years leading up to the Games. On this journey, a definite thought-provoking opportunity that I was privy to was the Sport Organizing Committee 'huddles' held at Pan Am central in Toronto. These provided all sport directors to work through table top exercises and discuss the challenges and successes they were encountering in their planning. The team at TO2015 were extraordinary and having the chance to sit in on a few of Mark's meetings with them was eye opening! Whether they were discussing medals, flags, stabling, quarantines, tables & chairs, uniforms, medical staff, gantries, security, volunteer training, work force support, horse transport, etc... the undertaking at first seemed both daunting and electrifying, and that's without even talking about the dressage, cross country and show jumping!

For me personally, some of the highlights of the Games included:

- *Chef's meetings:* All of the team Chef D'Equipes and Coaches coming together to draw orders of go and discuss daily events was a definite thrill and a 'who's who' of Eventing. When Mark Todd walked into the first meeting I sat in on I had to be reminded by Mark Nelson that I wasn't to act like a star struck teenager 😊. Fail!!
- *Putting the stall signs on the stabling at the Cross Country venue (CCE):* There's no job too small and when asked if I could zip-tie signs onto the stalls that the horses would move into for the day at CCE I couldn't have taken the job more seriously. Armed with zip-ties and pre-labeled stall cards for each horse that would arrive the next day I made sure that each nation had a clearly labelled tack stall, competitor stalls and feed stall. That night as we helped riders and grooms from each country unload equipment into their stalls it was with a sense of pride that I knew where each horse was going the next day... little pleasures.
- *Seeing so many old friends:* One of my first days volunteering at the Caledon site I was overwhelmed with emotion as I got a huge hug from team Guatemala's Chef D'Equipe, 'Cune' Jose Marroquin. Mark and I got the opportunity to work with the Guatemalan team leading up to the 2013 Central American Games, so to see everyone again was a joy! Not to mention on Cross Country day seeing so many friendly Canadian faces all over the course was awe inspiring.



- *Watching the horses arrive at the Cross Country Venue on the Saturday morning:* The logistics behind moving all of the competing horses from the Caledon Equestrian Park (CEP) to the Cross Country site required an unbelievable amount of preparation... Imagine, 40+ horses from different nations (some requiring specific quarantine protocols) all needed to be transported on the Saturday morning down a road narrow enough that the transports that brought them could not be turned around once on it, meaning that they had to back down a large stretch of road to unload and then be staged for the day even further down the road for the return trip to CEP. Right, and did I mention that this all had to happen while hundreds of volunteers were arriving?



After Mark and his crew at CCE got the call that the trucks were loaded, sealed by CFIA and on their way with police escort I don't think any one of them spoke until we saw the first huge, shiny transport truck arrive. Then it was a flurry of meticulous activity getting horses unloaded and into their stabling for the day. Equally, at the end of the day when all of the horses were reloaded on the transports and we got the call that they had all been safely unloaded back at CEP there was an overwhelming sigh of relief and feeling of unmistakable victory.

- *The Legacy of the Pan Am Games:* There's lots of discussion over what people perceive as the Legacy of the Games. What struck me as awesome during the volunteer training day at the Cross Country site was the vast amount of expertise as I looked around the tent. In the crowd I recognized judges, technical delegates, stewards, coaches, riders, sponsors, and supporters of equestrian sport. While we were undergoing training at CCE the Canadian Event riders were walking their course and as they walked past the work force tent they applauded the volunteers. Talk about an emotion stirring moment.



Throughout the remainder of the show season I saw the signature backpacks and coats that the volunteers were given, worn proudly by those who helped make the Games a success.

In my opinion the 'Legacy' of the Games can be found in the people that were involved. The comradery, expertise and enthusiasm that lives on with them is paramount in the future of our sport. Many of our Canadian officials acquired invaluable training throughout the Games that will prove fundamental in our sport throughout the next generation.

Congratulations to all who participated in any capacity, you picked up the ball as it rolled past and ran with it!

Ruth J. Allum
 Oakhurst Farm
 Canadian Evening Committee Coaching Chair
 Pan Am Games Zip Tying Volunteer Expert ☺



You know when you watch survivor and the first 2 minutes of the show go like this: "Last time on Survivor...". Well, it feels like so much has happened since my last blog that I would like to call this first segment: "Last Time Ruth Blogged about Oakhurst"... bet you were worried I wouldn't recap the last month. 😊!!

- Upper Canada Derby at Meadowvale – rocked it!
- Tandalee Horse Trials – we were awesome!
- The Pan Am Games – WOW, what a team!
- Oakhurst Summer Camp – so cool!
- Numech Silver Dressage Show – amazing!
- Jessica Phoenix clinic at Oakhurst – totally educational!!
- Starlit Farm Silver Dressage show – Champions!
- Grandview Horse Trials – Total Teamwork!

So, along with all the regular stuff like teaching, doing hay, mowing and that's what we've been up to over the last four weeks.

This past weekend the Oakhurst Dressage team went to the Starlit Farm Silver Dressage show and wow, did they triumph! Talk about taking the bull by the horns, they did that and more, check out their results:

- Cindy Moore & Gemini – 2nd & 3rd Places
- Barb Eamer & Black Magic – 4th & 1st Places + Training Level Reserve Champion
- Kristin McLaren & Panamerra – 1st & 1stPlace + 3rd Level Champion
- Devon Svoboda & Abbigael – 2nd & 3rd Place
- Jenna Mayhew & Kinsale – 1st & 1st place & 1st Level Champion, High Point Champion
- Cheryl Denault & Bright Holiday – 5th Place & 5th Place

In the words of Joe Dirt, "Life's a Garden, dig it." This Dressage team is definitely digging the winning spirit!



Meanwhile at Grandview Horse Trials there was equally brilliant work happening with the Eventing team...

Chelsea Arden (2nd in Pre-Training with The Sky's The Limit) and Laura Gravelle (3rd in Pre-Training with Yarraman) celebrating their success at Grandview HT!



Barb Eamer and Coach Blair Nicol showing off Barb and Black Magic's (Candy) prizes at the Starlit Silver Dressage Show on July 25th.



- Chelsea Arden & The Sky's The Limit – Pre-Training – 2nd
- Laura Gravelle & Yarraman – Pre-Training – 3rd
- Becky Allen & Da Vinci – Training – 7th
- Michaela Robinson & Devil's Advocate – Training – 13th
- Shannon Holmes & What Happens in Vegas – Preliminary – 12th

It was an incredibly hot weekend interspersed with some rain which made the humidity awesome for those of us with curly hair. It proved to be a bit of a challenge for the young trying to keep up on course walks but the effort was there and thanks to Bob and Sarah at Grandview for providing these beautiful benches to rest/pass out on.



Tatum Nelson finds a rest spot on the Cross Country Course at Grandview HT.

The upcoming weekend marks an exciting and educational experience for everyone in the area. When else do you have at your fingertips some of the key players in the sport???? I can't express my excitement at having Ozzie Sawiki, Peter Gray, Kara Edwards, Pam Coburn and Brandon Hall here for an Athlete Development clinic on Monday August 3rd. Seriously, in our own back yards we will have the greatest minds in athlete development across the country??? Athletes, coaches, grooms, parents etc... are all welcome, details can be found here: <http://www.oakhurstfarm.com/oakhurst-ht-2015-weekend>

What an opportunity to eat, get educated and school a flagged and prepped cross country and show jumping course... did I mention you get breakfast???

I would love to say, 'How lucky are we', but I am constantly reminded that we make our own luck...

Where will you be Monday August 3rd? I will have my ass glued to a chair attempting to absorb the collective wisdom of the masters within sport.



Ruth Allum and Mark Nelson taking a small rest stop during their busy Pan Am Games 2015 Officials schedule.



Take every opportunity you are given. Run at the wall. Do things that no one ever expected you to do. And in every day, find a reason to smile... not just a little smile but a really big one. I am blessed to get up every day with the knowledge that I don't always have to be popular, but with the feeling that today I could make a positive difference in someone's life.



Life is short. What if... just what if you made someone else feel great about themselves today and what they accomplished. Would there be a greater gift?? Someone asked me this weekend if I missed competing. When did I stop? Watching athletes that I have helped cross their finish line is beyond words. I am a coach. I crave my athlete's next conquest and I am grateful to be allowed in to their victory.

This weekend we have our Horse Trials on the Sunday and the Athlete Development clinic on the Monday. Do you feel lucky?

See you there,

Ruth

A small group of the Oakhurst Show Team out spectating on the Cross Country course at Grandview HT.

L to R: Cheryl Morris, Chelsea Arden, Tatum Nelson & Michaela Robinson.





The Oakhurst Kids – Zoe & Emma Richardson, Tatum Nelson and Marshall & Emmett Eldridge taking a ride in one of the sponsored RTV's.

To say the past week at Oakhurst has been busy would be an understatement! The last week has been an all-out whipper-snipping, miles of mowing, entry registering, jump decorating, dressage and stadium building, overwhelming temperature withstanding week of preparation for our biggest weekend of 2015. The preparation for our annual Horse Trials was certainly a frenzy of work for so many people, but one of the things I love about the event, after 20 years of running it, is that we have so many people who know their jobs and do them well.

From Joan, taking & sorting entries, answering competitor questions and being our first point of contact with competitors, to Ruth - mowing 4837 miles of grass. Twice, to make sure it is pointing the right way. From Mark - building and moving everything not staked down on the property - and then staking it to make sure no one else can move it - to Megan and Blair - painting, whipper snipping and trimming everything to within an inch of its life.

And from everyone else, jumping in to help wherever, whenever and however it is needed. Despite the fact that it is 98,000 hours of work that can only be done in the week before the event, somehow it gets pulled off every time.

And I think you have to agree, this weekend was better than ever! Shortening our horse trials to one day, but adding several extra events to fill out the weekend was a big hit for many competitors and coaches. On Saturday, our competitors started to arrive (actually a trailer load arrived on Friday from Quebec, mistakenly thinking our event started on Saturday. They were directed to the Ashton Pub to spend their spare time. They were happy!) and along with walking their courses and picking up their competitor packages, they were able to ride their horses in the dressage rings for our "Dressage Ring Familiarization" afternoon. So many competitors took advantage of the opportunity, and the result were many very smooth, lovely dressage tests the next day! A little rain in the afternoon and a lot of rain in the evening was perfect to help all of our footing soften up and absorbed all of the dust just in time for the competition.

Sunday morning, bright and early the Horse Trials started. I was only outside for a few moments of the day - my job is scoring - I stay hidden in a secret undisclosed location to process all of the scores of the day. It was the first time we have run the event on one day in a while, and for scoring, it just means that the flow of numbers to crunch keeps coming all day. And strangely, although I sent all day looking at the scores, I have no real idea how anyone did on the day - I look at all of the raw numbers and don't take too much time to sit and read the final results! I did, however, listen to Ruth's play-by-play of each Oakhurst Team member's Cross Country ride. And I must admit, when I heard my students both completed their cross



*Oakhurst Show Team Member Taya Davison riding Nike in her first event. The pair finished in 3rd place!
Photo by: Emma Richardson*



country successfully (one in her first event) there was a little victory dance and fist pump in the office. People who say coaches don't compete are ridiculous. I gave Nike and Mowgli a virtual squeeze over every jump.

Our competitor and volunteer party on Sunday evening was a well-deserved break from the work of the



The fantastic Oakhurst cake Todd & Sandy Brown generously made for our volunteer and competitor's party – sorry, there is none left!

past week and everyone's chance to celebrate a fantastic day. The sun shone all day for us (Thanks Dad!) and every competitor went home safe and sound. With only one fall on the cross country course, our day was a wonderful success! The competitor party featured live auctions for Fury (soccer) and Redblack (football) tickets, a 50/50 draw that Tate and Zoe sold \$300 worth of tickets for (but sadly Tate didn't win, so no rollerblades for her yet!) and the silent auction organized by Barb Eamer. Everyone at the party was excited to support the

Oakhurst and friends Midsouth Teams. And the dinner and cake provided by Todd and Sandy Brown were spectacular as usual!

Monday morning we all dragged our tired butts back out of bed for day 3 of the Oakhurst HT Weekend - an Athlete Development Breakfast & Clinic and XC/SJ Schooling afternoon. The Athlete Development Clinic started with a delicious (because I didn't have to make it) breakfast provided by the Lone Star Ranch. Then our sponsor Keith Bean of www.beancars.ca spoke to us about truck and trailer safety and invited everyone to try backing a truck and trailer through a pylon course at the end of the clinic! Following Keith, Kara Edwards representing sponsor BFL Insurance spoke about what insurance competitors have through their PSO and NSO memberships and what other insurance options exist for equestrians and coaches. Kara gave us some great information in very simple, easy to understand language - insurance is not nearly as mind-numbingly boring as I thought!



Janan Steward carefully backing the Bean Cars Truck and Trailer through the pylon course being coached by Keith Bean – anyone who completed the backing up received a gift bag with a baseball hat, t-shirt and coupon towards an oil change!

Our next speaker was our keynote speaker Ozzie Sawicki. Ozzie has been Chef D'Equipe for the Canadian Paralympic Team at the last few Olympics. He is an Alpine Ski coach who specializes in building grassroots and talent identification programs for different sports. He has been working on a program called "No Boundaries" with Equine Canada which helps identify competitors at the lower levels who, with the right help, mentoring and guidance, might just make it to the top of the sport. Ozzie spoke about how to develop from good athletes to great. He spoke to our athletes about some of the key things they need to focus on (like sleep, nutrition and core strength) and he challenged us:

"Let's create eventers who are SMART enough to be eventers. We can't just gallop around crashing through things, we need to be smart and use our intelligence to be competitive."



Ozzie also spoke about the importance of certified coaches. A topic I often blab about, so I was interested to hear his views (Ozzie is a ChPC - Canadian Chartered Professional Coach). Rather than argue the merits of coaching certification, Ozzie put it very simply, in perhaps the clearest reasoning I have heard. He said:

"If you are coaching and you are NOT certified, it does not mean you are not a good coach, it means a potential customer doesn't know if you are good or not."



Clinician Ozzie Sawicki speaking about creating Eventing talent in Canada during the Athlete Development Clinic at the Oakhurst HT Weekend.

Ozzie answered many questions and gave his audience a lot to ponder over the next little while. Definitely a fascinating morning! After the clinic, we ventured back out to the cross country course and watched many groups spend the afternoon schooling over the courses. Some were schooling jumps they had struggled with in competition, others brought green horses to see the jumps while they were dressed and flagged. Other groups came to challenge some obstacles from the next level and see what upgrading would be like. The weather was beautiful and sunny and cool. A perfect ending to the weekend!



I am always impressed at how such an enormous task - running the event weekend - happens so flawlessly and simply in the end. I know it is because we have the best group of volunteers we could ever hope for. Everyone knows their job and is happy to do it. The volunteers stand in the sun all day in exchange for a little Oakhurst swag and a lunch. They do their jobs with authority and experience, being cheerful and kind to competitors while making sure that every little part of their duty is done. The entire day (from my perspective anyway!) ran so smoothly, it seemed to run itself! I am so proud to be part of this team - all of those competitors who don't make it to our event have no idea what they are missing out on.

You should all be proud this week, Team Oakhurst Rules!



It wasn't that long ago.. almost two years to be exact that I began looking for a new project. Her name was Africa, a small chestnut filly with a lot of personality. We have only just begun to fill the introductory pages of our adventure together I thought I would share how our journey first began. What is it they say about chestnut mares again?

I first caught a glimpse of the three year old mare in mid July of 2013, my initial response was, to be honest, she's a chestnut mare. As a resale project not necessarily the easiest to market. Like most humans we all have our superstitions, like Friday the 13th or wearing a certain pair of socks during playoff season. In the horse world some may think of beware of the chestnut mare.



After a couple months of unsuccessful searching I found myself making the 4.5 hour drive back to Sutton, Quebec. This time I was able to watch the horse under saddle and was able to sit on her. Most people will tell you that you can't tell right away that this horse will work but after three minutes of walk and trot I knew deep down that this was a horse I wanted to work with and learn from. What an incredible athlete, she had a presence about her, strong, athletic, and elegant.

She left me feeling excited and after making the purchase I came to realize how much work and training was going to be involved. I knew that I had an amazing athlete in my string of horses but like most athletes she was an individual.

She is an embryo foal, out of Colleen Loach's 3* mount 'Freespirit' owned by the Barry family and sired by Charleston Liberator. With all the potential comes attitude and power. We are always in need of balance, in need of things to go not so perfect so we can truly appreciate the good days. After my first jumping lesson with Africa, I knew I had never sat on something as athletic and talented. But there was going to be a long road ahead.

Horses are amazing athletes!



Kristin McLaren and her little red mare Panamerra on the Cross Country course at Harmony HT.

Within our sport of three day eventing the Triathlon of equestrian sports its important that we look at our partners as athletes. Take opportunities to learn from one another. She began her eventing career at the Entry level in July 2014 and has recently moved up to the Training level this July.

As I continue to learn and understand what makes her tick, here are some things (so far) that I'm grateful to her for teaching me:

1. How to warm up on any terrain that doesn't involve other oncoming horses
2. Although she may not be the most friendly with other horses she loves any human affection and attention



3. NOT all hacks are for relaxing, sometimes they're meant to sharpen my stickability skills
4. Your fears (birds) can be passed on to your equine partner unintentionally
5. Butterflies can spark temper tantrums
6. Giving me my confidence back in the show jump ring
7. Just because we have seen this fence before doesn't mean I can sit back and wait, keep kicking!
8. Never underestimate how comfy a grass field looks to your tired pony after a 24 hour drive to Florida
9. The lighter coloured the horse is the scarier it is
10. Horses are humbling creatures, enough said!
11. Thankful for my horses, some of the best teachers I've ever had.



The Oakhurst Show Team at Harmony HT.

When it all comes together she is a force to be reckoned with, and I think this can be said for most equine partners. I have been blessed with the most amazing athletes and teachers (Dino, Ash, Blythe, Jake, Sonny, Que, Africa...just to name a few and the list continues to grow). Each of them have taught me something so uniquely different that I will forever cherish. Some days may not always go to plan but working with horses and the team at Oakhurst ensures that no day goes by without having a little fun. No matter what has happened the day before or even minutes before you find that spark when you see their face staring back at you down the barn aisle.

I'm a firm believer that everything happens for a reason and after discussing this topic outside of stabling at Harmony Horse Trials this past weekend with parents and riders its amazing how many of us can agree on this statement.

Harmony had the largest group of students and supporters we have taken to an away show this year. With some new additions it took 4 trucks and trailers to make the trip possible. This weekend was not all about the beautiful ribbons won that are now mounted outside our horses stalls or hanging from a string attached from one corner of our bedroom to the next. It was sharing that time with our family (horse & human) gaining insight into where our training needs to be directed or re-directed.



The Oakhurst Show Team dinner – Saturday night at Harmony HT.



Taking care of our athletes, giving us optimal experience and knowledge that will only strengthen our depth of skills moving forward to our long term goal or year end goal. Congrats to all the competitors, coaches, horses, family, grooms and spectators for supporting this sport and having fun! I am very appreciative of the team that surrounds me.



Helen Richardson and Taya Davison on Nike going over her dressage test before Taya goes in the ring at Harmony HT.

Can't wait to see where our journey takes us!

Until next time,

Blair



Well I can probably speak for most people with curly hair – the weather we have been having does not help tame the wild curls. No product or even wearing a hat could contain the amount of volume and frizz my hair had this past Sunday.



Mowgli trying to keep cool after dressage at Stevens Creek HT.

Oakhurst brought three horses and riders to Stevens Creek Horse Trials on Sunday with three awesome coaches. Good job Janan, Becky, Kristina, Ruth, Helen and Blair for braving the extreme heat and humidity! Not to mention the numerous jump judges that were from Oakhurst!

After we all came home, very sweaty and all looking drained from the heat, Helen made a joke that we should coach figure skating, those coaches never look sweaty. Not to mention that they don't have to try and hide their hair from the humidity! So why did we choose a sport that not only do we have to deal with humid hair but then -40 in January and everything in between!



Kristina Toppari and Top Gun (Ash) Pre-Training Jr. at Stevens Creek HT. Photo by Alexa Bresnahan.

Let's go back to the explanation that Ruth gave us about coaching; 'to describe the process used to transport people from where they are, to where they want to be'. For me as an Instructor of Beginners and teaching many of our younger students, I love the feeling of starting that process. I smile every time one my students jumps their first fence, or canters for the first time and when they turn to me and say "that was awesome!" Being able to work with a team of a horse and rider, being able to watch them and helping form a bond, figure out each other's quirks and how to deal with them is, I think, just as rewarding for a coach.





Tate, Zoe and I celebrating their successes this summer – we spent the day jump judging in the heat together!

To get my students there I feel that I need to keep improving myself. My first step was to become certified and within that process I was able to find an environment with many other certified coaches. I learn from Ruth, Helen and Blair every day as they never stop educating and improving themselves as a coaches!

*“You know you are on the road to success if you would do your job and not be paid for it.”
(Oprah Winfrey).*

I feel like I am on the right road then, as I will gladly fight with my frizzy hair or put an extra pair of socks on in January to be able to coach and be a part of the process to get my students where they want to be. Plus I am not very good at figure skating!

By the way.... Not only did we fight the extreme heat and humidity this past weekend but the rain was not on our side either. Because of the large amounts of rain we had last week we sadly had to postpone our Silver Dressage Show. But no worries! The rain date is August 30th, not too far away Dressage riders!

One of Oakhurst’s Dressage rings after all of the rain last week!

Until next time,

Megan



It was within a fabulous conversation last weekend that the discussion of ducks came up.

If you watch a duck swimming in a really strong current it looks from the surface like not much is going on. However if you were to look beneath the surface of the water you would see that the duck is peddling his butt off!

This resonates with me hugely.

We get up every day mostly excited about what's coming up... I say mostly because I'll be honest, Monday's are rough ☺... but I continue to haul myself out of bed and am better for it.

My next day off is in November I have mixed emotions about it... it saddens me that the end of the show season for many people is coming close or has happened. I am 100% honest when I say that I feel horrible for my family when the 'down season' (if there is one) comes because, I HUNGER for show season; I LIVE for horse shows; and I CRAVE the next outing!!!

This past weekend we had 10 horses and riders compete at the Robinson Horse Trials in Sutton, Quebec. The views from this Horse Trial are staggering:

Where else could one find such a beautiful setting for an Event?



Here is how our little ducks did:

Jenna Mayhew & Kinsale – Pre-Entry – 2nd
 Rebecca Walker & Rookie – Pre-Training – 5th
 Kristina Toppari & Top Gun – Pre-Training – 6th
 Alexa Bresnahan & Aragon – Training Jr. – 4th
 Darby Delle Donne & Silver Lining – Training – 3rd
 Michaela Robinson & Devil's Advocate – Training – 4th
 Laura Gravelle & Yarraman – Training – 6th
 Blair Nicol & Chasing Liberty – Training – 10th
 Chelsea Arden & The Sky's The Limit – Training
 Shannon Holmes & What Happens in Vegas - Preliminary

I can't express how much I will miss the ducks that will be migrating back to University this fall. They have once again exceeded expectations and they have been paddling upstream and making it look effortless to bystanders. You know who you are and I am delighted to have been part of your journey this summer.





On a completely separate note I am eager to announce the Oakhurst athletes that have been chosen to represent Ontario as members of the Dressage Team at the CIEC in September (Canadian Inter-Provincial Equestrian Championships) Congratulations and all our best wishes to JENNA MAYHEW and KINSALE.

You can check out all the details of the competition here: <http://www.cec-en.ca/>

My first experience with having a rider named to a provincial team was back in 2001 when Colin Campbell and The Warlock were named to Team Ontario for Eventing at the North American Young Rider Championships being held in Chicago.... I was very pregnant, Chicago was very hot and I generally had no idea what to expect from a team atmosphere or what my role would be when working with a team coach.



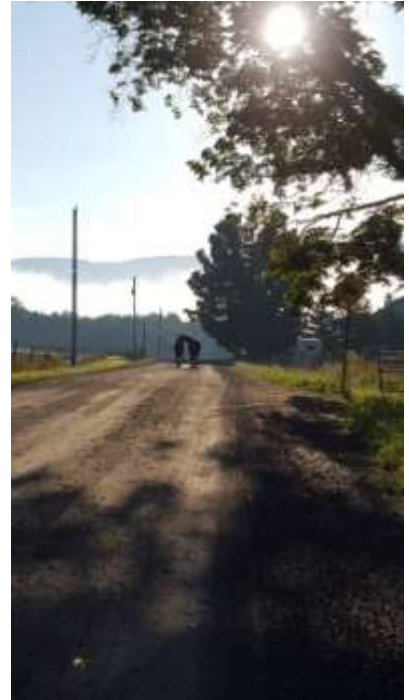
Colin was young, green and I am sure he would agree with me when I say that the first year he went to NAYRC we both thought he was a long shot to getting on the team. That said, Colin had quite a few aces in his pocket: a set of incredibly supportive parents, the best groom to have ever existed (his sister Soupy), a horse that he trusted implicitly and a quietly fierce competitive nature. It was a steep learning curve for all of us but without a doubt an amazingly positive event.

P.S. Congratulations to Colin and his beautiful bride Jen who got married last weekend.

The opportunity to ride as part of a team is definitely a thrill and although I will of course be there to support and coach my riders through the experience, I am equally delighted about the idea of an expert teaching me to watch my rider, as will happen at CIEC with team coaches Ellen Dvorak and Simone Williams. We should all be so lucky as to have other coaches watch our riders and give us input. After all, I have faith that what I have taught my athletes is correct and will absolutely stand them in good stead so what they may gain from another set of eyes may provide them (and me) with even more brilliance... isn't that part of the idea of LTED (Long Term Equestrian Development)?



We have a tendency to guard our programs so closely as coaches and entrepreneurs of this equestrian sport but if we are real and genuine and true to our athletes we should be open enough to allow them the opportunities that will take that athlete where they need to be. I respect that this is a somewhat unpopular view, after all, our paycheck is our client, but in a true sport view, by being open enough to work collaboratively with a coaching staff that can fit an individual's needs in that exact moment is an ideal model. This idea is what we continue to work on within our own coaching model at Oakhurst. Helen, Blair, Megan and I all have a different set of expertise when it comes to our teaching style and what we look for which is a definite plus for our athletes. We can watch each other's riders and see different areas of need and then collaborate on how best to go about improving them. I am looking forward to what I will learn from my time at CIEC in order to bring that back to our home team.



This weekend we have 2 shows happening at Oakhurst: The Upper Canada Derby on Saturday and the Silver Dressage show on Sunday, we also have a beautiful new secretary and scoring chalet to check out!

Never a dull moment, and if we are good, it won't even look like we are swimming hard at all 😊.

See you there!

Ruth



Phew, that was a busy weekend - 2 shows at Oakhurst in 2 days! This past weekend on Saturday we held an Upper Canada Derby at Oakhurst. The sun shone, local (and not so local!) riders came out and tested their partnerships over stadium and cross country jumps and everyone left smiling and happy at their new accomplishments. 112 rounds were ridden in the derby, in record time!

Sunday was the rain date for our Silver Dressage Show at Oakhurst. We had 61 dressage tests on a beautiful sunny day from Training to Third Level. Several Oakhurst riders (and ponies!) strutted their prancing stuff and showed off their teamwork in the dressage rings, scoring several more qualifying scores towards the Silver Dressage Championships - coming up at Oakhurst on Sept 12th.

One of the best parts of running these kinds of weekends is all of the teamwork that spontaneously happens because we all pull together in new ways to help make everyone's experience enjoyable. It is always a joy to watch new horse and rider partnerships discover each others talents and weaknesses, and watch existing partnerships grow and accept new challenges. I saw a lot of both this weekend.



Tatum Nelson & Jag, Miranda Lepore, Zoe Richardson & Nike celebrating their successful day in the Upper Canada Derby Aug 29, 2015



*Cindy Moore & Gemini looking beautiful in the Silver Dressage Show at Oakhurst, Aug 30, 2015.
Photo by: Emma Richardson*



I also saw a lot of volunteers joining forces to help make all of our jobs a little easier, our days a little smoother and our experience a lot more enjoyable! From Barb Bresnahan - joining Joan in the Secretary booth to help hand out and collect numbers to Laura Kelland-May and Cheryl Denault jumping into judges booths to write for Dressage judges. From Tate and Zoe who helped run the Midsouth Tack Sale Fundraiser to everyone who helped keep the barn mucked, ponies fed and generally pitched in all weekend - THANK YOU!

One of the best things I saw this weekend (apart from watching my daughter Emma compete with a new partner and love it, seeing my daughter Zoe do her first course of verticals and watching my niece Tate go cross country on Jag, both of which made my heart swell - I'm a mom and an aunt , those things are special!) was an amazing display of teamwork from two local coaches. We have known both for many years, and have always held both in high regard, but this weekend they both went above and beyond to help Team Oakhurst.



Alexa Bresnahan & Aragon strutting their stuff in the Training Level at the Oakhurst Silver Dressage Show Aug 30, 2015. Photo by: Emma Richardson

On Sunday morning, one of our two dressage judges did not appear. When it became obvious that we were in deep trouble, with 2 hours of Training level tests and no one to judge them, many people stepped in to help solve our problem.

It might sound simple to stick someone else in the Judge's booth and have them judge - lots of people have experience watching dressage - but let me assure you, finding a judge, certified at the right level and available at a moment's notice, is NOT EASY. So many competitors

needed qualifying results from the show that we could not jeopardize their opportunity by putting an unqualified judge in place. From the outside, the show may have looked like we recovered and figured out what to do quickly, but trust me, it did not feel quick or easy from our end.

After making several calls to local judges, 2 of the coaches with students competing in the show offered us a solution. Patrick Evans offered to step into the judges booth for the 2 hours of judging we needed, and Kerstin Blaeske offered to coach his 3 students to ensure they had spectacular rides and earned their qualifying scores. To further ensure all of Patrick's students had a fair chance to compete, they were juggled into the other judges ring. With some very generous teamwork from local coaches, a problem that seemed huge and very difficult to overcome became simple and solved in no time!





Jenna Mayhew & Kinsale with some lovely moves in the First Level Division at the Oakhurst Silver Dressage Show Aug 30, 2015. Photo by: Emma Richardson

Aside from seeing so many people step in and help Team Oakhurst, I was very proud of our local coaches. Coaching has come a long way. For Patrick to trust that he has given his students the skills and training they need to enable them to shift gears and switch to a coach they were unfamiliar with and still perform brilliantly is a testament to his teaching. For Kerstin to step in and coach unfamiliar students during their most stressful moments and help them find comfort and bring out their best was exciting to watch. She figured out their strengths, weaknesses and needs quickly and adjusted her coaching to suit their rides. Both coaches did a wonderful job with the problem they were given.

This is one of Ruth's philosophies that the coaches at Oakhurst hear often, but many coaches out there are still uncomfortable with - we don't want to teach students who can only learn from us. We want our students to be strong, self-confident riders who have all of the skills and abilities needed to be able to adapt and learn from others. Our students should be teachable. They should be able to self-analyse and learn from others - hopefully they will progress to a time when they might be part of a team being led by another coach (Young Riders, CIEC, Olympics, etc!) and will be able to make the most of it - and then come back and share their new skills with all of us!



Kristin McLaren & Panamerra and their "all business, all of the time" coach Ruth Allum

For me as a mom, this weekend was full of great displays of teamwork - ponies and riders working together to enjoy everything the weekend had to offer. As a coach, this weekend had amazing examples of teamwork - collaborating to help our own students and other coaches collaborating to help theirs. As someone working the shows, the many displays of teamwork from everyone who helped the shows go on, no matter what were inspiring. I think we're right....

TEAMWORK really does MAKE THE DREAM WORK!

Thanks everyone - See you on Sept 12 for the Silver Championships - when we get to do it all again!



It's that time of year again! Big yellow buses (and some mini vans) are heading down the road to pick up many anxious and excited students. Back to school ads are all over the radio and the tv, the mornings are noticeably cooler, and our last entries for the 2015 show season are being mailed.. I'm always amazed at how fast the time goes by.

In looking back, I realize that this was a summer of assessment and sharing our individual experiences as equestrians. Stories of our experiences are how we pass on the wisdom, life lessons, and compassion we have gained in our lifetime working with horses to the next generation of equine enthusiasts. They inspire us, connect us to something bigger than ourselves, give meaning to the twist and turns of life, and encourage our passion.

I have learned these lessons from watching Ruth, Mark, Helen, Joan and Meg. They have all had an impact on how OUR summer season ran. We have been fortunate to experience many levels of our sport. From the local Silver/ESD Dressage shows, to Upper Canada Derby's, Pan Am games, and horse trials all over Ontario and Quebec. We can reflect on many positive and fundamental experiences thanks to them.

With that being said, a large majority of the success we witnessed this summer was in large part a reflection of how YOU the competitors, volunteers, parents, and support team mirrored the nuggets of wisdom and advice shared by your coaches and one another. We had many new faces (both human and horse) join our team this summer and familiarized ourselves with those partnerships that far surpassed the initial goal of surviving!



It has often been said that 'the horse is a mirror to oneself, a reflection of who we truly are'. There is much truth to this simple statement. Horses are very sensitive, intuitive, and instinctive beings who communicate their thoughts and feelings clearly through body language.

Would that mean our own thoughts and feelings are reflected equally in the way we carry ourselves?



I think most of us can relate to a time in which we had a great day, and had the ride where we add :) to our daily training log! Or, we may have had a bad day and conversely, had a ride that left us feeling a little deflated. Sometimes unintentionally, our personal dilemmas are mirrored into our ride as soon as we enter the arena!

However, what I've always loved about riding is that no matter what has happened during that day I can always leave it at the mounting block before I get on. As soon as I'm in the saddle I'm in the present, thinking about nothing aside from how my ride is going (for better or worse)-except on those rare occasions when your dog decides to make himself known 'Oh Panda'..

So the summer is over, I will look back on the times spent learning, memories made, stories that will make me laugh (mostly at myself) and sharing this passion with friends, mentors, peers and family.

Here's to the remainder of the 2015 season!

What is your greatest memory of the summer?

Blair



So I think all of my rain jackets and boots have finally dried out since this past weekend. For those who don't know, the Ottawa area was hit with a little rain over the weekend. The rain started Saturday morning and did not stop until Sunday night getting about 50 ml of rain. Not only was it rainy but it was pretty chilly! I wore mittens to course walk Saturday evening...that chilly! At that point I actually found myself missing that +40 degree weather and humidity, who would've thought!

But a little bit of rain won't stop those dressage riders! Saturday Oakhurst held the Eastern Ontario Silver Dressage Championships. A huge congratulations to the Oakhurst riders, Cindy, Barb, Jenna, Devon and Kristen for 'prancing' so beautifully in the puddles!

After a full day of dressage Saturday, we re-grouped and packed up the trailers bright and early Sunday morning. Off we headed to the Eventing at the Park Horse Trial. I know at that point I was already on my second rain coat because my first one had not dried out since the dressage show. Mid morning, although it had been raining constantly all morning, we were hit with a real downpour. Thunder and lightning included! After at least 30 minutes of torrential rain Oakhurst decided to pack up and head home. We saw that the conditions were not going to get any better so we made the courageous decision that this was just not the day to run our horses. We have to thank our coaches for helping us make these tough decisions. Our coaches at Oakhurst truly have our and our horses safety as their number one priority.



Coach Ruth at Wesley Clover Park. Looks like she left the tap on!

I think my favorite part was there was not one member of the Oakhurst family that protested the decision and instead of sulking about it we all laughed and talked it off throughout the afternoon.

But in all of the rain and gloomy weather we were accompanied by the newest president of the Ontario Equestrian Federation! Yes, if you haven't heard, our very own Mark Nelson was appointed President of the OEF Board of Directors. Congratulations Mark!

I never put much thought into how our sport actually runs and who guides it. But watching Ruth and Mark put so much back into it is inspiring. They are not only running and improving Oakhurst but they are making a difference in Eventing in Canada. They are constantly moving the sport forward and each individually making big changes. If we don't have people like Ruth and Mark giving back to our sport than where would it be? Eventing would not exist with out the volunteers.

Maybe we won't all be president one day but we can all give back to the sport in different ways. Multiple Oakhurst riders were out volunteering their time, jump judging on Sunday and we can't forget Cheryl and Kristen who were XC Control for the day. We need to thank everyone of these



volunteers who gave back to the sport how ever they could. Together they make it run for the riders.

“Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much”



Zoe and Tate hiding under their umbrellas, while jump judging at Wesley Clover Park.

Its rainy days like this past weekend, when I curl up under a blanket and think about how can I give back to the sport more? Watching Ruth, Mark and multiple volunteers inspire me to get more involved in the sport and to try and make a difference how ever I can.

But now that the rain has passed, I'm sure Oakhurst rider, Jenna Mayhew will have beautiful weather riding at Canadian Interprovincial Equestrian Championships (CIEC) next week.

Make sure to check out her bio at; <http://www.cec-en.ca/participants-dressage.html>. Stay tuned to hear from her and Ruth while they are at CIEC. We wish you the best of luck Jenna & Kip and we know you guys will kick butt!

Now I hope everyone enjoys the sun and warmth this week while we still have it!

Megan



What a fun day! We moved Kip into his home for the remainder of the week – show stabling at Wesley Clover Parks. Once Kip was settled in, everyone turned to setting up and decorating Team Ontario's Meeting area for the week, and it looks awesome! Notice so many of the homier touches like the bench off my front porch.

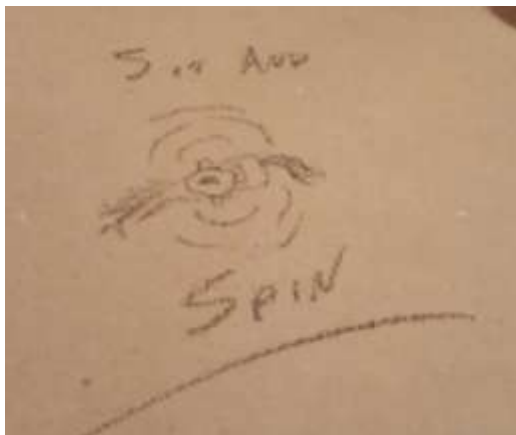


Team Ontario's meeting space – designed by Mark Nelson, assembled by Ruth, Mark, Angelique Homan and Brandon Hall of the OEF and Jenna Mayhew

Once all moved in and decorated up Jenna took Kip for a ride in the Dressage warm-up ring. The pair were brilliant and looking in super form for the upcoming competition. This evening I had the opportunity to meet our team dressage coaches, jumper coaches and reining coach, what a wealth of information and expertise this group encompass!!

For instance our Reining Coach taught me this vital piece of coaching brilliance at dinner tonight.:-)

Tomorrow is an early start with both the Ontario Dressage and Jumper teams having their ring familiarizations starting at 7am, with our reiners following on at 9:15am. We have a quick team Ontario meeting at 8:45am, a practice jog at 11:15am and then the official Horse Inspection at 1:30pm. Opening ceremonies and a welcome dinner will round out the day.



Stay tuned for updates from day 2!

Go Team Ontario!!!

P.S. To celebrate National Coaches Week, I have made it known that I plan on picking up at least 10 gems of coaching wisdom a day starting tomorrow...

Ruth



So, as promised in yesterday's blog here are the 10 pearls of wisdom I learned today – some coaching, some just genuine pearls:

1. Using your inside leg and outside hand really does work to straighten a horse's way of travelling and helps encourage balance and self-carriage (bet you've never heard that one before – but truly, to see Tom Dvorak teach it and to have a conversation with Simone Williams and Ellen Dvorak about it made me feel like I was at the most awesome analyze performance clinic designed just for me!)



Ellen Dvorak, Simone Williams and Brandon Hall, enjoying taking a picture of Tom Dvorak in the Equine Canada Horse display!

2. Schedules are always tentative. It's best to roll with it when the ever changing schedule of the day changes again... that's why there's a bowl of candy in our tack room! Chocolate cures all.

3. Reiners are really a lot like Eventers. It's true!! Okay so they don't jump solid obstacles or do 3 different phases but... they love it when you yell 'Oh Yeah' when they do something super cool (which is most of the time).

Team Ontario Reiners. The Team that makes everyone say "Oh Yeah!"



4. Good coaches can learn from any discipline. I was quietly sitting watching Team Ontario's reiners do cool things when I looked around and found the area was surrounded by a sea of red team Ontario jackets, amongst them were our team coaches from Jump and Dressage along with a huge contingent of our team Ontario athletes and parents watching and discussing technique, biomechanics and of course shouting out the well-deserved 'Oh Yeah's' when earned.



Team Ontario's "Oh Yeah" shouting supporters!



5. When a beautiful young lady sings 'O Canada' with absolute heartfelt abandon at the opening ceremonies of a sporting event there is nothing else to do but be left feeling pride, hope and inspiration.

6. Golf carts are fun. It's true, horse shows are definitely a lot more fun when you have a golf cart... However, I would like to formally encourage all horse show organizers to always include optional golf cart races for coaches to participate in.

7. Reining horses can hold your coat. True story, I watched a team Ontario reiner take off her coat and lie it on her horse's hind end and tie it to the back of her saddle. She did it all at a standstill and the horse stood like a rock. She then proceeded through the majority of her ride with her coat over the horse's hind end with horse never batting an eye. Oh Yeah!

Because reining isn't hard enough...do it with a flappy jacket tied to the back of YOUR saddle!



8. Stall displays. Team Ontario's stall display rocks and it makes me feel proud every time I walk (or golf cart at high speed) past it. Again, I would suggest there be an award for this, especially because there's chocolate and tomorrow I am bringing twizzlers.



9. Horse Inspections still make me nervous. I can't even count the number of horses I have had a hand in putting through a horse inspection at a competition, but I can definitely tell you that the sense of relief that I feel when our horses are accepted is immense no matter how well prepared we are.

Jenna Mayhew and Kinsale (Kip) ready for their first Horse Inspection!

10. Every opportunity is what you make it. I am so proud of Jenna for embracing every opportunity available to her at this competition. She has gone into this with an open mind and welcomed the chance to be coached by people new to her, make new friends and to accept the challenge of being on a team. I love the saying, "What got you here won't get you there". If we are constantly evolving our program with new ideas and information we will continue to move our program forward. I am so excited about this

opportunity to gather new information to incorporate into our program and feel like a coaching sponge trying desperately to soak up all the cool ideas and tidbits I can while being here. Oh Yeah

Who knows what I will learn tomorrow!

Come watch, learn and absorb.

Ruth



So, although it is Day 3 of my CIEC blogs, it's actually Day 1 of competition... If you know me at all you know that math is not my strong suit – sort of like the many cooking or sewing skills that I do not possess. However I do know that day 3 here at CIEC is definitely day 1 of competition. 😊

So, here are the 10 things I learned today:

1. Good coaches are worth listening to and sometimes even worth quoting, hence: 'My job is to empower you to be better'. Said by Trish Mrakawa this morning when talking about athlete development.
2. When you have been at a horse show since early in the morning some things are just funny. Long-time friend Julie Cull who works at Equine Canada drove past me on a golf cart late this afternoon with a show jump rail and all I could see was a jousting golf cart. (See picture for confirmation)... p.s. going to suggest to organizing committee that all golf carts for coaches be outfitted for jousting.



Golf Cart Jousting at CIEC's – It's a thing...

3. The debrief is crucial. Getting to work with such awesome coaches this week has reminded me that the post-performance analysis of any competition is so important and insightful. Spending some time with Tom Dvorak and Jenna this afternoon to talk about how today's performance will impact our preparation for the next day was fascinating. We have a game plan and are excited for day 2 (or day 4 however you are doing the math).

Debrief for Jenna Mayhew and Kinsale after their first Dressage Test.

4. Long days are exhausting! Team Ontario was captured by me waiting for the end of day ribbons presentations napping, even superstars need their rest 😊



Team Ontario taking a well-deserved break at CIEC's!



5. OEF employees get sassy when you rush them! Although there was still chocolate in the team Ontario tack room I was reminded to take the time it takes to write notes on the whiteboard in preparation for the next day's adventure.

Brandon Hall of the OEF – reminding Ruth to take her time!

6. Ribbons presentations are fun. Watching our team Ontario riders get their ribbons for the first round of competition was so much fun!



7. Coffee and candy cure all. Have I mentioned that there is an endless (in my dreams) supply of coffee and candy in team Ontario's tack room? Stop by and say hi!

8. Tomorrow is another day and now is the time to do some much needed analysis of what went well on Day 1 of competition and create a tactical outline of what the rest of the competition looks like. Being a genuine 3 Day Eventer in heart and mind I am a true believer in not resting after day 1, its time to take a move!



Brandon Hall, holding a sign that says "You is Smart, You is Kind, You is Important". The Help, Abilene Clark. Team Ontario!

9. Every single member of a team is important. From the athletes themselves (horse and rider) to the parents, grooms, coaches, chefs, support staff, farriers, vets, volunteers, judges and organizers: none of this would be possible without them. Have you thanked them lately?
10. Fans are everywhere, and thank goodness! In the chilly morning air while watching Jenna warm up for her test I looked around and saw some familiar Oakhurst faces respectfully watching. I was so thrilled to see all of you there cheering and supporting the team. You are without a doubt the best.

See you cheering on Saturday!

Ruth



Whoa, what a day!

So, here are the 10 things I learned today:

1. When chocolate is left in your down filled vest all day it becomes almost drinkable... but not in a good way.
2. Inter discipline respect is cool! It's true, when I was at dressage the Team Ontario Jumpers and Reiners were there clapping politely. When I was cheering on the Jumpers the Team Ontario Dressage and Reiners were cheering alongside. And when I was watching Reining, the Team Ontario Jumpers and Dressage riders were there 'Oh Yeah-ing' with the best of them. Mutual respect among disciplines.
3. The concept of CIEC is seriously groovy. The fact that we have so many provinces represented and ultimately coming together to improve our athlete development is so breath-taking, and to have the opportunity to take part in it in any way is a privilege.
4. +9 feels cold this time of year. Its true... in March +9 is short and tube top kind of weather, but this morning at +9 I saw toques, mittens, blankets and lots of layers on everyone!
5. When Jumpers decide to angle jumps, boy do they angle them! As Eventers we practice angles often, but wow, in the speed class today I saw angles that even Eventers would look twice at, OH YEAH!

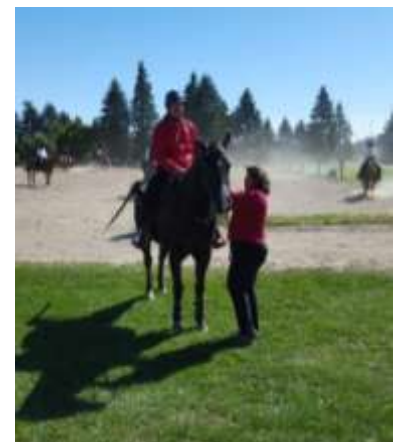


6. I love my province. I am sure that every person from every province feels the same and that's why every province fights their hardest to win... but let me tell you, that the level of support from Team Ontario and the OEF has been unsurpassed... and I am not just talking about the coffee/chocolate aspect, which of course I appreciate and should not EVER end!

7. Moms are amazing. Oh It's true (dad's you're cool too). I watched moms of all disciplines today perform extraordinary tasks and not bat an eye lash. Dressage moms wiping slobber off horses legs. Jumper moms setting fences. Reining moms pulling braids out of tails to make a Reiners tail look crimp and cool (not just a 90's thing ladies). You ladies

rock and I am hoping you are holding seminars of tips on how to deal with my soon to be teenage children 😊

8. Announcing is an art form and truly sport specific. I announce at all of our horse shows, but after this week genuinely aspire and feel competent to announce at a heavy weight boxing fight... true story.



9. Be all that you can be. This is such a cool competition because little do most people know that there were also Coaching Evaluations happening in conjunction with this competition. And why not? We have an amazing venue at our disposal, evaluators from across the country here as coaches and the opportunity to grow coaching and the sport in a massive way. Congratulations to those involved!



Oakhurst Head Coach Ruth Allum, Simone Williams and Tom Dvorak. Photo by: Cheryl Denault Photography

10. Honesty. Yup, #10 is honesty... deal with it. Is that too blunt? I feel like maybe Event coaches are possibly more blunt than other types of coaches, however Tom was more than accommodating to my wishes and Jenna was in the lead until the last few riders today. This experience has been insightful, educational and so much fun. I am looking forward to tomorrow where we will once again bring our best foot forward and let the chips fall where they may.



*Jenna Mayhew & Kinsale – Earning a 68% in their test today – note the bonnet Kip is wearing...Team Oakhurst pride!
Photo by: Cheryl Denault Photography*

Ruth

C'mon.... who doesn't want to win????

This morning while team coach Tom Dvorak was preparing to coach my athlete in the dressage warm up he asked me, 'is there anything you think we should work on specifically'. So my answer... 'I think we should work on winning'.

I feel like maybe Event coaches are possibly more blunt than other types of coaches, however Tom was more than accommodating to my wishes and Jenna was in the lead until the last few riders today.

This experience has been insightful, educational and so much fun. I am looking forward to tomorrow where we will once again bring our best foot forward and let the chips fall where they may.

Ruth



Remember the other day when I said I love to win??

Here are the 10 things I learned today:

1. Seeing team Ontario Dressage get the Gold on Sunday, and getting to be a part of it, was a total adrenaline rush! I totally thought this type of adrenaline rush was reserved for the completion of an epic cross country ride, but I was wrong. Sunglasses on in case my eyes watered!



*Team Ontario Dressage –
Gold Medal Team Dressage – CIEC 2015*

2. I have a healthy respect for our multi-coloured Ontario Dressage team. We had without a doubt the most colourful team out there. From Jenna's chestnut, Kendra's black and white Gypsy Vanner, Devlin's Chestnut roan pony to Morgan's Palomino we absolutely proved that a good horse comes in any colour.

3. Beer is best served cold. And if we were allowed to have alcohol at CIEC I would have totally had a super cold beer after the Dressage team got their gold medals.... Did I mention that the Ontario Dressage team got GOLD????



Team Ontario Dressage being interviewed after their Gold Medal win at CIEC's 2015

4. 7pm after a 5 day horse show feels like midnight or later. Its true, after not walking cross country courses/teaching lessons all day I am exhausted... must be all the gold medal winning!!

5. Every transition begins with your inside leg.

6. The Chef's job is of uniting all disciplines of a team/province, and Mark Nelson, congratulations on making that happen for Ontario... including going above and beyond the call of duty in lending Devlin a set of boots to wear to the final ceremonies.

7. Every correction begins with leg. Listening to Tom Dvorak and Simone Williams coaching our dressage riders this comment came up a few times. Instead of going to the hand first to make corrections they reinforced that a riders leg should be the start of any correction.



Team Ontario Reiners – CIEC 2015

8. Reining is an incredibly precise sport. If you spin 4 times around and it was supposed to be 4 ¼ you get a score of zero on your whole pattern... harsh!

9. Team competitions definitely do change the dynamic of what is normally a solo sport. The intensity of knowing that your ride means the difference between a team medal or not is exhilarating and a lot of pressure.





10. Packing up at the end of a five day competition is bittersweet. Although everyone was ready to go home saying good bye to the new friends we made over the week was moving. Hugs and congratulations all around regardless of discipline or province was the scene as we packed up. Until next time!

Team Ontario was named the most improved province from the previous years CIEC receiving a special award from the sponsors. With combined scores from the Dressage, Reining and Jumper riders Ontario finished in the Silver Medal position with Quebec in the Gold and Nova Scotia in the Bronze.

*Jenna Mayhew & Kinsale – Individual
Silver & Team Gold Medalists at CIEC's 2015*

Team Gold Medal with Quebec getting the Silver and New Brunswick getting the Bronze.
Congratulations to everyone who participated!

Ruth



The Pioneers who came to settle Canada faced a LOT of adversity. Between finding a place to build a home in a new country, in a new hemisphere of the world, foreign to them, they had to deal with our winters with the biting cold and mountains of snow, summers with stroke-inducing heat and mosquitos bigger than the family dog and foreign soil filled with rock and stone, unforgiving to even the strongest pickaxe (around here anyway). Yet they overcame these adverse conditions to build successful and thriving communities across the country.



Zoë Richardson – adding some style to the layers during XC course walk at Grandview Fall HT.

As I hovered in a porta-potty at Grandview this weekend – trying to keep from exposing any skin, lest the wind whipping through cause frostbite in the unmentionable region – I thought about how tough (stupid crazy fools) the pioneers were. They had to BUILD the outhouses. And an outhouse was a LUXURY for them. I would have sucked as a pioneer. I would have gotten back on the boat. “See you guys, it’s been a slice. I’ll be back when you get the whole indoor plumbing thing figured out.”



Unicorns farting rainbows socks – extra warmth AND good luck! These babies worked for Emma Richardson.

But the Pioneers were tough and made lemonade from the lemons presented to them. It occurred to me that eventers must be cut from the same cloth as so many of those pioneers. Saturday morning at the Grandview Fall HT it was a balmy 6 degrees – with 70km/hour winds.

Not the warm tropical breezes you sit on a beach enjoying a pina colada from a coconut in, these were the bone chilling, frostbitten eyebrows, don’t leave any skin exposed or you’ll regret it kind that make you wonder what ever possessed you to spend the day standing out in the gale force arctic breeze when we have the luxury of indoor plumbing. And central heating. And where the heck did summer go?

Eventers are tough. And we adapt. We put on our turtlenecks, hiked up our Unicorn socks, switched to the heavy gloves, wore our winter jackets under our body protectors and joked about how “at least there are no bugs today” and “hardly any humidity in this wind”. And everyone went out and rode their buns off. Despite the crazy weather, we cheered for each other, helped each other reach for our goals, supported our team and finished the event like any other.

Rather than letting the imperfect conditions scare us off, or make us change our plans, we figured out how to ride (and coach or parent!) through the wind. One of our team mates remarked to me “The weather’s not perfect today is it?” The best response I could come up with was “Nope. Welcome to Canada.” The weather is not always perfect. Saturday it was pretty far from perfect! But at the last Olympics in London, the Eventers had to do Dressage in the rain. If it’s not perfect there, maybe riding in imperfect conditions will make us that much stronger when we get to the Olympics! And sometimes, It is what it is. A few people on our team found out that their horses go REALLY WELL in the hurricane strength wind. Who knew? Some found out that even if it seems like the conditions are not conducive to riding, they can do it anyway.





Emma Richardson (4th Jr. PT) and Alexa Bresnahan (2nd Jr. Tr) celebrating winning Oakhurst coloured ribbons at Grandview Fall HT.

Maybe one day the weather will be perfect. And the birds WON'T fly during their dressage test, spooking their horse like at every other show. And the jump judges will be invisible so that their horse doesn't have a panic attack coming around the corner to jump 5 on cross country, AGAIN. And the stadium ring WON'T be surrounded by people flapping scary umbrella's during their ride. And conditions will be absolutely perfect for the first time ever. Imagine how AMAZING you will be on that day? With all of this training on less-than-perfect days, we'll be ready! Let's hope that one perfect day doesn't happen too soon. I'd rather save it for the one day you need that epic performance for some sort of medal winning opportunity (or when they bring out the BIG prize money...). And if it still doesn't happen on those days, you'll be even better prepared for the challenge.

I know as a coach, I have not stopped drinking fluids just because I know I will have to visit the porta-potty several times during a very cold or wet or disgustingly hot day. But I have been perfecting my technique. I can be in and out – exposing the minimum flesh required and hovering like a hummingbird over a target flower – faster and more efficiently than anyone I know.

My Pioneer ancestors would be proud – if I had any – my parents emigrated from England, so essentially they were pioneers for our family, but they lived in an apartment, drove a car, had baseboard heaters and indoor plumbing, so the whole hardy Pioneer thing was a bit missed in our ancestry.

So keep perfecting your technique – despite the heat, wind and rain, scary rocks, birds and umbrella's – next time those things will be easier to deal with, you'll be stronger and less flappable and the perfect day will be closer than you know. Coaches Ruth, Blair, Megan and I are happy to add layers of long johns, turtlenecks, hats, sunscreen and bug spray to help our team find their perfect rides on less than perfect days.

We'll share our secrets for surviving the porta-potty dash and keep learning and educating ourselves and teaching each other so that we can help our students overcome any adverse conditions. Everyone who rode this weekend is now a leg up on the competition the next time we attempt to ride as Dorothy and Toto careen past in a bungalow heading for OZ.

And we'll be there to cheer the day it all comes together. Wearing as many layers as it takes.

It's how we roll.

Pioneer style.

Helen

And a special HAPPY BIRTHDAY today to Tatum Nelson – Tate has finally reached double digits and is the ripe old age of 10 today. Woohoo! Enjoy your special day – and tell your mom I said you get to have a Birthday Week. Our pioneer ancestors would totally agree.



Megan Jenner, Ruth Allum and Jenna Mayhew walking the Cross Country course – and trying to look warm – at Grandview Fall HT.



I think it's safe to say most of us have gotten over our inevitable 'turkey comas' from this past weekend. Or maybe we're still feeling the lingering effects of that extra piece of pie (guilty)? Either way Thanksgiving is a holiday intended for family, food and to give thanks.

Here are thirteen fundamental things (not necessarily in order) that I feel grateful for not only at Thanksgiving but everyday!

1. My family- Its made up of so many different groups of people who also support and encourage us! I have family in my relatives, my barn family, my horse family, my close friends, and I am thankful for each one of those families. For in the safety, acceptance and loyalty of my family I am inspired to follow my dreams and goals as an equestrian.



2. Horses- Let's be honest –is there anything about horses that we aren't thankful for? My horses are my family as well. They teach me about patience and consistency and never pass judgment. For most of us its that connection we make when we see our horse. They are who I see everyday and spend the most time with. I know they are always there to offer whatever is needed in that moment.



3. Panda (most days)- Theres an unwritten law that horse people love dogs! From 'helping' me teach to entertaining us on the 24hour drive to florida, I can confidently say that everyday with Panda is an adventure! Always so happy to be there he loves to greet you outside, in the barn, in a car and occasionally in your locker.

4. Coaching- I have had the privilege over the past eight years to not only be taught by but also work with one of Canada's top Eventing Coaches. From day one Ruth has been a constant pillar of confidence and support. Her coaching ability and passion inspired me to become a certified coach, which has led me to even more opportunities within this industry. I am so fortunate to have three certified coaches (Ruth, Helen & Meg) who empower and share knowledge with me everyday. Coaches who explain and teach in such a way that every one of their students can go home and recreate it-AWESOME.

5. Hot Chocolate- Yes that's right, I am still a child at heart! Who needs coffee when you can get warmed up with some hot cocoa? All that sugar can get me out of bed on a cold day and realize it increases my production at work 😊 I look forward to the colder days knowing that some of our barn fairies deliver and spoil us with some hot chocolate!

6. Pony Pals- We share that common thread, passion, and excitement for all things horsey. They are the friends we've laughed with, shared experiences that no one would believe, memories that can never be forgotten and friendships that will last a lifetime. These are the people who will understand and accept that your vehicle has that eau d'horse smell or that new winter blanket purchase. I can't imagine not sharing these pony adventures without you.



7. Goals- As a coach, trainer and athlete I have only benefitted from having goals. Goals and goal setting has been built into the foundation here at Oakhurst. Our SMART goals allow us to push our own boundaries and achieve what we may feel is impossible.



8. Turkey- On my plate! It was bound to appear sooner than later. As many of you know I am terrified by birds, however when it comes to turkey time I am more than happy to partake in the festivities. In all seriousness, turkey is great and so are my family members who organize, cook, bake and host for Thanksgiving.



9. Eventing- Although I started my career in the hunter ring, it was eventing that stole my heart. Collectively between the adrenaline of cross country, horsemanship, highs and lows, partnership of horse & rider and friendships made along the way I can't think of a better sport. I have learned a lot about myself through my participation in eventing and am thankful to be a part of it.

10. Horse coolers- Not only are they helpful in the aid of drying our horses after a workout but they also double as a blanket for those cold horse show days, clinic watching or extra throw on our bed!

11. Training- I have been very lucky over the past years to work and learn from many equine athletes. All of which have taught me invaluable lessons in the arena and in life. There is nothing quite like starting a young/green horse from the beginning and being a part of their journey as they develop and watching them turn into the athlete and competitor you knew they could be.

12. Fall XC Schooling- We were fortunate enough to have an opportunity to cross country school at Harmony (Beaulieu Farm) this past Saturday. Ruth and Mark drove the 5 horse trailer with Jag (Tate), Abigail (Devon), Sox (Emma), Kip (Jenna) and Africa (myself) to explore and school one last time this season. We also had Elyse Howat and Janan Steward join us, to take part in all the fun. The weather turned out great for us and the footing felt great. It was great to have the atmosphere of being off property, new terrain, new partnerships to test the water (sort of speak) and the chance for some to redeem ourselves. Thank you to Ruth, Mark, Helen and the organizers for allowing us to have this opportunity!



13. Oakhurst- Last but not least thank you to Oakhurst Farm. For giving so many of us a positive start in equestrian sport, for leading by example and working under your tutelage has given many (including myself) the foundation to start their own business. Having the opportunity to learn and work in a facility like Oakhurst has furthered our long term equestrian development. As I continue to work towards my own dreams and endeavors I know I can rely on my mentors for support and guidance (as I've always come to know).

What are you thankful for?

Blair



Some people know right away what they are going to do when they grow up and for others it can take years to figure it out. For me, I was 18, when I realized that I wanted to become a coach. There were many reasons behind this madness. Obviously I enjoy the company of our four-legged friends. I love passing on my knowledge to others but I think what initiated the crazy idea was having a special mentor in my life growing up and wanting to do that for others.



Coach Ruth Allum from Oakhurst, a huge mentor for many at Oakhurst, in action.

I can say I have had many great mentors to look up to growing up. I had great teachers throughout school, my parents are unbelievable. An older sister to look up to (even when we fought) and a ton of family and friends that I can rely on. But it is those mentors that we don't think will impact our lives so much that do. For me that would be my riding coach and I think most riders can agree with me that a special bond is made through a coach and their students in this sport.



Two very special mentors at Oakhurst; Coaches Helen & Ruth.

Not only did I learn how to ride but I saw that hard work pays off, I learned how to be responsible, to be respectful and so much more. The amount of opportunities, thought and attention that was given to me outside of my hour lesson. I will be thankful for the rest of my life for this and I can only hope to do the same for my students and impact their lives, the way my life was impacted.



One of Oakhurst's amazing coaches, in action, Blair Nicol.

Oakhurst is such a great example of these mentors who will go above and beyond for their students. I know that all the fellow Oakhurst employees have helped me learn and grow in the time I have been a part of the team. Ruth, Blair and Helen give all of their students their undivided attention and treat them as their own family.

Oakhurst always has lots of opportunities for their students to keep busy! Even coming up, October 30th is our Halloween Costume Contest! So get your costumes out! Get Ready For Halloween!

As a coach you take on more than just teaching, you take on being a role model, mentor and a friend to your students. That, for me, is the icing on the cake and a huge part of why I love being a coach.

Have a Safe and Happy Halloween!

Megan



I've heard it said that while standing on the podium, the best in the world, with the gold medal around their neck are already trying to figure out how to better their next performance.

We arrived home early Monday morning from an amazing trip to Lexington, Kentucky where we participated in the Hagyard Midsouth Team Challenge. We had 3 fabulous teams of riders from the local area who worked together as one for the past few days.

I've outlined some of the trip highlights from my perspective:

- The trip down and back were incredibly smooth. The ponies travelled well and the weather was very cooperative.
- Breakfast at the Cracker Barrel after an overnight drive somehow tastes better than if you hadn't driven 13 hours.



Always helps if you have a friend to follow – Matt Kidney & Leah Vrieling are in front of us!



- Getting all of the Canada flags on stalls and then giving the riders their swag bags of Canadian gear is a total thrill! However with the amount of work that Helen puts into getting all of our swag together she definitely needs to be here next year to hand it out.

The team decorating stalls with as much Canada stuff as possible – everyone knew where we came from!

- The Cross Country courses for this event are so well thought out and presented it really is like being at a mini Rolex. There are no short cuts in terms of decorations, brush and flowers on the course. And watching the first time Midsouth competitors walk around the cross country course wide eyed is fun. As we walked through the Head of the Lake with the Novice riders on their first tour around the course there was a definite feeling of quiet anticipation and excitement about what was to come.

A little pause after walking through "The Head of the Lake".

- I love working with dedicated and professional coaches! There were 3 of us coaching riders from the 3 teams with us and all worked collaboratively to attempt to get the best performance possible out of all 11 riders. What a great experience for us all to course walk together



and provide input into what we saw. I look forward to the next opportunity to work with Casey and Matt again!

- All of our riders were awesome, but without a doubt watching all four of our Novice Riders come across the finish line with huge smiles on their faces after posting a clear run inside the time was amazing!

The Novice Team – The Eh! Team after 4 perfect Cross Country rides. Champions!



The drive home from any horse show for me is a time for reflection on the aspects of what went well and what needs improvement in my own performance as a coach and manager of a team. Just as the riders are asked to break down their performances in terms of the Tactical, Technical, Physical and Mental aspects, I do the same... standing on the podium thinking about what I can do to get better performances out of our athletes and myself.



Every team needs cheerleaders. Our teams brought one of the best EVER – Leah Vrieling – she even made sure the horses felt Canadian!

We are heading into the post-competition season. A season of planning, re-educating and re-evaluating our best and worst performances. What are you doing to get ready for next season?

Ruth out!



Show season is over, awards season has begun! Now that our event season has officially come to an end for 2015, we have started to enjoy all of the post-show season spoils, like the awards banquets for every circuit our riders compete on. This past weekend, Ruth & Mark made the trek to Mohawk Raceway (Campbellville, ON) for the CADORA Ontario Silver Dressage Awards lunch with Kristin McLaren, Barb Eamer and Jenna Mayhew. Kristin won 2 awards (and a door prize!) – 2nd Level Champion and 3rd Level 3rd place. Jenna won 1st Level 3rd Place and the 3 ladies (the Oakhurst Prancing Queens) won the Eastern Team Champion title.

Woohoo! Our new dressage team rocked their first year!



The Oakhurst Prancing Queens – Kristin McLaren, Jenna Mayhew and Barb Eamer – Silver Team (Eastern) Champions!



The Oakhurst Haunting Judge – Coach Ruth Allum – and Assistant – Joan Allum.

We also celebrated Halloween last weekend. Oakhurst became a very spooky spot on the evening of Oct 30th – We had 9 daring contestants in our Halloween Parade. Dressing up in costumes with their favourite equine friends, they were tasked with presenting their costume to the judge and assembled crowd. After a lively parade around the arena showing off their costumed greatness, each contestant stepped forward and introduced their partner and theme.

The judge presented awards for several different categories, including “Most Moo-ving Costume” and “Best representation of an Animated Character”. Contestants were awarded candy and certificates – and of course bragging rights and applause! and everyone retired to Ruth and Mark’s house for treats and drinks to celebrate the fun evening. It was a great chance for the team to get together and enjoy having a little fun with the ponies, and each other. Social events like these are always fun after the intensity of show season comes to an end.

Over the winter, we are going to be running several programs at Oakhurst that many boarders and students will recognize and enjoy. Drill Team is back – what is more fun when the snow is howling outside than trying to make a pattern for a dozen horses to ride – choreographed to music of course. Coach Ruth takes the drill team very seriously. Hopefully you’ve all remembered your moves like “the rainbow” and “hoe down spins” for this winter. If you are looking for a fun way to do one of your LSD (Long Slow Distance) works on your horse, join us – Drill Team is a great way to make those long trots wildly exciting for a change! I say we add some canter in to the action...

We are also planning a team bonding day in early December – can’t give all of the details yet, but this will be a get-together for all students / boarders to spend some time together playing games (Coach Ruth LOVES board games), eating food and doing some other exciting things – watch your emails for more details soon.





Tatum "The Mexican" Nelson and her "Mule" Jag. Tatum's costume won "Most Terrifying" thanks to her Unibrow and Moustache!

We are planning several new clinics and educational opportunities – watch the website calendar for those. Can't divulge all of the details yet, but they will be amazing, I assure you!

We've got more awards dinners coming up soon – OHTA Banquet Nov 21st and the OADG Dressage Banquet on Dec 5th – several reasons to pull out the fancy (clean) clothes! Come and cheer for your teammates, or collect your own awards. It's always fun at these dinners to try to identify people out of context – without a helmet and show jacket or horse underneath them.

Lots of horses are already being body clipped – they haven't had the message that it is not yet winter. Ruth has her clippers sharpened and is starting to do some pretty fancy work already – check out Ash's new racing stripes:



Photo by: Kenzi Greer-Mitchell

Winter is coming, let's get ready to have some fun!

Helen



The off season gives us equestrians the chance to partake in activities outside the realm of our everyday horsey chores and routines. This past weekend I travelled to Toronto for the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair! I know, I know this off season adventure still involved horses (goats, cows, pigs, etc.) but I have a hard time completely getting away from anything to do with animals.

The Royal is nothing short of a mini 'Disney' experience for animal lovers. It's personally one of my favourite autumn traditions, which I was introduced to as a 12 year old 4H member showing in the dairy cattle ring. Since then, I've been almost every year and have worked out a system that involves eating an infamous Rosti Potato (maybe two), followed by a trip to see the livestock exhibits, buying a ticket to watch the indoor horse shows and enjoying the endless amounts of shopping available.



With a large trade fair expanding the entirety of the exhibition hall, there's no shortage of booths to catch your attention. These booths not only have that must buy item for your horse but includes many outside vendors supplying shoppers with plenty of Ontario goodness. You may even bump into some celebrities- enter Amber Marshall from Heartland! The OEF booth offered this exclusive opportunity to meet Amber, which drew in many kids and adults (no names mentioned).



Left: Cute animal photo ops. Cheryl Denault and Turbo the subway riding, stock exchange opening goat was trying to eat her fudge!



RIGHT: Rosti Potato

The agricultural fair also offers programs with a focus on local food, agri-education and competitions. You could take in a show at the Animal Theatre featuring more than just Super Dogs. The mini arena offers equestrian demos and clinics with well known Canadian riders from different disciplines rotating throughout the fair's two week duration. I think its a great oppourtunity for people who live in the city to experience the country. The amount of agricultural education and exposure is huge. It welcomes the next generation to participate in all things animal, farm, and country.



I was able to attend the horse show both Friday and Saturday night in the Ricoh Coliseum. Friday night included two hackney single lady driver classes, all breed four horse hitch of mares, Canadian Show Jump Championship, mini chuckwagon races-so cute, and round one of the Indoor Eventing class. Saturday night was an extension of Friday starting with the conclusion of the Indoor eventing class won by 8 time winner Waylon Roberts. Followed by the mini chuckwagon races, and the final Canadian Championship won by Jill Henselwood. It was fun to be there and watch as a spectator.



Not just at the show each night but we also ventured through the horse barn and into one of the warm up rings. The chance to watch some of our countries best equestrian athletes ride up close was incredible.





I would have to say the mini chuckwagon races stole the show both nights. I think everything mini is just cuter, but exciting to watch nonetheless! We definitely were placing our bets as to who we thought would take home the win, partly based on which ponies we thought looked more competitive. Who's up for some mini racing this winter?

Phil better start prepping now.

Whether you attended the Royal, spent time in meetings held at the Royal York or attended Jump Canada's Hall of Fame gala, Toronto became the hub of equestrian activity this past weekend! I had so much fun and it was in large part because of the people I travelled with and friends I was able to catch up with while in Toronto. It was an adventure I'll be sure to remember. Can't wait till next year!



Thanks for reading,

Blair

PS. Happy Birthday shout out to Eric (Carlos) Nelson who turns 14 today!

Well its official, show season has passed and the cross country schooling is over, bummer! Now looking into the winter – I know I picture snow blowing, dark by 5 pm and riding in the arena every single day.... how many circles can we do!?! Not to talk about the jealousy we feel to those who get to go to Florida, to cross country school and compete, but really the winter is a great time for us to grow in our riding!

The off season for Canadians is typically the end of October to the beginning of May, which can be a very long and cold six months! But let's look at the glass half full. These cold, long months give us time to bond with our partners, work on our weaknesses, perfect our position and start working towards the next level of competition. Having a longer period of time than our normal week or two between shows gives us more time to work on things that may take longer to perfect, like our horses quality of canter.- well that's mine and Portia's goal for the winter anyways. The winter gives us time to work on our position while we are riding and try to get out of those bad habits.



Angelina and Alissia taking part in No Stirrups November in their Saturday morning lesson.

Welcome to No Stirrups November! As we all have those bad habits to break in our position, like putting our toes down or rounding our shoulders, there are exercises we can all do to help our overall position, like riding with no stirrups. Riding without stirrups can be nerve wracking because it's easy to lose our balance but it helps our position in so many ways. It helps stretch our upper leg to create a longer, steadier leg. It helps us find our balance and strengthens our core. Over all riding with no stirrups can help everybody's position and helps everyone become a stronger rider. No stirrups is an easy thing for anyone to do at anytime, so since it is No Stirrups November I hope to see everyone in the arena dropping their stirrups.

Now that our leg is lengthened, let's work that upper body. Oakhurst students now have access to this very neat black, looking box thing with handles. You have probably seen it on the bleachers or on the ledge of the arena. The Equicube is a weight that is made for riders to ride with it and help build our core muscles. The cube should be held with the "googly" eyes looking up to you and just slightly above your horses withers.

This cube helps to put your hands, elbows and arms in the correct position, it corrects your posture in the saddle, helps balance and strengthens core muscles. This is a great toy to use for 10 minutes a ride to create that muscle memory of the correct position. So Oakhurst students, have a chat with your coaches to see if you can use the cube and work those abs of steel!



Hannah Ledgerwood practicing riding with the Equicube in her lesson.





Zoe Richardson practicing riding with the Equicube in her lesson.

Did anyone see that awesome exercise Ruth had set this past week? There were poles everywhere! As we watched riders ride through it and see the progressions, we realized how much of a fun yet difficult exercise it was! Winter gives us so much time to work through these fun, technical exercises. These exercises all help with different things, sometimes for the horse and sometimes for the rider; like eye and stride control, shortening and lengthening strides, flying lead changes and more! Then we take these skills we learned and use them out cross country, when we need to shorten our stride to come into that coffin. The exercise worked on flying lead changes.

But even with all of these things we can work on, sometimes riding in the arena can get boring with out the change of scenery and with the limited things we can do. So, if you haven't heard of Drill team (starting this Sunday), go online and check it out! Drill team is a group of riders, riding a routine of different movements to music! We even do a final performance at the end and you only need to be able to walk and trot!

Not only is it lots of socializing and riding time, it acts as a long slow distance ride for your horse to stay in shape through out the winter.

So even so the cold, dreary weather is coming, the winter is very useful for us riders! When we aren't focused on the next show and going out cross country schooling, we can work on the things that make us more successful in show season.

And just wait until the tarp, barrel and cows come out! Eek!!

Megan



Hoe down spins, pinwheels, thread the needles, you know what I'm talking about – it's Drill Team season!! Although we are a facility that is deeply entrenched in the world of hard core Eventing (lest we not forget our Dressage team) I definitely look forward to the time of year that I turn my creativity to our world renowned (in my eyes) Drill Team! And much to my delight this year we are turning the musical ride competitive. 2 teams duelling for the title of supreme champion!!! I actually feel like it might make a gripping reality TV show... 'Duelling Drill Teams' or wait, what about 'Oakhurst's got talent' or how about 'Prancing with the stars'? Okay, lets table that for another blog.

This past weekend marked the first practice for our two drill teams who will compete for the supreme title of most fabulousness (not really a thing). One team of 8 riders and one team of 10 riders practicing the same routine using different music and costumes, with the vision of putting on the best performance they can on December 27th at 2:00pm (spectators strongly encouraged). The coolest thing for me is that each team represents a huge range of athletes from the 10 year olds in the Learning and Training stages of Long Term Equestrian Development to our 60-year-old Active for Life athletes not to mention two of our very own coaching staff. A whole array of athletes at totally different biological, physical and developmental stages of their athletic life and yet all working together to produce a successful outcome. For me, watching these groups of riders work together towards a common goal is in itself a huge victory. I can't wait to see the costumes that will accompany their performances and look forward to the practices that promise more laughs, entertainment, and enjoyment for all involved, including myself.

Since I know that most people don't actually read past the 10th line of any blog I feel safe at this point telling you my secrets of why we run Drill team:

- It provides an awesome Long Slow Distance workout for the horses
- It is fabulous Warm-up ring training – It teaches riders to look up when they ride so the whole routine doesn't up as a 'musical collide'.
- The entire experience ~~requires~~ encourages athletes to have compassion and understanding of where each member of their newly formed team is coming from in terms of their athletic ability and experience.
- FUN. Oh yes, gossip about it, I just used the 'F word'!!! Watching this hugely diverse group of individuals share a common experience, laugh, joke and enjoy themselves is FUN! Reminding us all why we joined in on this amazing sport in the first place.

So, there it is, deep dark secrets of our musical ride... minus the costume/music tips... p.s. I have 4 glue guns and an awesome be-dazzler when it comes time guys!

The 'off-season' is an amazing time to introduce new skills and techniques and with the inspired coaching staff we have at Oakhurst I am so excited that we can offer to our athletes this 4 part Mental training series.

We talk often about the physical, technical, tactical and mental training aspects of our sport and are quick to deal with the first 3. Having the guts to decide that although we are fabulous coaches and horse trainers we just don't have the years of training and expertise to give our athletes the absolute edge in terms of sport psychology and mental training was a big leap of faith. However, after talking to Paige Mattie for 2 minutes on the phone the first time I was 100% convinced that she could give our athletes a leg up on the competition.



Paige Mattie, MHK, BSc., Mental Performance Consultant



Paige came out and met with Helen, Blair, Megan and myself this past weekend in order to get a complete picture of what we think are our athlete's areas of need. I am so thrilled to bring her into our team and look forward to the doors she will open for us all in terms of our mental skill building.



In other news, maybe you've seen that our very own Helen Richardson is now an Ontario Horse Trials Association Board member! The belief that any opportunity to give back in the sport runs strong and true in Helen and I am eager to watch her in this new role. I have no doubt that she will continue to endorse and embrace the tremendous work that the OHTA carries out. Congratulations!

And speaking of Congratulations, did you hear that Oakhurst is the site for the 2016 Ontario Horse Trials Association Championships??? Mark your calendars: September 3rd & 4th, 2016 in Ashton, Ontario! Oh yes, there will be awesome competition accompanied by a competitor's party to rival no other... let it be said that I have heard that there will be, live music, awesome food and I have been told to leave the rest as a surprise (much to my chagrin).



Welcome to the Nations Capital, Eventers of the province, we promise a fun, quality event!

Although the 'off season' for me is normally one that I dread for fear of not getting a competitive rush, this one has been action packed and full of excitement. Bring on winter, I am ready for you!! We have skills to perfect and an electrifying 2016 season to come. Watch the Oakhurst calendar for the date of the Oakhurst Show Team meetings!

What are you doing to get ready for 2016?

Later,

Ruth



The past few weeks have been busy around Oakhurst – our competition dates for 2016 have been selected and announced, Drill Team has begun a pretty intense practice schedule to prepare for their big show on Dec 27th, awards dinners and banquets celebrating our competitors are happening on weekends – or are being planned for the depths of winter and lessons are having fun jumping the new exercise Coach Ruth sets up for us every week. This coming week's exercise looks tricky, I'm interested to see how it will ride – as I told Ruth, she has to test it out for a few days before I send my students over it! Lucky for me, she starts using it on Tuesday and has until Thursday evening to work out the kinks.

Speaking of Coach Ruth, today is a special day for her – the anniversary of the day she became MY sister! To celebrate the day I got a sister, I thought it might be fun to follow one of her favourite blog styles and list 10 things you might not know about her.

1 – Before she started riding horses, Ruth ice skated. She was amazing at ice skating but gave it up to ride instead. Ruth had her own special technique: Standing on one side of the rink, holding the boards, she would rock up onto her skate picks, then push off and run a few steps on her picks to build speed. Then she would put both feet flat on the ice and glide until she came gracefully to (slammed into) the boards on the other side of the rink. She was amazing at speed-skating. Too bad her talent was not recognized at the time. Sadly our rink didn't do any speed-skating lessons, just figure skating. I'm not sure the Richmond Figure Skating Club missed either of us when we "quit" to ride for 1 winter.



Can you find Coach Ruth Allum in her figure skating group? She really LOVED figure skating!

2 – Ruth loathes most vegetables. Especially the tree or shrub shaped ones. Except one – tomatoes (I know, I know, they are a fruit but humor me). She loves tomatoes. So much that as a kid she would pick them in our garden and eat them like apples. Who does that? (Tate does it. I've seen it. it freaks me out.) I don't mind them blended into a sauce, but I draw the line at eating them as if they were a crisp juicy peach or pear. It's wrong. As children, Ruth ate a lot of tomatoes off my plate at dinner. Thank god.

3 – Ruth hates Banana Chips. I do too. Thanks mom. Quick flashback – 2 little girls sitting in the back seat of the family car on a hot July day, waiting for their mom while she "just runs into the bank". To keep the kids happy (maybe like 6 and 8 years old?) we are given a bag of banana chips – don't know what they are? Someone came up with the brainwave idea to dry out little rounds of banana, cover them with honey or some sickly sweet sugary ick and sell them to be added to cereal. We had just picked them up from the health food store – apparently they are an essential ingredient in granola. We grew up in the 70's and 80's when granola was a big deal. Long story short, we ate a lot of banana chips in the back of a very sweaty car



before the bank trip was over and were both quite ill afterwards. Even the smell of the damned things makes Ruth heave.

4 – *Ruth quit riding when she was 9.* She started at age 8 and then fell off a little paint pony named Sonny and quit for a while. After 6 months or so, once it became obvious that the rest of us weren't going to quit and she'd have to keep coming to the barn anyway, she came back and started riding again. She overcame her fear and jumped back on the ponies and got right back into riding. She started competing a year or so later! The lesson here is that everyone has a bad day, bad ride or bad season. It's the strong ones that shake it off and move on with their lives. Ruth has had struggles and bad days with horses too, they have made her stronger. But trust me, when she sees her students have a bad day, she gets it. She understands because it probably happened to her once upon a time.



*Ruth Allum riding at Fiddlers Green Stables – Age 10
The pony is named Prince.*

5 – *Ruth is a HUGE Arlo Guthrie fan.* OK, you may have known that one. She did JUST go to New York City to see Arlo perform one of his final shows at Carnegie Hall. As kids, we used to listen to records (google it) and one of her favourites was Arlo Guthrie's "Alice's Restaurant". Growing up at the end of the Vietnam War, we had family friends affected by the US Military Draft, and would hear rumblings of what was happening around the world. Alice's Restaurant combined several themes that have always been important in Ruth's life – understanding the song can help understand Ruth a little better. The song is funny. Ruth likes to keep a lot of humour and joy in her life. The song has a positive ending to a negative situation. Ruth always likes to look for the good thing that can be found in any experience – "Sure you fell off, but now we know your airvest works...". Rather than turning this blog post into an essay, I'll leave it at that – but look up the YouTube video is the original recording of the song "Alice's Restaurant" (no pictures, we were born before music videos, you'll have to imagine the pictures in your head. Don't worry, you've got lots of time to do it, the song is about 18 and a half minutes long. Ruth has patience.)

6 – *Ruth had shoulder surgery on her left shoulder* because she had it dislocated so many times by horses (like black Billee) yanking her arm right out of the socket. She has a scar on the front of her left shoulder from having a muscle pulled across from the center of her chest to the point of her shoulder to provide more strength and stop her arm from falling out of its socket. She is never happy when she is holding a horse that tries to drag her.

7 – *Ruth has trouble navigating stairs.* They have always been her nemesis. The stairs in the farm house were uncarpeted when we first moved to Oakhurst. The stairs have a 90 degree turn 3 steps before the bottom. Ruth used to fall down the stairs a few times a week. To the point that we would all hear "thunk, thunk, thunk, thunk, THUD" (hitting the wall at the turn), then Ruth yelling "I'm OK" and none of us would flinch. We'd all just look at each other like "Oh, just Ruth falling down the stairs again." We'd buy her grippy socks for Christmas and tell her to slow down, but nothing seemed to help. My parents eventually had the stairs carpeted. It didn't help with the falling, but it did muffle the



Ruth Allum and Erin Gorski-Howcroft at their High School Graduation – Ruth had been absent from school for several months with Mononucleosis – still pretty pale in this pic but their friendship is still strong today!



sound! Ruth has also fallen up stairs, it's not a gravity thing. At boarding school she fell up the stairs to the dining hall and broke her collar bone. She's better with elevators if there's a choice.

8 – *Ruth knows some Russian*. She went to Brock university in St. Catherines to study the russian language. She went to Russia in high school and has had a real fascination with the culture (alcohol), food (alcohol) and people (who serve the alcohol?). This may have been an interest in foreign boys but at the time I thought she was going to be a spy. It never occurred to either of us that her being a redhead and rather loud would in any way be a kink in that plan. I would totally have signed her up for the secret service, I bet she could have blended in if she had to. She can do anything she puts her mind to.

9 – *Ruth reads books*. Actually if you ask Ruth, she will tell you that's a lie. She'll tell you that her least favourite gifts to get as a child were books. When offered a gift that felt like a book, she would hand it back to the gift giver and say "Thanks, but I already HAVE a book". But she DOES read books. Not fluffy romances or vampire love stories, her favourite books are memoirs written by coaches. She has many books about where great athletes come from, how great coaches think and how sport can be developed. As a real book lover and avid reader, I'm actually quite proud to see she has a whole shelf full of books that she has read! I don't think she'll ever read the Twilight series, but she DOES read, despite what she tells you otherwise.



Ruth Allum riding Debonair (Marty) at Harwood Horse Trials 1989

10 – *Ruth hates when people try to give her a nickname*. Her name is only 4 letters long, why change it? When she was little, people used to try to call her "Ruthie". I remember a neighbour across the street from us in Richmond. The mom called her "Ruthie" and Ruth was so enraged that she stomped across the street to their house, knocked on the door and politely informed the mom through gritted teeth that "my name is Ruth, NOT Ruthie" and stomped back to our house again. She was 4 or 5 years old. She has NEVER liked to be called anything other than Ruth. Mark can get away with calling her "Ruby", but I wouldn't try it if I were you. She's not so tolerant of that kind of shenanigans. Trust me.



Ruth and Joan Allum – 1974!

Hopefully some of those points were news to you, and now you have a deeper understanding of what makes our own Coach Ruth tick. I could have gone on and on about how she had her own "frog training academy" at our cottage and how she really feels about all things Disney, but I'll leave some secrets for another day...It's her birthday today – don't forget to show her love for her special day – she's going to spend most of it doing what she loves – shouting at people riding ponies in a freezing cold arena!

Thank goodness she didn't quit for good all those years ago. She is a pretty amazing coach, mom, role model and sister. I'm not sure the figure skating world was ready for her "talent".

Happy Birthday Ruth! (I'm pretty sure this is the day we adopted you, anyway)

From your favourite sister – H 😊



5,4,3,2,1... Counting those numbers down out loud still gives me chills/anticipation/excitement! The start box has the ability to create magic moments and help us push our individual boundaries. As eventers we hear that countdown entering the start box but what about countdowns in life? Here are some incredible moments I'm ready to start counting down to.

5 has become one of my favourite and cherished memories so far this year! 05.05.15 was the day I was introduced to Alice (my foal). The countdown to her arrival was anticipated for many months. As I look her progression from one month to the next it amazes me how quickly time goes by. I hold on to that feeling excitement and relief knowing she made her arrival into this world so smoothly. I countdown to the day when I get to finally add her to my string of competitive ponies!



*High Five (Alice) born on May 05, 2015
Photo by: Cheryl Denault Photography*

4 exciting things happening around the farm over the next little while. Beginning with the Mental Training Workshops, followed by the Oakhurst Dueling Drill Team Performance, Oakhurst awards party (woohoo) and finally the EC Rider Level Education Sessions. When people ask me what I do during the 'off season' I tell them at the farm we are really never turned off! Organized fun, as Ruth would say it keeps us athletes motivated during the months of mandatory pants on pants and giant snowball filled hooves.

3 degrees celsius on December eighth, who would have guessed that we would be counting up the thermometer instead of watching that red line drop below freezing? I can only hope for continued mild temperatures as we countdown the remaining days of winter. Thank you El Nino! Three also becomes the number of weeks until one of our most cherished countdowns, Christmas! Who doesn't love those chocolate advent calendars, marking each day with a delicious treat. It also reminds us of all the pony things and people we have on our list to buy for.

2 more banquets left for team Oakhurst after the dressage team attended the OADG (Ottawa Area Dressage Group) annual awards banquet held at the Hellenic Centre this past weekend. They brought home some serious hardware to encompass all their hard work and dedication throughout the 2015 season.



Coach Ruth Allum, Jenna Mayhew, Kristin McLaren, Megan Jenner and Zoe Richardson proudly displaying their awards from the OADG Dressage Banquet!

Awards received by Oakhurst team members included:

- OADG Special Cash award for highest 3 scores overall – Silver AA : Jenna Mayhew & Kinsale
- Walk/Trot Horse Open – 3rd: Megan Jenner & Malibu Barbie
- Walk/Trot Rider PW/JR – 3rd: Zoe Richardson & Nike



- Silver First Level AA – Champion: Jenna Mayhew & Kinsale
- Silver Second Level AA – Champion: Kristin McLaren & Panamerra
- Silver Third Level AA – Champion: Kristin McLaren & Panamerra
- OADG Award of Merit for Silver Dressage: Jenna Mayhew & Kinsale
- And coach Ruth Allum emceed the Silver awards!



Coach Ruth Allum and her doorprize – a basket full of Avon creams and lotions!

Congratulations to all members of the Oakhurst team who represented themselves and the farm so graciously. Although I did not attend myself I was happy to receive many photos and updates from the girls!



Jenna Mayhew and her doorprize – a gigantic Christmas ornament!

1 last blog post for 2015 and in some ways a little nostalgic looking back at what the year has brought me. When the idea of blogging was first presented, I was a little intimidated to say the least. However, looking back I'm glad we were encouraged to do so because it has allowed us to reflect on so many fond memories shared between all of us this year.

Countdowns in life, much like in the start box, are equally as compelling and wonderful. Whether your countdown is number of days left before Christmas vacation, number of days left before a trip to a warmer climate (Florida), or simply the number of sleeps left before Santa's big day, enjoy the countdown!

Until next time,

Blair



I don't know about anybody else but this off-season doesn't feel so "off" to me, which I don't mind, it keeps us all busy and out of trouble! Between banquets, award parties, clinics and more, we have all kept busy and looking forward to the what we are doing the following weekend!



Coach Ruth Allum presenting Silver Dressage awards at the OADG Dressage Banquet.

For those who weren't around the barn this weekend, we had our first [mental training](#) session with Paige Mattie. Two different groups met Paige for the first time on Sunday and we got on our way making ourselves stronger as an athlete. I found it very interesting about how much of sport is mental but how little mental training most athletes actually do. We do so much other training for the other areas of our sport; technical and tactical, that its time to learn about mental. And yes, just like in our lessons learning the technical and tactical bit, we will get homework in this bit too! But how else are we going to get good at it and have a leg up next show season?

Speaking of next years show season, who is getting excited for it? I know it is still a few months away but with starting to hear different dates that horse shows are on, changes that will be happening in the schedule and for our championships being at home, I am really starting to get excited! If you are not excited yet then just wait for the Oakhurst Awards Party! We will remember the good, funny and sometimes those embarrassing (but hilarious) moments of the 2015 show season over a plate of food (one of my favorite parts). I am pretty excited to see the video that Ruth is busy making up, especially the bloopers. If you haven't bought a ticket make sure to talk with Ruth to get one!

Zoe Richardson & Megan Jenner celebrating their 3rd place finishes in the OADG Walk Trot 2015 Dressage Divisions



The Oakhurst Holiday Party 2014 – We had so much fun!

Not only does that make me excited for next years show season but then we have the show team meeting right around the corner. That's when we know show season is really coming, we start making goals for the season, figure out how we will get there and choose which shows we want to attend to get there. I know half the time my show season ends up changing a million times than I originally plan, and that's probably why Ruth tells us that our YTP's are not set in stone and is a constantly changing document.



I think as equestrians we have to be fairly flexible, there are a lot of different factors that can change our show season. Although I am sure there are many factors in other sports as well. I wouldn't be the one to ask as I really only danced, skated and did a couple of years of baseball and swimming growing up.

Although I did not excel in any of the above sports and apologize to my dance teachers for just standing on stage and never actually dancing... I was a little star struck by the big audience and lights or maybe just wasn't feeling the groove most days, who knows! But through out most of those sports I took part in there different grades, badges and levels. Coming to Oakhurst I was able to now take part in the Equine Canada Rider Levels. For those who read that and think, "What is that?". Equine Canada Rider Levels is a national program developed to learn safe horsemanship and practices on a national standard. I achieved my rider level 8 this past summer and then mentored an evaluator and now can evaluate up to rider level 4. As an athlete it is a true sense of achievement and it also gave me an idea of my strengths and weaknesses within the horse sport. For example I had to study way more for my written test which was a lot of stable management and theory versus the riding portion. I can also see where I compared to on a national standard.



Megan Jenner, Ruth Allum & Cheryl Denault keeping the Team Oakhurst table cheering loudly during the 2015 OADG Dressage Awards Banquet.

Well we are in luck because Oakhurst is offering Equine Canada Rider Level Education Sessions! These clinics are happening at Oakhurst through out the winter and into early spring. If you are interested in pursuing a rider level, they will help prepare you for the evaluation but they are also great ways to increase your horsemanship education and be a better advocate for the horses. Make sure to check those out online and sign up!

Well I know I am already tired but very excited thinking about our busy winter ahead. Can't wait to see everybody at these events!

Happy Holidays!

Megan



On the 1st day of Christmas my true love gave to me: One super fun barn movie night!

- This past weekend marked the first ever Oakhurst Farm movie night! Held in the indoor arena complete with big screen, sleeping bags, tailgating and lots of laughs courtesy of the movie Elf!. A definite new tradition in the making.



The Oakhurst Movie Crew – enjoying some fun at our first ever Oakhurst Movie Night!

On the 2nd day of Christmas my true love gave to me: Two sand rings completely void of snow!

- The sand rings are both currently wet but definitely have no snow!

On the 3rd day of Christmas my true love gave to me: Three fabulous Eventing phases to base my lesson plans on.

- Oh yes, the greatest sport ever has three wonderful phases which provides us coaches lots and lots of lesson plan ideas in the off season. No worries folks I have lots up my sleeve to get us through the winter



On the 4th day of Christmas my true love gave to me: Four awesome coaches to work with!

- We have an inspired group of coaches at Oakhurst who I am proud to be a part of. The opportunity to bounce ideas off 3 other professionals who understand our program, our philosophy and the long term benefit of us working collaboratively for our athletes is a true joy.

On the 5th day of Christmas my true love gave to me: Five months until show season in Ontario!

- No time to waste, we are already planning for the 2016 season. The Oakhurst Show Team meeting will be held on February 14th, 2016. Details will soon be found on the Oakhurst website, stay tuned.



The dusting of snow Oakhurst saw this week was pretty minor and is now all gone – looked pretty while it lasted!

On the 6th day of Christmas my true love gave to me: Six Amazing school horses!



- The notion that the horse will be the greatest teacher we will ever have as equestrians is so cool. We can learn countless lessons from our horses if we pay attention. Some lessons are more obvious than others and some of my school horses are more obvious about teaching them.

On the 7th day of Christmas my true love gave to me: Seven months until Daisy pops out a new life!

- Its true... although Daisy looks like she will be giving birth to an elephant already, she still has a while to go.

On the 8th day of Christmas my true love gave to me: Eight horses in Drill Team #1, and Ten horses in Drill Team #2!

- Sunday December 27th at 2:00pm will be the big performance for both Drill Teams. Come and cheer them on and join us in the house after for pot luck drinks and appetizers.

On the 9th day of Christmas my true love gave to me: Nine Degrees of warmth outside!!

- Who could have imagined that outside on December 23rd would be 9 degrees Celsius? Definitely not me, but it does lead me to my 10th point...

On the 10th day of Christmas my true love gave to me: Ten completely un-frostbitten toes!!!!

- I own heated insoles, high tech socks, and super warm boots all of which I haven't used so far this winter and I have 10 completely un-frostbitten toes! Although I would like for the mud to freeze up, I can honestly say that my toes look prettier this Christmas than in previous years.

On the 11th day of Christmas my true love gave to me: Eleven days until the Oakhurst Christmas Awards Party!!

- On January 2nd, 2016 we will celebrate the 2015 season with an Awards party at the Glen Mar golf course. We will have delicious food, an funny year end video, some super cool door prizes (shhh, Mark told me not to tell) and lots of awards to recognize all of the fabulous achievements made by our Oakhurst friends. If you don't have your tickets yet there is still time. Check out the website or email me and I will hook you up. Whether you are an Oakhurst student, boarder, alumni, friend or just a horse person looking for a fun night we look forward to greeting you there.

On the 12th day of Christmas my true love gave to me: Twelve cups of coffee!!

- On a personal note, one of my favorite times of the entire year is Christmas morning. However, I have a terrible habit of waking up SUPER early and then I have to wait (noisily) for the rest of my family to wake up while I drink a pot of coffee. Last year I was on my second pot of coffee when I finally made enough noise to wake everyone up... kids these days 😊

From the entire Oakhurst Team, may your holidays be filled with love, good health and lots of horsey presents under the tree.

What is your pony getting for Christmas?

Ruth



We are all starting to feel the effects of too much Christmas celebrating, too much making merry and toasting the end of the season. It's time to get back to the grind and remind ourselves to start coming up with resolutions to become better, smarter, more amazing coaches for 2016. I have come up with several standard resolutions that I am mulling over for the next few days. Hopefully I will be able to stick with at least one of these gems and make 2016 totally fabulous. But if I fail miserably, at the very least I shouldn't be any WORSE than I was in 2015. Right?

1. *Eat Healthy.*

So, more vegetables and salad in my life and I will drink more water in a day than a camel pulling up to the first oasis after a 7 day trek across the Sahara. No problem. I've got this. Although...OK. Let's be realistic, all of those boxes of After Eights and homemade cookies are not going to eat themselves. And if I don't get to them soon, they will go bad and will be wasted. I'm all for conservation. I don't want to be accused of being wasteful. So once I have plowed my way through the mountain of chocolate that has made its way to my house this Christmas, I will TOTALLY be on the vegetable bandwagon. We all want healthier, stronger fitter coaches who can at least keep up during course walks, right? Although If I just invest in good rollerskates, I could perhaps convince my students to tow me around as part of their strength training. Seems more likely than living like a rabbit. This one may be aiming a bit high in all honesty. Maybe I can just "eat healthIER". I might be able to pull that one off. But just in case, where do you think I can purchase healthy looking rollerskates?

2. *Exercise more.*

OK. Slow down. What counts as MORE? I have a pedometer on my phone, so I have a good idea of how far I go in a day normally. I aim for 7500 steps a day - but if I put my phone down and walk to the loo or kitchen, I figure those steps are missed so I add them in manually - I usually round up because I don't want to short myself. I figure a thousand for each unmonitored trip must be about right. I feel good about it. So what is MORE exercise? If I ride the riding lawnmower around the yard for an hour or two, the pedometer counts about 12,000 steps. I figure technology can't be wrong, so I'm super active on those days. And I'm sure the daiquiri I am drinking while riding must count as fruit, which is almost the same as vegetables. Maybe I should cut the grass more. Or ride the lawnmower for course walks. At least I don't teach from a chair in the arena, so I figure the standing up has to be counted as some sort of exercise! How much more is realistic? Maybe I just need fancier running shoes to LOOK like I'm doing as much as it feels like I am doing. Or more stretchy clothes to guilt everyone else into thinking I am totally in the middle of my workout and just stopping to talk to them.



The audience at the 2015 year end Oakhurst Drill Team(s) performance - these brave souls came out to support our hard working drill teams at their final brilliant performance!



3. Pursue further education.

Every year the coaches at Oakhurst continue to upgrade their education and take clinics, classes and coaching certification education on an ongoing basis. I am always forced to do most of this continued education by Head Coach Ruth Allum. To be honest she's a bit of a bully about us "making ourselves smarter". Like we're not amazing already. But it's fine. I don't take any of it personally. I'm currently reading a book called "Mindset" by Carol Dweck about how most people approach their lives from a growth or fixed mindset. A fixed mindset lets us believe that we possess a certain amount of talent or skill in any area, and any downfalls come from either outside influences ("There was a jump judge beside the jump I fell off at, and they spooked my horse. Not my fault!") or a limit to our skills and abilities. A growth mindset lets us believe that there is always something to learn, to continue getting educated, to continue improving and getting stronger, smarter, and more competitive ("The jump judge next to the jump really surprised me. I need to pay more attention next time I'm on course so I notice where people are sitting that might surprise us. I don't want to make that mistake again.").

This book is reminding me we need to approach problems as starting points for learning and growth, we can overcome obstacles by assuming there is always an answer, we just need to see the challenge in working through the problem to learn and grow, rather than assuming the obstacle is insurmountable. I am optimistic that ideas like this make both my approach to coaching and my students approach to riding with my guidance, more successful in the future. We are always looking for new ideas like this to help us be stronger and more well balanced coaches. I think understanding this book will add another facet to my coaching style and delivery. At least I hope so. I am on page 14. Out of 268. I'm pretty sure I'll get through it by the end of the 2016. I'd better, if I don't then I probably haven't learned much from the theory - and at this point, I've really only read the introduction, so not finishing the rest of book would be seriously awkward!

4. Spend less time using technology and more time enjoying nature.

Seriously? I mean I spend quite a bit of time at the barn already. And if I'm not posting the pictures, blogs and updates on the Oakhurst website, Facebook page and Twitter, who will? Right now, Ruth texts me things to post. I'd have to teach her how to do it all by herself. And then she wouldn't NEED me. And I wouldn't get those lovely middle of the night texts with a random picture to post for everyone's amusement. I often use my technology outside. I spent quite a bit of last summer sitting at the picnic table in the middle of the sandring, or leaning on a cross country jump updating a status or uploading a pic on my phone or iPad. I feel like it helps me enjoy the nature. Except when there are bugs. I hate bugs.

5. Quit an addiction.

I hate to admit it, but I don't have any substance addiction - I don't smoke, I don't drink very often, I take vitamin D and Reactine every day, but that's about it for drugs. Coffee? OK 2 cups a day is pretty much required for non-grouchy functioning. But If quit those 2 cups, you will all regret it. Morning lessons will no longer be a viable choice. I mean, if it's THAT important to you, I'm sure I can let it go. But I think we can come up with something better. Let's keep thinking...



Television? I don't often watch a lot. I'm not addicted to any specific show or series. I don't usually turn it on when I am home alone - except to watch the occasional cooking show. Technology? OK, I'm on my phone or iPad a lot. Most of the time really. I guess it is an addiction. But I don't think it's a problem. I'd know if it was a problem. I'm pretty sure it's totally normal. Maybe I can google it.

6. Take up a new hobby.

How do people have time for this one? Between working a part-time day job, teaching lessons, keeping the website and Facebook pages up to date, managing the NCHTA leaderboards, joining the OHTA Board of Directors, scoring for all of the Oakhurst competitions, writing a blog for the Ontario Equestrian Federation and being the mom of two active girls, I'm not sure when I could squeeze a hobby in. And what on earth it could be. Cutting the grass feels like a hobby sometimes, and it does tick the "get out in nature" and "exercise more" (if you can believe the pedometer on my phone) boxes. It eats up any spare time I can find and if I eat broccoli while I am riding the mower, it might just count as several resolutions at once.

7. Think before you speak.

OK, when I do a lesson before the second cup of coffee, I sometimes have trouble finding the words in time for them to make sense to my students. Sometimes those students will glance at me with an "I'm PAYING for this?" look in their eyes. I've seen it. I don't blame them. Frankly, they are lucky I showed up with matching socks and weather appropriate clothing that early in the day. One of the things you might not know about my lessons is how much preparation goes into them. I know it's sometimes hard to tell that I've done any homework at all! But in reality, I watch Ruth teaching every week and then discuss my lesson plan, with my progressions for each of my students with her. We always discuss what her goals are for her students and what my students need to grasp from the weekly lesson so that they are ready to move into her program one day. This conversation happens every week between lessons, sometimes in fits and starts as I think of things to throw at my students, sometimes in one thorough discussion in which we share ideas. I am always prepared when I step into the ring to teach, and I know what my goal is for the lesson - and what I will do if we get off track along the way. I occasionally get caught totally by surprise and have to replan off the top of my head. It does happen, but after 23 years, I've got a few backup plans in my pocket. So basically, to stop the tongue tied'ness that sometimes happens when I am trying to coach as quickly as my fabulous students are learning, I should really drink MORE coffee. Gallons of the stuff. So I feel like suggesting I quit it for the sake of a New Years Resolution is probably not the best plan ever. Just saying.

So what am I going to resolve as an Equestrian Coach for 2016? I am going to have to think about it a bit more, but so far I think I'm looking at eating the occasional salad, buying some fancier running shoes and stretchy clothes, drinking more coffee, getting a camouflage cover for my iPad so it blends into nature more, finishing the book I have started reading before I forget what the first 14 pages were about and generally trying to better myself as a person and a coach so that 2016 is a successful, amazing year full of growth, learning and excellence.

Just like 2015 was.

Good luck to all of you as you reach for your new goals for 2016 - what is your New Year's Resolution?

Helen



2015 Oakhurst Show Team Results

Ocala Horse Trials				
February 6th - 8th, 2015				
Miranda Lepore	Sokit2ya	Preliminary		10th
Mark Nelson	Alex	Training		W
Leah Vrieling	Gandalf	Training		14th
Shannon Holmes	What Happens in Vegas	Training		14th
Matt Kidney	Fuzion	Novice		10th
Blair Nicol	Q & A	Novice		15th
Blair Nicol	Chasing Liberty	Novice		R

Rocking Horse Winter Horse Trials II				
February 15th & 16th, 2015				
Matt Kidney	IceMan	Intermediate		13th
Miranda Lepore	Sokit2ya	Preliminary		1st
Leah Vrieling	Gandalf	Preliminary		8th
Matt Kidney	Fuzion	Training		14th
Shannon Holmes	What Happens in Vegas	Training		15th
Blair Nicol	Chasing Liberty	Novice		20th

Rocking Horse Winter Horse Trials III				
March 1st, 2015				
Leah Vrieling	Gandalf	Preliminary		W
Shannon Holmes	What Happens in Vegas	Preliminary		W
Matt Kidney	Fuzion	Training		14th
Blair Nicol	Chasing Liberty	Novice		11th

Southern Pines Horse Trials				
March 11th, 2015				
Miranda Lepore	Sokit2ya	Preliminary		5th
Leah Vrieling	Gandalf	Training		12th
Shannon Holmes	What Happens in Vegas	Training		W
Blair Nicol	Chasing Liberty	Novice		18th
Blair Nicol	Q & A	Novice		E

Skill Builder Dressage Show at Oakhurst				
May 9th, 2015				
Zoe Richardson	Nike	CADORA Walk/Trot Test A		1st
		DC Walk/Trot Test A		1st
		<i>Pee Wee Champion</i>		
Tatum Nelson	Oh Chez	CADORA Walk/Trot Test A		2nd
		DC Walk/Trot Test A		3rd
		Dressage Equitation W/T		2nd
		<i>Pee Wee Reserve Champion</i>		



Megan Jenner	Malibu	CADORA Walk/Trot Test C		1st
		DC Walk/Trot Test B		1st
Janan Steward	Mowgli	Dressage Equitation W/T/C		3rd
		Entry #1		n/a
Barb Eamer	Black Magic	Training Level Test #1		1st
		Training Level Test #2		2nd
Jenna Mayhew	Kinsale	First Level Test #1		1st
		First Level Test #2		1st
		<i>First Level Champion Adult Amateur Reserve Champion</i>		
Kristin McLaren	Panamerra	First Level Test #1		2nd
		First Level Test #2		2nd
		<i>First Level Reserve Champion</i>		
Jackie Naida	Conquest	First Level Test #1		3rd
Devon Svoboda	Abbigael	First Level Test #1		4th
		First Level Test #2		3rd
Cheryl Denault	Bright Holiday	First Level Test #1		6th
		First Level Test #2		5th
Kieryn Davison	King Stag	Pre-Training #1		n/a
Devon Eustace	Nike	Entry #1		n/a
Leona Noble	Little Miss Snuggle Monster	Entry #1		n/a
Megan Jenner	Portia	Entry #1		n/a
Misha Wylie	Black Magic	Entry #1		n/a
Taya Davison	Nike	Entry #1		n/a
Leah Vrieling	Gandalf	FEI CCI 1* A		n/a
		Preliminary #2		n/a
Rebecca Walker	Rookie	Entry #1		n/a
		Entry #2		n/a
Kristina Toppari	Top Gun	Pre-Training #1		n/a
		Pre-Training #2		n/a

Upper Canada Derby at Oakhurst May 10th, 2015				
Alexa Bresnahan	Duke	X Poles		2nd
Tatum Nelson	Nike	X Poles		4th
Megan Jenner	Malibu Barbie	X Poles		5th
Jenna Mayhew	Kinsale	2'0" Match the Clock		3rd
Alexa Bresnahan	Duke	2'0" Match the Clock		5th
Jenna Mayhew	Kinsale	2'3" Match the Clock		1st
Janan Steward	Mowgli	2'3" Match the Clock		3rd
Janan Steward	Mowgli	2'6" Short Track		1st
Chelsea Arden	The Sky's The Limit	2'6" Short Track		3rd
Chelsea Arden	The Sky's The Limit	2'9" Long Track		1st
Emma Richardson	Knight in a Jag	2'9" Long Track		4th



Kristina Toppari	Top Gun	3'0" Short Track		4th
Blair Nicol	Africa	3'0" Long Track		1st
Kristina Toppari	Top Gun	3'0" Long Track		2nd
Jackie Naida	Conquest	3'3" Short Track		2nd
Jackie Naida	Conquest	3'3" Long Track		4th
Zoe Richardson	Nike			
Kieryn Davison	King Stag			
Devon Eustace	Nike			
Heather Leclerc	Lollipop			
Megan Jenner	Portia			
Michaela Robinson	Devil's Advocate			
Taya Davison	Little Miss Snuggle Monster			
Devon Svoboda	Abbigael			
Leah Vrieling	Gandalf			
Rebecca Walker	Rookie			
Blair Nicol	Q & A			

Grandview Horse Trials May 23rd & 24th, 2015				
Shannon Holmes	What Happens in Vegas	Training		17th
Leah Vrieling	Gandalf	Pre-Training		20th
Mark Nelson	Danny	Pre-Training		19th
Blair Nicol	Chasing Liberty	Pre-Training		9th
Devon Svoboda	Abbigael	Pre-Training		8th
Rebecca Walker	Rookie	Entry		2nd
Misha Wylie	Black Magic	Entry		6th

Mountain Star Rising Star Silver Dressage Show May 23rd, 2015				
Jenna Mayhew	Kinsale	First Level Test #1	66.60%	1st
		First Level Test #2	69.21%	1st
		<i>First Level Champion</i>		
		<i>High Point Adult Amateur</i>		
Kristin McLaren	Panamerra	Second Level Test #1	62.00%	1st
		Second Level Test #2	61.15%	2nd
		<i>Second Level Reserve Champion</i>		

Upper Canada Derby at Meadowvale May 31st, 2015				
Tatum Nelson	Nike	X Poles		4th
Taya Davison	Nike	2'6" Short Track		2nd
Janan Steward	Mowgli	2'6" Short Track		6th
Taya Davison	Nike	2'6" Long Track		5th
Emma Richardson	Knight in a Jag	2'9" Short Track		4th



Leah Vrieling	Gandalf	2'9" Short Track		6th
Chelsea Arden	The Sky's The Limit	2'9" Long Track		2nd
Kieryn Davison	King Stag	2'9" Long Track		2nd
Michaela Robinson	Devils Advocate	3'0" Short Track		4th
Michaela Robinson	Devils Advocate	3'0" Long Track		5th
Zoe Richardson	Nike			
Laura Gravelle	Yarraman			
Leona Noble	Little Miss Snuggle Monster			
Reed Wigglesworth	Pharoah			
Kristin McLaren	Panamerra			
Megan Jenner	Portia			

Eventing at the Park Horse Trials June 7th, 2015				
Rebecca Walker	Rookie	Pre-Training		6th
Devon Svoboda	Abbigael	Pre-Training		3rd
Michaela Robinson	Devil's Advocate	Pre-Training		6th
Kieryn Davison	King Stag	Entry		1st
Kristina Toppari	Top Gun	Entry		6th
Nadia Miller	Nike	Entry		8th
Emma Richardson	Knight in a Jag	Entry		RF
Cheslea Arden	The Sky's The Limit	Entry		2nd
Misha Wylie	Black Magic	Entry		9th
Laura Gravelle	Yarraman	Entry		10th
Janan Steward	Mowgli	Pre-Entry		9th
Leona Noble	Little Miss Snuggle Monster	Pre-Entry		E
Megan Jenner	Portia	Pre-Entry		8th

Little Bromont Horse Trials June 13th & 14th, 2015				
Leah Vrieling	Gandalf	Training		21st
Blair Nicol	Chasing Liberty	Pre-Training		6th
Devon Svoboda	Abbigael	Pre-Training		15th
Emma Richardson	Knight in a Jag	Entry		W
Laura Gravelle	Yarraman	Entry		4th
Kenzi Mitchell	Top Gun	Entry		E

OEF Skill Builder Dressage Show at Numech June 20th, 2015				
Tatum Nelson	Oh Chez	W/T Test A - New Rider	56.66%	1st
		W/T Test C - New Rider	58.63%	3rd
		W/T Equitation	PW	3rd
		<i>Walk Trot Rider Pee Wee Reserve Champion</i>		
		<i>Pee Wee Reserve Champion</i>		



Zoe Richardson	Nike	W/T Test A - New Rider	52.85%	4th
		W/T Test C - New Rider	67.72%	1st
		W/T Equitation	PW	2nd
		<i>Walk Trot Rider Pee Wee Champion</i>		
		<i>Pee Wee Champion</i>		
Megan Jenner	Malibu Barbie	W/T Test A - New Horse	69.52%	1st
		W/T Test C - New Horse	64.54%	2nd
		W/T Equitation	Open	1st
		<i>Walk Trot Green Horse Reserve Champion</i>		
Cheryl Denault	Bright Holiday	First Level Test #1	60.00%	1st
		First Level Test #2	62.96%	2nd
		<i>First Level Champion</i>		

Touch A Rainbow HT				
June 21st, 2015				
Laura Gravelle	Yarraman	Pre-Training		1st
Rebecca Walker	Rookie	Pre-Training		3rd
Kieryn Davison	King Stag	Pre-Training		4th
Kristina Toppari	Top Gun	Pre-Training		5th
Blair Nicol	Q & A	Pre-Training		E
Chelsea Arden	The Sky's the Limit	Entry		1st
Megan Jenner	Portia	Entry		10th
Kristin McLaren	Panamerra	Entry		W
Devon Eustace	Nike	Pre-Entry		11th
Leona Noble	Little Miss Snuggle Monster	Pre-Entry		E
Janan Steward	Mowgli	Pre-Entry		E

Dewmont Silver Dressage Show				
June 27th, 2015				
Kristin McLaren	Panamerra	2nd Level Test #1	63.48%	1st
		2nd Level Test #2	60.83%	1st
		<i>Second Level Test #1 Champion</i>		
		<i>Second Level Test #2 Champion</i>		
Jenna Mayhew	Kinsale	1st Level Test #1	63.33%	3rd
		1st Level Test #2	67.81%	1st
		<i>First Level Test #2 Champion</i>		
Cheryl Denault	Bright Holliday	1st Level Test #1	55.74%	5th
		1st Level Test #2	61.72%	5th
Devon Svoboda	Abbigael	1st Level Test #1	64.44%	2nd
		1st Level Test #2	62.03%	4th
		<i>First Level Test #1 Reserve Champion</i>		
Barb Eamer	Black Magic	Training Level Test #1	61.90%	TE
		Training Level Test #2	62.88%	2nd
		<i>Training Level Test #2 Reserve Champion</i>		



Upper Canada Derby at Meadowvale July 5th, 2015				
Tatum Nelson	Nike	X Poles		4th
Zoe Richardson	Nike	X Poles		
Emma Richardson	Knight in a Jag	2'6" Short Track		5th
Megan Jenner	Portia	2'6" Short Track		
Emma Richardson	Knight in a Jag	2'6" Long Track		4th
Megan Jenner	Portia	2'6" Long Track		
Alexa Bresnahan	Aragon	2'9" Short Track		2nd
Misha Wylie	Black Magic	2'9" Short Track		3rd
Colleen Richardson	Jamby	2'9" Short Track		
Misha Wylie	Black Magic	2'9" Long Track		6th
Alexa Bresnahan	Aragon	2'9" Long Track		
Colleen Richardson	Jamby	2'9" Long Track		
Colleen Richardson	Jamby	3'0" Long Track		

Tandalee Horse Trials July 11th & 12th, 2015				
Devon Svoboda	Abbigael	Training		9th
Shannon Holmes	What Happens In Vegas	Training		12th
Blair Nicol	Chasing Liberty	Training		E
Alexa Bresnahan	Aragon	Pre-Training		3rd
Rebecca Walker	Rookie	Pre-Training		6th
Kieryn Davison	King Stag	Pre-Training		RF
Laura Gravelle	Yarraman	Pre-Training		6th
Darby Delle Donne	Silver Lining	Pre-Training		11th
Misha Wylie	Black Magic	Pre-Training		12th
Chelsea Arden	The Sky's The Limit	Pre-Training		RF
Kenzi Mitchell	Top Gun	Entry		8th

Numech Silver Dressage Show July 19th, 2015				
Kristin McLaren	Panamerra	Second Level Test #2	62.31%	1st
		Third Level Test #1	62.12%	1st

Starlit Farm Silver Dressage Show July 25th, 2015				
Cindy Moore	Gemini	Training Level Test #1	60.65%	2nd
		Training Level Test #2	63.46%	3rd
Barb Eamer	Black Magic	Training Level Test #2	62.50%	4th
		Training Level Test #3	63.18%	1st
Devon Svoboda	Abbigael	First Level Test #1	61.85%	2nd
		First Level Test #2	63.28%	3rd
Cheryl Denault	Bright Holiday	First Level Test #2	61.71%	5th
		First Level Test #3	59.12%	5th



Jenna Mayhew	Kinsale	First Level Test #2	67.34%	1st
		First Level Test #3	68.09%	1st
Kristin McLaren	Panamerra	Second Level Test #3	66.95%	1st
		Third Level Test #1	62.73%	1st

Grandview Horse Trials July 25th & 26th, 2015				
Shannon Holmes	What Happens In Vegas	Preliminary		12th
Becky Allen	Da Vinci	Training		7th
Michaela Robinson	Devil's Advocate	Training		13th
Chelsea Arden	The Sky's The Limit	Pre-Training		2nd
Laura Gravelle	Yarraman	Pre-Training		3rd

Oakhurst Horse Trials August 2nd, 2015				
Shannon Holmes	What Happens in Vegas	Preliminary		R
Michaela Robinson	Devil's Advocate	Training		1st
Becky Allen	Da Vinci	Training		8th
Devon Svoboda	Abbigael	Training		14th
Blair Nicol	Chasing Liberty	Training		E
Darby Delle Donne	Silver Lining	Pre-Training		2nd
Laura Gravelle	Yarraman	Pre-Training		5th
Chelsea Arden	The Sky's The Limit	Pre-Training		6th
Misha Wylie	Black Magic	Pre-Training		8th
Colleen Richardson	We Be Jammin'	Pre-Training		9th
Kieryn Davison	King Stag	Pre-Training		3rd
Alexa Bresnahan	Aragon	Pre-Training		5th
Kenzi Mitchell	Top Gun	Pre-Training		7th
Rebecca Walker	Rookie	Pre-Training		8th
Megan Jenner	Portia	Entry		8th
Reed Wigglesworth	Pharoah	Entry		3rd
Miranda Lepore	The Duke	Pre-Entry		4th
Jenna Mayhew	Kinsale	Pre-Entry		6th
Megan Jenner	Malibu Barbie	Pre-Entry		E
Taya Davison	Nike	Pre-Entry		3rd
Janan Steward	Mowgli	Pre-Entry		5th

Harmony Horse Trials August 8th & 9th, 2015				
Alexa Bresnahan	Aragon	Training Junior		4th
Darby Delle Donne	Silver Lining	Training Senior		6th
Blair Nicol	Chasing Liberty	Training Senior		E
Devon Svoboda	Abbigael	Training Senior		RF
Laura Gravelle	Yarraman	Pre-Training Senior		5th
Kieryn Davison	King Stag	Pre-Training Junior		2nd



Laurence Montreuil	Zack Attack	Pre-Training Junior		7th
Kenzi Mitchell	Top Gun	Pre-Training Junior		8th
Rebecca Walker	Rookie	Pre-Training Junior		10th
Jenna Mayhew	Kinsale	Pre-Entry		2nd
Kristin McLaren	Panamerra	Pre-Entry		7th
Miranda Lepore	The Duke	Pre-Entry		8th
Andrew Morris	Kemosabe	Pre-Entry		10th
Taya Davison	Nike	Pre-Entry		11th
Janan Steward	Mowgli	Pre-Entry		E

Stevens Creek Horse Trials				
August 16th, 2015				
Becky Allen	Da Vinci	Training		E
Kristina Toppari	Top Gun	Pre-Training		6th
Janan Steward	Mowgli	Pre-Entry		RF

Robinson Farm Horse Trials #2				
August 22nd & 23rd, 2015				
Shannon Holmes	What Happens in Vegas	Preliminary		R
Alexa Bresnahan	Aragon	Training		4th
Darby Delle Donne	Silver Lining	Training		3rd
Michaela Robinson	Devil's Advocate	Training		4th
Laura Gravelle	Yarraman	Training		6th
Blair Nicol	Chasing Liberty	Training		10th
Chelsea Arden	The Sky's The Limit	Training		E
Rebecca Walker	Rookie	Pre-Training		5th
Kristina Toppari	Top Gun	Pre-Training		6th
Jenna Mayhew	Kinsale	Pre-Entry		2nd

Upper Canada Derby at Oakhurst				
August 29th, 2015				
Tatum Nelson	Knight in a Jag	X Poles		2nd
Rebecca Walker	Amera	X Poles		3rd
Becky Allen	Torquay	X Poles		4th
Zoe Richardson	Nike	X Poles		5th
Zoe Richardson	Nike	2ft Match the Clock		1st
Tatum Nelson	Knight in a Jag	2ft Match the Clock		4th
Tatum Nelson	Knight in a Jag	2'3" Long Track		1st
Rebecca Walker	Amera	2'3" Long Track		4th
Janan Steward	Mowgli	2'6" Short Track		1st
Miranda Lepore	The Duke	2'6" Long Track		4th
Becky Allen	Torquay	2'6" Long Track		5th
Reed Wigglesworth	Pharoah	2'9" Short Track		1st
Emma Richardson	Sokit2ya	2'9" Short Track		3rd
Megan Jenner	Portia	2'9" Short Track		4th



Emma Richardson	Sokit2ya	2'9" Long Track		2nd
Reed Wigglesworth	Pharoah	2'9" Long Track		3rd
<i>Reed Wigglesworth & Pharoah - Entry Level Reserve Champion</i>				
Megan Jenner	Portia	2'9" Long Track		5th
Kenzi Mitchell	Top Gun	3'0" Short Track		2nd
Kristina Toppari	Top Gun	3'0" Short Track		3rd
Rebecca Walker	Rookie	3'0" Short Track		4th
Kenzi Mitchell	Top Gun	3'0" Long Track		2nd
<i>Kenzi Mitchell & Top Gun - Pre-Training Level Reserve Champion</i>				
Rebecca Walker	Rookie	3'0" Long Track		3rd
Kristina Toppari	Top Gun	3'3" Short Track		1st
Chelsea Arden	The Sky's The Limit	3'3" Short Track		2nd
Alexa Bresnahan	Aragon	3'3" Short Track		3rd
Michaela Robinson	Devil's Advocate	3'3" Short Track		4th
Chelsea Arden	The Sky's The Limit	3'3" Long Track		1st
<i>Chelsea Arden & The Sky's The Limit - Training Level Reserve Champion</i>				
Alexa Bresnahan	Aragon	3'3" Long Track		2nd
<i>Alexa Bresnahan & Aragon - Training Level Reserve Champion</i>				
Becky Allen	Da Vinci	3'3" Long Track		3rd
Sarah Catt	Drummore Bay	3'3" Long Track		4th

Oakhurst Silver Dressage Show				
August 30th, 2015				
Kristin McLaren	Panamerra	3rd Level Test #2	60.51%	1st
		3rd Level Test #3	65.64%	1st
		<i>Third Level Reserve Champion</i>		
Jenna Mayhew	Kinsale	1st Level Test #2	68.90%	1st
		1st Level Test #3	67.35%	1st
		<i>First Level Champion</i>		
		<i>Adult Amateur Reserve Champion</i>		
Emma Richardson	Sokit2ya	Training Level Test #2	62.50%	4th
		Training Level Test #3	66.36%	2nd
		<i>Junior Reserve Champion</i>		
Alexa Bresnahan	Aragon	Training Level Test #2	63.46%	2nd
		Training Level Test #3	62.72%	4th
Cindy Moore	Gemini	Training Level Test #2	65.38%	3rd
		Training Level Test #3	61.13%	5th
Barb Eamer	Black Magic	Training Level Test #2	62.69%	5th
		Training Level Test #3	62.27%	3rd



OEF Skill Builder Dressage Show at Meadowvale September 6th, 2015				
Megan Jenner	Malibu Barbie	W/T Test A - New Horse	64.76%	
		W/T Test C - New Horse	59.20%	
Zoe Richardson	Nike	W/T Test A - New Rider	53.25%	
		W/T Test C - New Rider	54.73%	

Silver Dressage Championships at Oakhurst September 12th, 2015					
Kristin McLaren	Panamerra	3rd Level Test #2	61.15%	1st	
		3rd Level Test #3	59.23%	2nd	
		<i>3rd Level Overall Champion</i>			
		<i>3rd Level Adult Amateur Champion</i>			
Jenna Mayhew	Kinsale	1st Level Test #2	61.25%	6th	
		1st Level Test #3	73.82%	1st	
		<i>1st Level Adult Amateur Reserve Champion</i>			
Devon Svoboda	Abbigael	1st Level Test #2	62.50%	5th	
		1st Level Test #3	62.50%	6th	
Cindy Moore	Gemini	Training Level Test #2	64.42%	5th	
		Training Level Test #3	63.18%	3rd	
Barb Eamer	Black Magic	Training Level Test #2	63.65%	6th	
		Training Level Test #3	58.40%	7th	

Eventing at the Park Horse Trials September 13th, 2015				
Blair Nicol	Chasing Liberty	Training	All withdrew due to weather	
Devon Svoboda	Abbigael	Training		
Alexa Bresnahan	Aragon	Training		
Sarah Catt	Drummore Bay	Training		
Becky Allen	Da Vinci	Training		
Kenzi Mitchell	Top Gun	Pre-Training		
Rebecca Walker	Rookie	Pre-Training		
Misha Wylie	Black Magic	Pre-Training		
Megan Jenner	Portia	Entry		
Miranda Lepore	The Duke	Entry		
Becky Allen	Tory	Pre-Entry		
Jenna Mayhew	Kinsale	Pre-Entry		
Janan Steward	Mowgli	Pre-Entry		
Devon Eustace	Nike	Pre-Entry		



Canadian Inter-Provincial Equestrian Championships September 24th - 27th, 2015				
Jenna Mayhew	Kinsale	1st Level Test #2	65.46%	4th
		1st Level Test #3	68.60%	2nd
		1st Level Test #3	67.72%	2nd
		<i>Individual Silver Medalist</i>		
		<i>Gold Medal - Team Ontario Dressage</i>		
		<i>Overall Silver Medal - Team Ontario</i>		

Grandview Horse Trials October 3rd, 2015				
Alexa Bresnahan	Aragon	Training		2nd
Darby Delle Donne	Silver Lining	Training		3rd
Devon Svoboda	Abbigael	Training		7th
Emma Richardson	Sokit2ya	Pre-Training		4th
Rebecca Walker	Rookie	Pre-Training		RF
Miranda Lepore	The Duke	Entry		7th
Megan Jenner	Portia	Entry		7th
Jenna Mayhew	Kinsale	Entry		W

Midsouth Team Challenge October 22nd - 25th, 2015				
Alexa Bresnahan	Aragon	Training		R
Marie-Eve Denis Bordeleau	Fire Diamond	Training		13th
Darby Delle Donne	Silver Lining	Training		21st
Emma McLauren	Caleb	Novice		3rd
Rebecca Walker	Rookie	Novice		17th

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