

Story By: Tina Delish - Sports Life Magazine

Photos By Lindsey Long Equine Photography

The Untold Story In The Equestrian Industry

When one investigates the Equestrian Sport, most times we immediately think of a day at the races. When you're the rider it takes on an entirely different meaning. The Equestrian world has sought its place in the sports world and after so much time it's finally getting noticed just a little bit more every day by the enthusiasm of those that watch, and the tears and joy by those participating in the sport. It's no secret that the world of Equine sport lovers and participants know that the work involved is not only commitment but a deep awe at the beautiful animals and their amazing riders. One such rider is 19-year-old Amanda Gomez. Amanda started riding seriously at the tender age of just 4 years old. The daughter of Garrett Gomez who also rode in the Kentucky Derby and Pam Gomez who is not only a seasoned show jumper herself but an amazing trainer who has been training Amanda since she was young. Coming from such a background, it is no wonder this amazing girl with so much talent and drive would go on to win in this year's Grand prix.

When little girls everywhere were begging their parents for a pony, little Amanda was training on one. You can hear in her voice how happy she is to have accomplished so much and the excitement of knowing there is still so much more she will be able to achieve. To see such enthusiasm and joy in a child is one of life's greatest treasures, but when that child takes that enthusiasm and turns it into a passion it's nothing short of her proud parents watching as that child takes the reigns head on and with persistence and drive turns her dreams of competitive show jumping into a reality that many tried deterring her from. I spoke with Amanda briefly on her recent Grand prix win and as she put it *"It was a tear-filled moment and such a joyous occasion"* She also stated that the venue and the crowds were just so amazing, and she is looking forward to many more. The

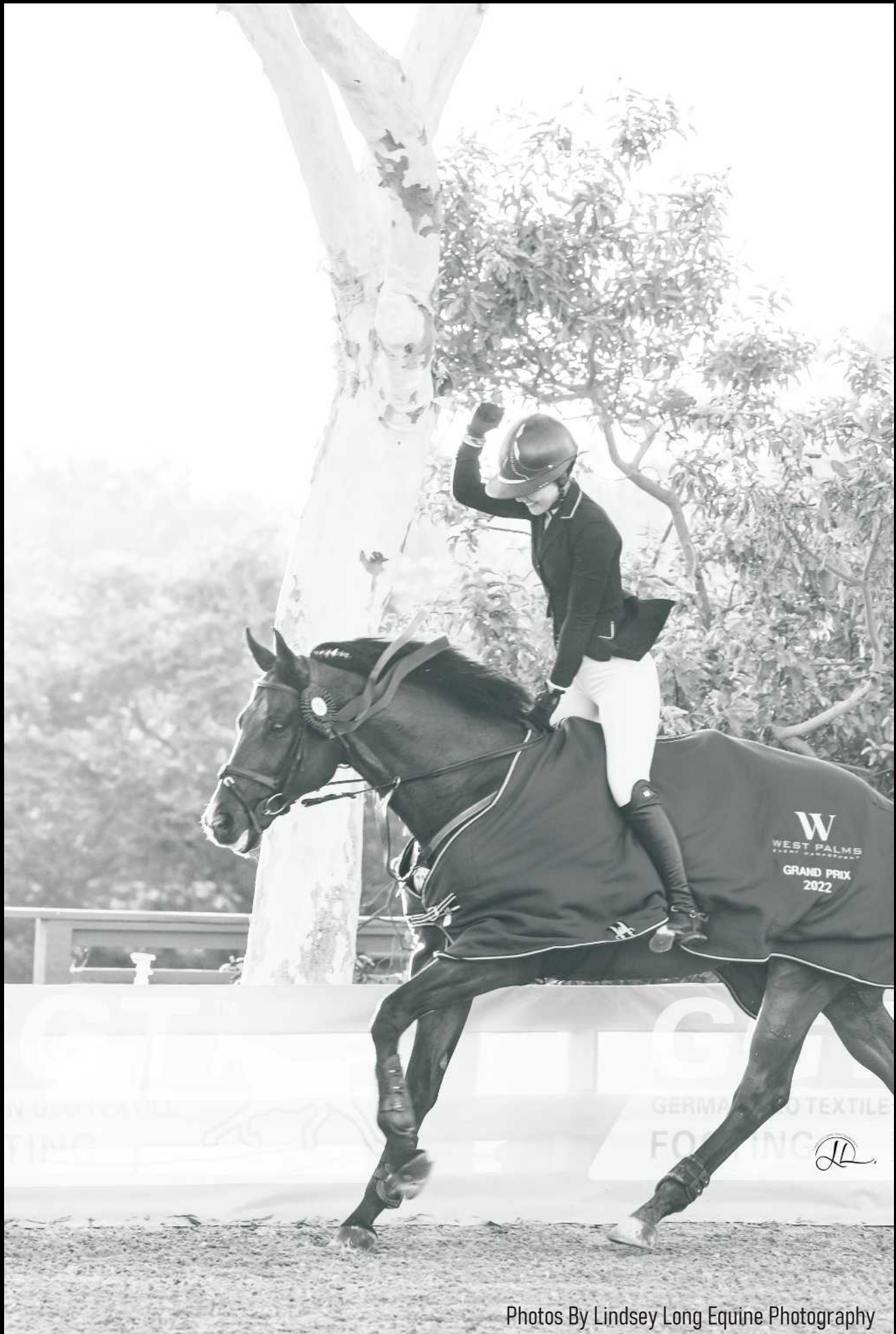
Experience of a lifetime, but with Amanda's skills it's a sure bet this is just a taste of what is yet to come. Amanda Gomez was born into this industry, where mom and dad met on the racetrack and history was made. Being able to ride these beautiful animals and in a sense as their second career and really show what they are capable of in a different part of the Horse world as show jumpers, is a meaningful moment. You just love what you do, and you love your animals. One thing that spoke volumes was how important the happiness and health of her horses are.

It's not just the passion of what you love, or the excitement of another competition. It is engaging with your animals, it's making sure they have the best life, are happy, well taken care of and loved that makes the biggest impact. When you have a happy horse then the work and the drive just make it that more intense. The bonds are powerful, and the memories are forever.

Amanda says it isn't easy, and it's hard work. But work that is well worth it when you love it so much. I could hear how passionate she was about what she does, and how blessed too. It's a tough industry without the financial backing Amanda stated, but where there is a will there's a way, and no matter what anyone says, just put your mind to it, and go for the end goal. I loved that last comment she made.

"The End Goal". Well, I don't see an end in sight for this bright and talented young lady. This is just the beginning of seeing more of Amanda Gomez in future competitions and I don't foresee her slowing down any time soon.

Congratulations Amanda, and We look forward to seeing much more from you and sharing the excitement of your future wins.



Photos By Lindsey Long Equine Photography





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WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS FOR THESE EQUESTRIANS

After the event at Hansen Dam Equestrian Center, Sports Life had the opportunity to interview a few of the younger competitors in the show jumping event. Although people frequently see Show Jumping and Dressage as an “Elite” sport, and the competitors as privileged or wealthy, we were pleasantly surprised to speak with three young ladies who epitomize a down to earth “Get Up and Go” attitude, Devynn Sibly 23, from Upland, California, Jocelyne Reiche, 16, from Beaumont, California and Madison Hanneman from Norco, 16.

These young ladies all have to fund their training and competition, because it can be expensive just to show up and ride, let’s not even talk about the entry fees to compete. Feed, housing, Veterinary care, transportation, etc. Show Jumping takes lots of regular practice, you don’t just arrive and start clearing the hurdles! There is a lot more to it than that. Not only do the riders need practice to improve, but their mounts do as well! Although many people think that you can just use any horse, the reality is that there is more to it than just buying what are commonly referred to as “Thoroughbreds”. Although there have been notable exceptions, most competitors train and use what are referred to as “Warmblood” types such as Oldenburg, Selle Francais, Hanoverian or Irish Sport horses. Yes, there are those who simply ask “Daddy, I need a new Selle Francais Filly”, and expect to get it, the real truth is that while some of the riders get a bit of help from parents and Grandparents, the vast majority like Devynn Sibly, shovel out corrals and groom other people’s horses to pay for the “Room and board” for their horses.

When I asked whether she intended to make this a long-term occupation, her response was “This is something that I am trying to get my foot in the door, I have a 2 year-old filly, that I bred myself, that I am getting ready to break in and bring her up”. That is kind of my long-term goal, I would like to train horses, and maybe train some people as well”. When asked about her current horse she replied that “Her current horse is an “Off the track thoroughbred” which seems to be a common theme, but that her “new filly is an Oldenburg”. Like Devynn, Madison & Jocelyne stated “I too intend to make this a permanent living.

Madison is training and riding multiple horses a day for her trainer (Rising Star Equestrian). Devynn is a working student, working at a veterinarian clinic.



Story by: Richard Haight - Sports Life Magazine
Photo by: Chuck Null - Sports Life Magazine

Talk about commitment, Madison also washes cars for one of her mother's clients. She goes on to state "I am doing everything I can to get as much experience as I can. I am trying to get as many show miles as I can, so I can progress". "Hopefully one day I can do Grand Prix's, the meter 30's and meter 40's".

When I asked what that meant, I found out that Show jumping is progressive. You don't simply start off sailing gracefully over those jumps we all see at the Olympics. Riders like Madison, Jocelyne and Devynn jump over lower bars or "Fences" set at a "Meter" and progress up from a 1.10 meter to as high as 1.60 meters or 5.3 feet high obstacles that we see on televised events like the Olympics.

When asked, all three ladies, Jocelyne, Devynn and Madison clearly had Olympic competition or the F.E.I. Grands Prix as their ultimate goal. They all said "We all have to start somewhere" (the lower obstacles). All of the ladies explained how the lay-out of the arena changes from event to event, and how there are many different classes. Jocelyn explained that while she tries "to compete about once a month, but is trying to compete more often as she wants to accumulate enough "Points" to be able to be able to qualify for higher level events towards the end of the year".

Overall, I was impressed by the level of commitment, both in time and effort, and how they were willing and eager to put in the work necessary both to raise their skills and to pay for the fees, training and other expenses necessary to advance in this highly competitive sport. Or, in other words "You go girls"! Future Olympians all!



Jocelyne Reiche



Devynn Sibley



Equestrian Ar

Madison Hanneman



