



PICTURED: Amy Collinson - GIFTED 11 - Young Rider of the Year 2010

Living the dream...

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Nineteen year old show jumper Amy Collinson is one of New Zealand's most promising up and coming stars. Show Circuit caught up with her to chat about her successes so far and her dreams for the future...

SHOW/CIRCUIT: When did you first get into show jumping?

Amy Collinson: 'I started out in the Show Hunter ring, but I soon discovered show jumping and found that I absolutely loved it. My first coach was Des Lowe; he was really great to start out with.'

To be honest, my career in the pony ring wasn't that great...it wasn't until I got my first hack Garry Arthur, three seasons ago, that things took a turn for the better. He was absolutely amazing. He was an 18-year-old grand prix schoolmaster and took me from being very average on ponies up to 1.15m to jumping 1.35m in the hack ring. I haven't looked back since then.

SHOW/CIRCUIT: Which horses are you competing at the moment?

Amy Collinson: I have Gifted II, an 11 years old, 16.1hh bay mare that I bought about a year ago. She has a great temperament and just loves to do her job! She is bred really nicely, being out of a Voltaire mare and by top show jumping stallion Mermus R.

Mighty Ambassador, known as Paxle at home, is my other horse, bought from Karen Teague in 2008. He's a nine year old dark bay gelding by Mighty Heights. He has inherited his sire's uncomplicated,

laid back temperament which makes him a joy to handle and compete. I've owned Paxle for two seasons now, and I'm really pleased with the progress we have made during that time. He was a perfect second hack as he is super honest but needs a bit of motivating; he has taught me an awful lot.

SHOW/CIRCUIT: How did the 2009/10 competition season go?

Amy Collinson: It went pretty well. It was my first season on my Gifted II, so we had a few rounds in the 1.10m classes to get to know each other. We finished the season jumping the 1.35m class at Horse of the Year for one time fault, which I was pretty pleased with! We also won the one star Toyota Young Rider class at the Larsen Sawmilling Equestrian Championships in Gisborne earlier this year and were fourth in the grand prix at the Waikato Equestrian centre show. I also had a great season on Paxle; I competed him up to 1.25m, and I am really starting to click with him. He started off well at Horse of the Year, but unfortunately he injured himself in the yards so I couldn't ride him for the rest of the show.

SHOW/CIRCUIT: Do you have a particular training or fitness regime when you're preparing your horses for a new competition season?

Amy Collinson: The horses always have around five weeks off after the Horse of the Year Show, to give them a well-deserved break. After that, they are brought back into work slowly. For the first few weeks we do a little bit of schooling each day and a lot of walking. It's mainly arena work as we live quite close to town, but I do try to get some road work in when I can – usually when I can grab hold of someone else to ride out with me.

Along with getting them fit, I also like to do plenty of dressage training over winter. It really gets them listening to me more, makes them softer and keeps them between my hand and leg. I didn't realise how important flatwork is to show jumping until I moved on to the horses – it wasn't something I did a lot of with the ponies. It has made a massive improvement to how my horses travel around a course.

When the horses are fit enough, we start introducing some jump training. I like to do lots of grids and bounces to sharpen them up.

SHOW/CIRCUIT: Do you have a mentor or trainer who has inspired you over the years? Is there anyone who helps you with your riding?

Amy Collinson: I work with Penny Stevenson for show jumping and Charlott Bayliss for dressage. They are both very talented riders and great instructors. I have a great deal of respect for them and have learnt so much. I also had a great deal of help from Phillip and Sally Steiner and Alex and Danielle De Luca Oliveira in the early days.

My parents are also 100% supportive, which I'm incredibly grateful for. They have learned a lot since the early days when I was begging for a pony! They both come to the shows to watch, and dad drives the truck. I wouldn't be where I am today without them on board.

SHOW/CIRCUIT: What are your plans for the season?

Amy Collinson: I'm planning on doing the young rider series with both Gifted and Mighty Ambassador this year. I'm feeling pretty positive and looking forward to seeing just how much we can improve on last year.

SHOW/CIRCUIT: Do you think New Zealand has a chance of winning a medal in the 2012 Olympics? Is there anyone you have your eye on?

Amy Collinson: I think Samantha McIntosh could be in with a chance of walking away with a medal. She's an extremely talented rider and has a great string of horses.

SHOW/CIRCUIT: What do you think it takes to be a top show jumping rider? Do you think it's possible to reach the dizzy heights of show jumping fame without basing yourself overseas?

Amy Collinson: I think it definitely takes a lot of hard work, determination, patience and a rather large pinch of luck! I think it is possible to do well if you're based in New Zealand, as people like Katie McVean have shown, but I do think it's a lot easier if you are based overseas.'

'The world's top riders and horses are in Europe and North America. If you want to succeed at the highest levels, I think you have to move eventually, simply so you can benefit from competing in the main international competitions against riders who will really push you to the limits of your ability.'

SHOW/CIRCUIT: Are there any pieces of equestrian equipment that you can't live without?

Amy Collinson: It would have to be my CWD saddles. They are just so nice to ride in and fit the horses really well.

SHOW/CIRCUIT: What are your long term goals?

Amy Collinson: My ultimate goal is to ride in World Cup classes overseas and to represent New Zealand at international competitions like WEG and the Olympics. I'm currently studying a Bachelor of Management at Waikato University so I have some skills to fall back on, but I would love to pursue show jumping as a fulltime career... that is my dream.

PICTURED: Amy Collinson - MIGHTY AMBASSADOR.

