



CAROLINE PARKES GOING THE MILES TO SHOW JUMP

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Twenty-one-year-old Caroline Parkes from Tolaga Bay, on the East Coast of New Zealand, faces more than a lot of us before she even gets to an event as her 'local' show (Gisborne) is one and a half hours in the truck from home and anything other than that, the drive is at least three to five hours away.

Caroline has just completed a Bachelor of Applied Science Degree, majoring in Agriculture, at Massey University in Palmerston North. It was a three-year degree and she will graduate in May next year if all goes well. She is currently riding her horses and working on the family's 3000-acre sheep and beef farm helping Dad (Murray). Caroline is the eldest child with two brothers Ben (20) and Sam (15).

Caroline says she has, "been around horses all my life. Mum used to event when I was young and I basically got into horses because of her. Mum's whole family (the Mossman's) are a well-known horse family in Gisborne, so it was inevitable that I would be into horses also. We have farm hacks that we use on the farm, so was always exposed to horses from a young age. When I was three years old, I would go to work with Dad on his hack and sit at the front of the saddle - loved that! My first pony was called *Mushroom*, a little 12hh grey pony I got when I was four. We would hoon around home and went to work (on the farm with Dad) - the first time on the lead rein when I was four years old also.

Have had a few ponies in my time. When I was still in the Novelty Ring at local Gisborne Sports Days, I would get bored waiting for the games to start so I would just go of on my own little tangent and jump all the jumps in the ring. I was quite naughty like that when I was young. I just loved jumping my ponies.

My first coach was a well-known NZ Pony Club stalwart in Valerie Bruce and she helped me a lot when I was younger and involved with Pony Club and eventing. I started Pony Club when I was five years old as a member of the East Coast Pony Club - loved that and had heaps of fun."

Caroline went to the North Island Pony Club Show Jumping Championships in Cambridge when she was just ten years old on her first really good pony *Eclipse*. She says that these champs

were "always a highlight as a young kid, Gisborne did really well in the years that I was in the team and we won in 1997. Also did PC Area Trials on *Eclipse* and went to the NZ PC Eventing Championships in Te Teko when I was ten years old as the youngest by far in the DC section. Unfortunately, my pony was slightly ill during the competition, so I didn't go that great. *Eclipse* was a 14hh chestnut mare that my grandfather bred in Gisborne. She has just retired having been ridden by young children in Cambridge right up until a few months ago. She would be 19 years now.

Eclipse and I jumped to Grand Prix. I got her when I was eight years and did my first Grand Prix when I was twelve years old. We were successful and became members of the NZ International Children's Challenge Team in 2001. Also members the next year but *Eclipse* got colic and we couldn't attend.

My first hack was *Irish Decent*, a 16.2hh bay mare by Kingsway Diamond purchased from Lloyd Worthington in Auckland when I was fifteen. Des Lowe, my coach since I was eight years old, helped me find her and we had heaps of successes. We bought her as a

six year old and she took me from 1.10m to Young Riders in one season. I got off ponies when I was fifteen as just got too tall. With *Irish Decent* I had many young rider placings and show jumped up to 1.30m. She was also a successful show hunter horse and got third in Show Hunter Horse of the Year in 2006. In 2003 was a member of the NZ PSI World Challenge Team on *Irish Decent*. She really put me on the map."

Caroline's best horse to date is *Bush Magic*, who was purchased in 2005, when Caroline was seventeen. This combination are now prolific winners including the 2008 National Grand Prix Championship at the National SJ Champs in Christchurch and runner up National Young Rider Champ at the same show. Won the Toyota Young Rider Series in 2007-2008 season and were 2006 Speed Horse of the Year at the Kelt Capital Horse of the Year Show plus many 3* Young Rider wins and many Grand Prix placings up to 2*. 'Magic' was Caroline's mount when securing her naming in the NZ Young Rider Trans Tasman teams in 2008 and 2009. *Bush Magic* was purchased from Lisa Coupe of Kumeu, who



had a lot of success in YR also.

Caroline says, "my biggest achievements would definitely have to be winning the National 1* Grand Prix Championship at Nationals in 2008 on *Bush Magic* and winning the Young Rider Series in the same season (2007-08). It was a dream season, I couldn't have asked for better. I won most of the major 3* YR in that season and *Bush Magic* was on form the whole time. Being selected for NZ Young Rider teams is also very special - I love being in teams and representing NZ -

especially in Australia - it makes it so much more exciting. Have been with the NZ YR SJ Team to Toowoomba, Australia twice - 2008 and 09. They have been great, had a mixed talent of horses but have met some really neat Aussies from those trips. All in all, they're fun trips. I have also been awarded a Massey University Blue Award in 2008 and 2009, they are very special also - it is such an honour."

Caroline is a very keen sportsperson and plays hockey in the winter and last year also played women's rugby for Massey University. She follows rugby, loves water skiing and the farming life. "I have my own farm dog called *Jade* so, in the Uni holidays, I love helping Dad on the farm mustering with the horses. All of my horses do stock work and it's really helpful to keep them fit and is something different for the show jumpers. We don't have an arena at home as there is simply no area for a decent sized one close to the house as our farm is medium to steep hill country. So I don't have the luxury of schooling my horses in a nice railed arena, I mainly work them on farm tracks and on the hills but I find it is really good for them and you can still school them and get them nice and rounded. However we do have jumps set up on a small flat paddock - I am not a total hillbilly!!!"

Caroline's current horses are *Bush Magic* the fifteen year old grey Gisborne bred gelding, bred by Billy Maaka, that show jumps to 1* Grand Prix (1.35m). *Ngahiwi Style* is a five-year-old bay Bruce Holden bred mare that is show jumping well at 1.10m and competing in the Five Year Old Series. There are two promising coloured four year old geldings in the paddock, one due out soon - but they are Caroline's project over the summer. Since being at University, Caroline really didn't want to over commit herself "to having heaps of horses, as it is too hard - two or three is enough!"

In 2006 Caroline had a gap year between school and University and during June and July she traveled to Canada and worked at a Hunter and Jumper Barn in Vancouver, BC. "It was awesome and I got to see some really impressive show jumpers (horses). Katie McVean was riding at Spruce Meadows at the time, so I flew over and spent a week with her and had an amazing time. She was riding *Lindberg Des Hayettes* and *Telegraph* at the show and riding for Eric Lamaze at the time - I got to meet Hickstead (individual gold medal winner in SJ at Olympics 2008). I really enjoyed myself at Spruce, I definitely want to go back and watch again. When in Canada, I flew down to USA and spent another week with Dale Pederson, show hunter judge that often comes to NZ. Went to a hunter show with him, rode a few horses at his place and saw some amazing equestrian facilities in San Diego (where he lives). Incredible! But that trip, it was great to experience horse shows in another country, it is a lot different to NZ but the same in some ways."

When asked about her future plans, Caroline replied with, "Gosh, well, where do I start?! Now that I have left Uni, I suppose I need to put my knowledge into good use! But there are plans to go overseas to work and/or travel at some stage (who knows when!!)

I'm really taking life as it comes, but it isn't easy being a student fresh out of Uni trying to find a job at the moment (with the economy slowing down which is really annoying). But I will continue riding, hopefully bring on a few nice young ones and get them through the grades. We are starting to breed a few of our own out of my old show jumper *Irish Decent*. We will hopefully put her in foal to *Lindberg Des Hayettes* after the New Year, which will be awesome."

A typical day in the life of Caroline Parkes goes as follows, "well I get up, get the horses in, feed them, come back in for breaky, go back out and ride, lunch, ride, dinner. When dad needs a hand on the farm my day can change but I typically like to help him in the afternoons and ride in the morning, as it gets too hot in the afternoon. Mondays are always sleep in (as get back from a show very late Sunday) and unpack truck etc and the horses have a rest.

Tuesday to Thursday ride or Thursday travel to show for a Friday, Saturday and Sunday show."

For the betterment of show jumping in New Zealand, Caroline would like to see "better ground surfaces so we can have consistent jumping surfaces for the whole season. It would be awesome for Show Jumping NZ to get a lot more funding so they can have more squads and squad training and have a lot more clinics going on! And ones that benefit older riders not just the young riders."

Caroline says her mentor is Des Lowe, "he has been my trainer since I was eight years old, although I don't religiously see him as he lives in Auckland and, as I am from Gisborne, it is a bit hard. But he knows my riding so well and I always seem to go better under his guidance, it is awesome! He is so helpful, and he gives me confidence. He has been encouraging throughout most of my life and is a big motivation with my riding."

Being the gracious person that she is, Caroline says, "my parents are my number one sponsors. I would not have achieved anything I have today without them, they are amazing. They are so motivational, encouraging, and supportive. Especially when I am the only one in the family that rides."