



“Slow and steady is key - too much makes them lose focus and they become bored and sour. It’s important to keep them fresh.”

INTERVIEW WITH SHOW JUMPING SUPERSTAR **KATIE MCVEAN**

WORDS: JENNIFER BOYES PHOTO: KERRY MARSHALL

Leading trainer, breeder and competitor, Katie McVean, gives an insight into what she looks for in a young horse and how to help them fulfil their potential

Show Circuit: You seem to have a consistent stream of lovely young horses coming up through the ranks. Where do you find them all?

Katie McVean: We have actually bred most of what we have. My dad, Jeff McVean, is very much into the breeding side of things. We have had a lot of luck with his World Cup horse, DUNSTAN FLOWER POWER. She’s a Brilliant Invader mare and we have had some fantastic stock out of her, including DUNSTAN DELPHI and DUNSTAN DAFFODIL, both of whom are jumping Grand Prix and World Cup. I really like that TB x Warmblood cross.

We have purchased a few along the way, including DUNSTAN ZENZEL HBC, who we imported as a four year old. He is six years old now and has recently been sold to Australia where I’m sure he’ll do exceedingly well. Last year, I was also involved with bringing six Dutch bred horses into New Zealand. Three of them were five year olds,

ready to compete and three were in-foal broodmares. Two of the mares have since had stunning fillies by the Dutch Warmblood stallion WITTINGER.

SC: What do you look for in a prospective show jumper?

KMcV: Well, when I saw DUNSTAN ZENZEL for the first time as a young horse, the qualities that stood out were the fact that he was very careful over fences and had beautiful movement. He was also very nicely put together which always helps.

It’s difficult to pinpoint the qualities of an ideal show jumper. Mine have all been so different! For example, DUNSTAN DAFFODIL is a very short, hot horse and DUNSTAN DELPHI is much taller and more laid back. The main thing is that they show carefulness over jumps and are able to get their knees up and out of the way. It is also important that they are willing and really enjoy their job.

SC: What about when you’re looking at really young horses? Is it possible to pick out a foal or yearling as being a potential top show jumper?

KMcV: It’s easy to spot a nice looking foal and there are some conformation traits which will make them more suited for show jumping and will be more resilient to wear and tear. For example, a good strong engine behind, a nice amount of bone and clean, stout hocks are desirable. However, we have had some stunning young horses that have just not turned out to be suited for high level jumping. Looking at the breeding will give you a much better idea of their potential. There are certain lines which come up time and time again in the pedigrees of our most successful show jumpers.

SC: How would you recommend introducing jump training to a young competition horse?

KMcV: I break my youngsters in as late three year olds and they come in to do a tiny bit of flatwork training. We start our jump training when the horses are four years old and give them lots of breaks to keep them fresh and focussed. The first time I jumped Dunstan Delphi she was useless but she eventually got the idea and was turned out for a while. When we brought her back in, she was so much better. It’s important not to do too much too soon with a four year old.

After they have been introduced to the jumps in that first year, they are turned out again and brought back as five year olds to do a little bit more. By the time they are seven, they are fit and mature enough to handle a whole season. When they come in as eight year olds, they are usually ready enough to do a World Cup.

Slow and steady is key - too much makes them lose focus and they become bored and sour. It’s important to keep them fresh.

SC: How can you tell whether a horse is going to make the grade or not?

KMcV: You do reach a point, fairly early on, when you know that a horse isn’t going to reach Grand Prix. They simply reach a stage where they stop improving. We’re looking for horses that are going to jump the big stuff so will usually sell horses that aren’t going to be capable of doing that. They are never wasted though. Even though a horse might not have a future at the top levels, it might be perfectly suitable for someone wanting to compete over

smaller fences or in junior classes.

SC: Do you have any up and coming show jumpers that you’re particularly excited about at the moment?

KMcV: I have a number of young horses that I’m really pleased with at the moment. I really like our 2004 imported grey gelding, DUNSTAN ZASJANY, who is by the magnificent Holsteiner stallion, CORLAND. He was started late but ended up placing second in the Six Year Old Series this year.

Our 17hh chestnut gelding, DUNSTAN SPRINGFIELD by INDOCTRO is progressing nicely. He was second in the Five Year Old Series this year. We also have a lovely five year old full sister to DUNSTAN DELPHI.

SC: Do you do much with your youngsters in the off season? What are your plans this winter?

KMcV: I always give my horses a complete break over the winter months and this year will be no different. They have all jumped this season and will enjoy a well deserved holiday. They don’t usually come back onto the yard until eight weeks before the competition season starts up again. I think it’s important to give them some time to wind down and just be horses, especially the young ones who will have had a lot to absorb over the summer. They always come back refreshed and ready to go after some time off.

This winter will be a little different. At the beginning of May, I am heading overseas with DUNSTAN DELPHI to train in Canada and to compete at Spruce Meadows, before continuing down to North America and hopefully Kentucky in October. I’m really looking forward to it and hoping it will give me the chance to refine my riding and training skills even further. It’s a fantastic opportunity.

Katie will be updating Show Circuit with a “KATIE DIARY” whilst she travels to Canada and the Olympics! We will be reporting in each issue what Katie has been up to!

F|M|R Bloodstock

Livestock Insurance Specialists

COMPREHENSIVE INSURANCE FOR YOUR EQUINE

A professional and cost effective product to cover losses of your valuable equine assets. Statistics show that it is more likely a claim will be made on horse insurance than house insurance!

EQUINE INSURANCE AT AFFORDABLE PRICES!

Liz Smith - Mobile - 021 859 216 - email: liz.smith@fmrisk.co.nz
Lance Ryan - Mobile - 021 246 0354 - email: lance.ryan@fmrisk.co.nz
Carlene Jones - Mobile - 021 750 912 - email: carlene.jones@fmrisk.co.nz

FMR Bloodstock Ltd, Xenacom Business Centre
20 Millicich Place, Cambridge 3434, New Zealand
Phone + 64 7 823 0481

