

# *KINGSLAND*

WINTER 2016

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VISITING  
HENK NOOREN STABLES

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TALKING TO JULIA

# *TOPS*

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# JULIA TOPS

## BEAUTY, BRAINS AND BALANCE

By **Jannicke Naustdal** Photo: **Jenny Abrahamsson** Make-up: **Karen Krist**

She was born into the showjumping world – her mother is Canadian showjumper Tani Zeidler, and her father Dutch Olympic gold medalist and Global Champions Tour founder Jan Tops. Yet, little has come for free for 18-year-old Julia Tops. “My parents did not want me to just fall into a career in horses because that was what everybody else was doing in my family,” Julia says. “I had to prove to them that I really wanted it.”

### THE APPLE THAT DIDN'T FALL FAR FROM THE TREE

Julia's first memory from the horse back, is sitting in front of her father's saddle being kept safe by his firm hands while hacking in the woods. “And, apparently my mum used to ride with me in a front-baby carrier,” she laughs.

It came as no surprise that – just like her parents – Julia started to ride. Starting on ponies and moving on to horses, through equitation and hunters – Julia laid down an important fundament of the very basics of riding at an early age. In 2011, at the age of thirteen she became the youngest rider to ever win the CET regional finals in Canada.

“The equitation really taught me some very important basics,” Julia tells. “It gave me the tools to see a good distance, gave me the right position, and it also taught me to be really disciplined and think about how you as a rider impact how the horses jump.”







## SCHOOL AND STABLES

For Julia, school and stables have gone hand in hand her entire life. To get to do the horses, a condition was that she was good in school.

“Both my parents, my mum specifically, believe that it is good to have balance in life – and not to be caught up to quickly in the horse world. My mum always told me to leave all my options open. So, I went to school in Calgary and would travel back and forth on the weekends to compete. But, my mum would never let me show if I did not have above a 90 % average,” Julia smiles. “Growing up, that motivated me a lot and I think it made me want to do the sport even more. It was a good way to test to see if I really wanted to do this!”

Ambitious towards both her academic and equestrian education, it has taken a lot to get where she is today. Studying international relations at the prestigious Trinity College in Toronto, where she aims to minor in contemporary Asian studies – which involves a combination of history, political science and economics – Julia has proven to both have beauty and brains, and to have what it takes for the top sport at the very same time.

Towards the final run of high school, Julia found herself with a very intensive academic load at school – “but that was the way for me to get a scholarship and to get into a top university,” she says. Juggling large amounts of school work with a hectic competition schedule was not easy, but Julia was determined not to give up. “I tried for a month without horses, but I ended up absolutely hating it,” she laughs. Finishing her full international baccalaureate diploma, Julia made

the almost impossible possible and also made it on to the Canadian young rider team for the 2015 FEI North American Championships at the same time. “That showed me that I could do both,” she smiles.

“I feel like riding has helped me a lot in school,” she reflects. “Many my age psych themselves out, or get really nervous before a big test, but I don’t – neither in riding nor school. I think that is because riding and school both foster that same kind of mental strength, where you have to stay in a competitive and focused zone. And, I never found the competitive environment in university a problem – simply because I am used to it from riding.”

## A BRIGHT BRAND AMBASSADOR

Speaking about Kingsland, it is more to it than just the clothes for Julia. “Kingsland has been with me for the last three years, and has played a huge part in my development as a rider,” Julia says. “As Kingsland not only has designed their clothes as pure riding apparel, it is possible to use it on different occasions. And, as my life is not always every day at the barn I still can wear a lot of their stuff in my daily life. So, I always feel connected to Kingsland that way and that make my relation to the brand very special.”

