

PAYING IT FORWARD

Canadian champion **JAY DUKE** shifts his focus to teaching.

BY **LINDSAY BROCK**

JAY DUKE HAS BEEN TO THE TOP of horse sport and back again. Now that he is on the back side of that journey, the former Canadian Equestrian Team member has dedicated himself to channeling the knowledge and experience he's gained after a lifetime in the industry into helping horses and riders be the best versions of themselves.

Born into a family of riders and trainers in Calgary, Canada, Duke himself is a competitor turned trainer, clinician, course designer, and all-around horseman. He began riding at age 4 under the direction of his mother, well-known Alberta trainer Cheryl Anderson. Duke's connection to horses also came from his father, Fred, who was recently inducted into the Canadian Pro Rodeo Hall of Fame.

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"There was no real start to my career with horses," said Duke, 48, who debuted on the A-rated show jumping circuit at 8 years old. "The goal for me, and for many of my peers, was to ride on the Canadian team and then go to the Olympics. That was the reason we rode. Unfortunately for me, only part of that dream worked out, but there was never any doubt in my mind that this sport was where I belonged."

A four-time Canadian junior champion in both the hunters and jumpers and a rider with a knack for developing young horses from the field to the grand-prix ring, Duke earned his fair share of accolades. But in 2014, Duke hung up his whites for good and retired from competition. He shifted his focus to teaching the next generation of riders, offering clinics that develop confident, capable horses and riders throughout North America.

"I feel lucky to have worked with some of the best trainers and riders in the world," said Duke. "Because I hold some of their wisdom, I think it's obvious that I should make an effort to give back to the industry that made my career."

For Duke, however, success isn't about the height of the jumps, but rather about attitude, saying, "Anybody that has a positive attitude and wants to learn can be successful, and that is what I find most enjoyable about clinics. Often the lessons are not so different from the lower level to the higher level. I try to get the most from every horse and rider and produce a positive result, where both did something they didn't think they were capable of doing."

In addition to traditional clinics, Duke has taken his library of lessons, tips, and maybe even a few tricks and gone digital. He developed a subscription-based service, unveiled in the fall of 2017, that shares his flat and jumping exercises. Mobile-friendly lesson plans are delivered weekly via email with a portion of all proceeds being donated to JustWorld International and Uryadi's Village charities.

Of the theory behind his lesson-plan program and his teaching philosophy in general, Duke says, "In my experience, it's when the show-jumping community operates as a whole rather than a group of individuals that magic happens."

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