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EQ'S ANNUAL
GOLD LIST



Hotel Cheval was voted EQ readers' favorite California hotel.

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RALPH LAUREN AND WORK TO RIDE

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The famous designer's Work to Ride campaign funds collegiate scholarships for athletes participating in the organization dedicated to teaching inner-city kids to ride, play polo, and succeed in life.

EQ'S ANNUAL GOLD LIST

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Now in its sixth year, EQ's Gold List has grown to become America's leading survey of all things equestrian. Did your selections make the list?

HANNAH SELLECK

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Born to Hollywood stars, she has built a successful career as a grand prix rider and breeding business owner with hard work and passion.

DEVON KANE

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Dressage star Devon Kane shines bright both in the show ring and in her business as head trainer at Diamante Farms.

LADEW TOPIARY GARDENS

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With over 100 delightful and imaginative topiaries inspired by the sport of foxhunting and the elaborate gardens of England, this Maryland gem was founded by Harvey Smith Ladew.

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HANNAH
SELLECK



KRISTIN LEE PHOTOGRAPHY

BY **EMILY RIDEN**
PHOTOS **KRISTIN LEE**

AS CONVERSATION
with Hannah
Selleck moves
seamlessly
from sto-
ries and

laughs about her first pony and early riding years to earnest insight into her career, it's easy to feel instantly at home in the discussion.

Her genuine and welcoming demeanor, coupled with a clear passion for the horses that she has built her life around, give the sense that you could be speaking with any fellow horse-crazy barn mate—only this is Hannah, a grand prix competitor who also happens to run her own successful boutique breeding operation. She's also definitely the barn mate you would want to turn to for riding advice and business tips—and probably fitness and style pointers as well.

HANNAH SELLECK

Hannah's no-nonsense attitude and the passion with which she approaches her equestrian career can likely be attributed to her parents, actors Tom Selleck and Jillie Mack. She fell in love with horses at an early age and became an accomplished competitor at the grand prix level. In 2010, she founded Descanso Farm, fueled by her desire to produce high-quality horses in the U.S.









FOXFIELD AND THE FOUNDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

Hannah's no-nonsense attitude and the passion with which she approaches her equestrian career can likely be attributed to her parents, actors Tom Selleck and Jillie Mack—as can her first introduction to horses. The year Hannah was born, the couple moved away from the Hollywood limelight and purchased a ranch in Ventura County, California. There, with several ranch horses and retired movie horses at home, Hannah, now 30, began riding lessons at an early age in order to become more horse-savvy.

“There happened to be a local stable very close by. That’s where I dove in along with other activities, but the riding just seemed to be a fit,” said Hannah, who also showed promise in ballet throughout her childhood but ultimately chose riding as her sole focus, eventually training at the acclaimed Foxfield Riding

School in Westlake Village, California.

“Because [my parents are] both artists, they believe in the idea that you have to be very passionate about what you do to be successful,” said Hannah. “They encouraged me to be passionate about it and immersed in it, and from there it was kind of on me how much I wanted it. They always let me take the lead. If I wanted to move barns or trainers, that was my decision.”

Following her time at Foxfield, Hannah made the decision to train with Mark Bone at Huntover before beginning to ride with Karen Healey, with whom she trained from age 16 into the start of her amateur career.

It was under Karen’s tutelage that Hannah rode to a string of successes including both team and individual gold

medals at the 2008 North American Junior and Young Rider Championships (now the North American Youth Championships), a win in the 2008 Platinum Performance/U.S. Equestrian Federation (USEF) Show Jumping Talent Search Finals–West, and a second-place finish in the 2007 Pessoa/USEF Medal Finals.

As she moved into her amateur career, Hannah also began making her mark in the open jumper ring, earning her first grand prix win in 2010 at the Blenheim Summer Classic in California aboard Tosca van het Lambroeck.

It was with Tosca, a now-23-year-old Belgian Warmblood mare (by Casch) that Hannah saw much of her early jumper success, and it was largely because of Tosca that ultimately an idea, a business, and a new love were born.

At the same time that Hannah was competing Tosca and other mounts to top finishes in the open

jumpers, she was attending Loyola Marymount University in California to receive her degree in communications.

“My parents were generous enough to support the riding and keep my good horses while I was in school, but the idea was that I was going to school to prepare for a career that could then support my riding,” explained Hannah, who thought at the time that she would continue on as a high-level amateur rider while working full-time in the public relations field.

Throughout her college years, Hannah traveled to see and compete her horses as much as she could, which included notching impressive finishes like a second place in the 2011 \$80,000 CSI₅* Akita Drilling Cup at Spruce Meadows in Calgary, Alberta, with ES Carando Z—but she realized it wasn’t enough.

“It was really the first time that I’d been away from the horses for so long, and I wasn’t very fulfilled,” said Hannah.

After graduating from Loyola Marymount in 2011, Hannah made the decision to instead turn professional as a rider, all the while recognizing that it was something she was really going to have to work for. “At that point, I knew I had to find a way to support myself as a rider, so that was when it was time for me to be a working student, an assistant, and to take any apprenticeship opportunities that I could find,” said Hannah who then spent several years as an assistant for Karen, riding clients’ horses, teaching students, and setting jumps.

“I was always very independent growing up,” continued Hannah. “I never kept the horses with Karen or Mark; they were always kept with us. So, I was knowledgeable, but you have to work under great people to learn it and really hone your skill.”

That belief, and the desire to support her own riding career, led Hannah to work under show jumping icons Katie Monahan Prudent and Laura Kraut before keeping her horses with Ilan Ferder at his well-known sales stable.

All the while though, Hannah was growing

Hannah and Gia DF.





Hannah with
Rumpleteazer DF.



and building another facet of her professional equestrian career and pursuing another dream, the one fueled by mares like Tosca.

THE BIRTH OF A NEW VENTURE

“I was lucky enough to have a couple of really good mares when I was a junior,” said Hannah, who claimed many of her top junior finishes aboard one of those mares, Alvarina. “Alvarina was a great equitation mare, and we decided to breed her. That got the wheels turning. So, when Tosca retired, my dad said, ‘Why don’t you try and breed her and produce your own [future mount]?’”

Inspired by the idea of producing top-quality sport horses within the U.S. and a possible future star of her own, in 2010, while Hannah was still in school, she launched Descanso Farm, her own boutique breeding and training operation named for her family’s Rancho de

Descanso, which means “Ranch of Rest.”

Alvarina’s first foal, Delphina DF (by Cacique), was born in 2011, and Tosca’s first filly, Elita Toscita DF (by LaMarque) arrived in 2012. In total from 2011 to 2014, Hannah’s Descanso Farm bred and delivered six foals, desiring to maintain a small scale in order to focus on producing high-caliber horses in the best possible way.

“We want to show that we can produce horses in the States, having them on the ground as foals and bringing them up through the young horse classes,” said Hannah. “But we don’t want to just get the horse to the ring quickly; I want to make it right so that it has a long career.”

With that in mind, after many of the foals were weaned, they were sent to Rancho Corazon in New Mexico, to

live out in large grass fields with other young horses and to simply enjoy being horses. From there, the young horses are started at Colts Unlimited in Wyoming before returning to Hannah to further their training and begin more work over fences.

“I like to try and find who is best to do these things and have the best people work with them. I’m a little bit of a perfectionist, so I want everything done right,” explained Hannah. “Barb Ellison [at Wild Turkey Farm] has created a great program; she helped me a lot in the beginning, including foaling some of our first foals like Rumble and Elita, and she gave me a lot of guidance and referrals.

“You always can benefit from someone willing to take the time to share their experience or share their knowledge,” continued Hannah. “For me, it was about finding a system that I would want to aspire to or something that’s similar. Then, you can look at those people and

see what they do right and see what you don't like with them too. That's how our process came into place."

While Hannah busily juggled producing the young horses with her other professional riding jobs for several years, in 2017, she stepped out fully on her own to devote all of her attention to the Descanso Farm-bred horses and her current grand prix mount, Barla.

"With all of our young horses, it's an incredible feeling when you get to see them start going under saddle and jumping and really witnessing their future potential," said Hannah. "It wasn't so tangible until I started riding them. Once the first one started showing, then I realized, 'Okay, this is real. We're going to have a lot of horses coming up.'"

Today, Descanso Farm is based out of El Campeon Farms in Thousand Oaks, California, with Hannah riding, training, and competing Barla, 7-year-old Elita Toscita DF (Lamarque-Tosca, Casch), 6-year-old Rumpleteazer DF (Flexible-Alvarina, Alvarez), 5-year-old Gia DF (Contefino-Barla, Baloubet du Rouet), and 4-year-old Corsica DF (Cancara-Tosca van het Lambroeck, Cash). Barla is the only one not bred by Hannah.

"Elita's a lot like her mother, Tosca," said Hannah, who speaks fondly of all of the young horses. "I think she's going to be a great speed horse. That one's just a lot of fun. I love her type. Then we have Rump, who's really coming along and showing a lot of potential in everything. She's always been bold and scopey, but you really started to see her potential this winter as she was winning in the



ELENA LUSENTI

6-year-old jumpers."

While all of the young horses are already showing great promise and seeing them in the show ring has proven extremely rewarding, Hannah acknowledges that there are definite ups and downs along the way, and it has not always felt quite as satisfying.

"At a certain point—I think perhaps Barla was hurt—I didn't have a horse in the big ring. You start to think, 'Is focusing on the young horses taking away from my time to do that?'" explained Hannah. "Then it reaches this other side of the hump, and you start to see that these horses that you've brought along could make it to the big ring."

"As you're initially doing it, you don't quite know what the end product is, especially if you've never done it. You can start to question what the future might hold and if you made the right choice," said Hannah. "Now, I would hands down do it all over again."

Today, Hannah is focused on not only continuing to produce the young horses currently in her barn, but also on advancing her own grand prix career with Barla, and she strives to apply the lessons she's learned in developing young prospects and in the grand prix ring to mounts for future owners as well.

"When Barla's ready to retire, I'd like to breed her more and do some embryos. That would be a next stage, but right now I want to develop this group of horses to their highest potential and continue to focus on my own show career as well," said Hannah. "I don't have a large team, so with me being the main rider, I prefer to focus on producing quality, not quantity."

While producing the young horses and competing herself, including earning top FEI results earlier this year with Barla, keeps her busy, Hannah is also quick to ensure that she is taking time to enjoy the process.

"My goal right now is to enjoy each moment. It's a blessing to be jumping so many of these classes, so I'm just trying to be present and take that in. We are goal-oriented as athletes, but you're also constantly thinking about future plans, where you want to be, and 'I need to do x, y, and z in order to get this result.' Right now, I want to focus on not only having the goals, but also being more present," concluded Hannah in the same honest and humble manner that our conversation began.

"You want to enjoy that moment that you're in—whether it's in the show ring or training the young horses at home—because we are so, so lucky to work with these animals every day."