

AMATEUR HOUR:

Following Up with 2020 Profiled Riders



Ally Blais celebrated her engagement to Jason Landa with Escudo on June 26, 2020.

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ALLY BLAIS

Ally Blais, who competes typically in the Medium Amateur-Owner Jumper division, expressed that while she continued to have a steady work environment, the early effects of Covid-19 in fact allowed her more time in the saddle.

“I’m in sales for a medical device company so I’m fortunate enough to have stayed somewhat busy during COVID, with the exception of the lockdown because elective surgeries came to a halt and I wasn’t going into doctor’s offices,” Blais said. “During that time however, I was able to get in more riding time when we were allowed to do so in a safe way and in our designated time slot.”

She also made the move to bring her mount closer to home with the decision to take her training to East Wind Farms in Southwest Ranches.

“I live all the way in Miami Beach and with my new work schedule, it was getting very difficult to make it up to Wellington to ride,” she explained. “Having him closer has made my life much easier, and I even have time to swing by and give him a few carrots on Mondays!”

Blais plans to return for the 2021 season with her

top mount, the 11-year-old KWPN stallion, Escudo, whom she calls “Scooby” for short. Despite the effects of COVID, the pair have had a successful year since May. As a South Florida resident, she has been able to compete at multiple Wellington venues bringing home several championships in the Medium Amateur-Owner Jumper division as well as putting in a good performance in the grand prix at Fox Lea Farm.

CHELSEA DWINELL

Chelsea Dwinell and husband Christian Coyle, of Christian Coyle Show Stables, are excited to return to Wellington after a year of big changes. In addition to the effects of dealing with the COVID pandemic, the pair also welcomed a second baby girl and launched a new training business over the summer. Coyle previously worked for three years as the head trainer at Old Salem Farm but made the move to launch his own training facility in July, the same month that wife and amateur rider Chelsea gave birth to their daughter Grace.



Chelsea Dwinell with Daisy Coyle and Teddy

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With the hunter that she has owned and ridden for the past five years, Dwinell decided not to waste any time getting back in the saddle and returned to the show ring only two months after their addition.

“Honestly it did work out a bit in my favor being pregnant during COVID because I didn’t lose out on the opportunity to get points from my time off of showing,” she explained. “Keystone and I stepped back into the ring in September and ended up reserve champion for the week which was a great comeback to me.”

While she no longer works full-time at the farm with two young children, Dwinell added that older daughter Daisy acquired a mini pony that previously belonged to Jasper Bloomberg this year and can now often be seen at the barn as well.

“I find that if I can squeeze in some riding time each day, it makes me a better mom because I am happier,” Dwinell added. “Riding is a part of who I am, and now that Daisy has her own pony, I am lucky enough to get to enjoy spending time with her there and taking care of the horses together.”

Dwinell will return to PBIEC with Keystone and a new adult jumper mount, while Coyle plans to bring down several younger jumpers and client horses as well as his grand prix mount, Centurion. The family also purchased a home in Wellington over the summer and have committed to the area as a home-base for much of the year.

NICOLE LAKIN

Amateur competitor and small business owner Nicole Lakin’s return to the 2021 Winter Equestrian Festival comes after a season of challenges. Lakin is the CEO and founder of BarnManager, an online software platform that aims to alleviate many of the challenges barn owners and managers face in their daily routines. Lakin is also an avid competitor herself in the Amateur-Owner divisions and is looking forward to competing her new mount this upcoming season.

“I got my new mare about a week into the competition shut down [in 2020], so while we did get to compete a bit later on, we spent most of our summer just getting to know one another,” she explained.



Nicole Lakin with Capitaine de Flobecq

For Lakin, her day-to-day work routine did not see a huge change because the BarnManager team is already remote-based. While she said that the company as a whole did cut back in case things were to get worse, the overall needs for their operation stayed virtually the same.

Lakin detailed that “even with competition and travel grinding to a temporary halt, barn management and horse care persisted.”

She continued, “At first, I think people had a bit of extra time on their hands. If they had been considering trying BarnManager before COVID, they took advantage of the unplanned downtime to schedule a demo, sign up for a free trial, and give it a go. Our existing clients reached out asking for suggestions on how to use BarnManager to communicate with their clients and control the number of people coming to the barn at a given time. In addition to keeping things organized as they would during ‘normal’ times, people were looking to tackle some new challenges that were specific to COVID. And we were so happy that BarnManager could help them do that.”

By Summer Grace