

Stable spotlight.

We take a moment to shine the spotlight on a featured Barn or Stable to learn a bit about their business, their philosophy, and just hear their story ...



SHADROCK SHOW STABLES



“THIS HOLISTIC APPROACH, WITH PATIENCE AND TRUST IN YOUR TRAINING METHODS ARE HOW I BELIEVE WE GET THE MOST OUT OF HORSES.”

W

ith momentum building up for the official launch of World Equestrian Center-Ocala in central Florida, many of the area's trainers are looking forward to taking advantage of all the amenities the elite venue will be offering. One such trainer is Caitlin Maloney, who operates her boarding and hunter/jumper training program out of her family's Shamrock Show Stables in nearby Reddick, Florida.

"It will be a great asset to have a world-class horse show year-round in Ocala," says Caitlin, 31. "I enjoy the

shows in Florida, but it can be so hot in the summer. I can't wait for the temperature-controlled show rings and stabling. Last year, I had a tour of the outdoor showgrounds at WEC, and it looks beautiful. The spacious rings and two stadiums will be a great draw for riders and spectators."

Though she's an Illinois native, Caitlin has found the Ocala area to be the ideal location to base her business. "The community is so supportive of the equestrian world. Ocala has endless resources for horses and riders, with top vet clinics, training facilities, and feed and equipment suppliers."



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Focusing on HORSEMANSHIP

by Emily Daily

Photos by JW Basham Photography



Gaining Experience

Growing up just outside of Chicago in Lake Bluff, Illinois, Caitlin got her first taste of riding as a child on a family vacation at a Colorado ranch. "I begged to keep riding when we got home and started taking lessons at a local hunter/jumper barn," she recalls. At the time, no one else in the family rode, but soon enough, her mother also began taking lessons and eventually the family purchased their own horses.

Caitlin's first children's hunter was a warmblood named Dante, who took her to her first zone medal finals and was also the first horse she took to show in Wellington. "I'm grateful for the accomplishments I achieved with him," she says.

As Caitlin progressed into the "big eq" classes, her next partner was Max, whom she got in April of her final junior year. She focused on qualifying for the USET Medal and Maclay classes and competed at the finals held at the Pennsylvania National Horse Show and the National Horse that fall.

"I continued to compete with him as an amateur while I was in college," Caitlin says. "We competed in the USEF Talent Search classes as well as international hunter derbies and some jumper classes. We had good results in international derbies in 2009 at the Kentucky Spring Derby and the Chicago Hunter Derby."

While finishing her undergraduate degree in international studies at DePaul University in Chicago, Illinois, Caitlin decided her true calling was working with horses. For the next few years, she traveled all over the country learning from top trainers including Don Stewart, Bibby Farmer and Denise Dennehy



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Lenn, and also spent time at Split Rock Farm in Lexington, Kentucky. Finally, she settled at Balmoral Farm in California, working for Carleton and Traci Brooks for several years.

Horses as Teachers

Carleton ("CB") proved to have one of the biggest influences on her career. "Working with him wasn't just about producing what you 'need' from a horse or rider, like to win a class, to sell a horse or to qualify for a show." It was more than that — it was about all the nuances that made a rider a great horseman.

"CB's attention to detail and his love for the horse is what allows him to produce greatness: Both riders who are curious and motivated to grow their connection with their horses



The Story BEHIND THE \$ NAME:

The farm's namesake comes from Caitlin's special skill for finding four-leaf clovers. She's had a knack for spotting them since she was young.





while competing at the highest level, as well as horses that give that bit of extra effort to perform their best," she says.

One of the most important philosophies Carleton instilled in Caitlin became a key part of her own program. "Carleton encourages his riders to 'think like the horse,' which is what I incorporate most in my training on a daily basis," Caitlin says. "Working with him tied in full-circle the horsemanship lessons I learned as a young rider that solidified my foundation as a trainer, coach, competitor and horse lover."

"No matter what you're learning, if you take the time to understand what your long-term goal truly is, and take the time to get there, you will realize that the horses teach us much more than how to earn ribbons," she adds. "It is a process that does not look the same for any horse or rider. One of the greatest lessons we get from horses is to truly learn empathy. If you understand the horse and see the world through their eyes, you will

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likely get to that success point much faster than if you only see things from a single point of view."

"When you think like the horse, you understand why and when to use different tack or different pressure, when to push for more on a certain day, and when to know the benefit of ending a ride earlier than planned," she adds. "This holistic approach, with patience and trust in your training methods, is how I believe we get the most out of horses."

An Ideal Homebase

After gaining experience in California, Caitlin moved back to her family's farm at the end of 2017 to officially launch her business. The family had purchased the 10-acre facility in 2010, but only used

it seasonally or rented it out until Caitlin's mother moved there full-time in 2016.

Located just northwest of Ocala, in the heart of Florida's horse country, the farm features sprawling grass fields on rolling hills, framed by towering, shady oak trees. The spacious cinderblock 10-stall barn with a temperature-controlled tack room gives both horses and riders a chance to relax in comfort, especially in the summer heat.

A large, flat area with natural footing provides ideal riding conditions. "It absorbs the rain and drains evenly because of the sandy base," says Caitlin. "It never gets too deep or slippery to ride."

Along with her personal horses and her mother's adult amateur

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CAITLIN'S Must Haves:

Favorite food?

Ben and Jerry's ice cream

Favorite pets?

My two dogs, Roxy and Peppers

Favorite piece of tack?

Butet saddle

Do you enjoy sports or have other hobbies?

I practice yoga and work out in the gym. I like to incorporate outdoor bicycling and kayaking as a fun exercise, too. I like to watch professional sports. I'm a Chicago girl, so I like Blackhawks hockey and Cubs baseball.

Favorite tv show or music or movie?

I recently binge-watched The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel series. I love music. Going out to see live music has always been a part of my life outside the barn. My boyfriend and I like to go to the movie theatre, too, as much as possible.

Favorite store?

Hadfield's Saddlery, Valencia Saddlery

What's your ideal day off?

If I have a free day, I'd most likely spend it at the beach with a book.



FAVORITE Training Exercise:

I like to use "shape-rails" and gymnastics in between coursework at home. Landing rails help the horse stay slow off the ground. Recently, I've had some horses that rush their lead changes, so giving them a rail to step over, or even raised off the ground with cavaletti, encourages the horse to stay light on its front end and allow for more balance that creates an easy lead change.

For this exercise, I will usually start with a 2'6" vertical with groundlines on both sides. I set the jump in the middle of the arena so the rider can approach it from either lead. I then set a shape-rail 9 to 10 feet on the backside of the vertical. If incline is a variable of the ground in the riding area, then I set the jump-to-shape-rail "downhill." This will give the horse and rider a "passive" balancing exercise.

This exercise also encourages "slow work." Therefore, a horse or rider that rushes and loses balance on the backside of a jump learns to steady by shifting balance, rather than relying on direct aids such as pulling on the reins, in order to slow down. This allows the horse and rider as one to shift their balance and weight, and then complete the next upcoming variable of the course.



community. "Everyone comes to the barn for more than their scheduled lesson, often hanging out after to groom their horses, clean their tack, catch up with their barn mates or even to just play with my dogs."

hunter, Caitlin has a mix of students, from short-stirrup juniors to 3' adult amateur hunter competitors, some of whom come south for the winter and spring season. No stranger to the show ring, she often shows sales horses, as well as her students' horses. Last December, Caitlin won the Florida Thoroughbred Transformation Show Hunter championship with a client's horse, Sky Pilot.

Shamrock Show Stables is more than just an equestrian facility — it's a

Caitlin's former show horse, Max, is still an integral part of her life. "Max gets extra carrots every day," she says. "He teaches about four lessons per week, and absolutely loves his job. At his age, he, like all of our horses, really benefits from a lot of pasture turnout and hills, which helps keep his topline and hind end conditioned without much wear and tear."

Every detail about each horse's care and well-being is always in the

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Stable Spotlight: Shamrock Show Stables



forefront of Caitlin's mind. She talks with her farrier about every horse each time they're shod. "Even if it's a casual chat, I like to know that we are on the same page with the way the horse is going and if anything changes, it's discussed. Same goes for the chiropractor. I make the time to check in with them. It's part of my job as a horsewoman."

Reaching Her Goals

Not one to rest on her laurels, furthering her education has always been a goal for Caitlin. Currently, she is working towards becoming a 'R' hunter and equitation judge. "The licensing process has been a great experience. I'm really enjoying and benefitting from working with other

'R' judges in a new way. I see judging as being another valuable asset to my career in the industry."

So far, the experience has been both inspirational and fulfilling. "I love to push my comfort zone," Caitlin says. "It can be intimidating to go into a new facet of the industry as a beginner and work one-on-one with

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experts, and I take my participation in the licensure process very seriously. The feedback that I have gotten from the judges whom I've worked with so far has been phenomenal. It's a real confidence boost and reaffirms for me that this is a goal well-worth working toward."

Gaining knowledge, whether it's through judging, learning from top trainers or even experimenting in other disciplines, is important to Caitlin for reaching her goal of becoming a better horsewoman. "I try other disciplines as an educational experience, such as taking lessons from dressage trainers, going cross country and riding western."

Like most trainers, Caitlin has had her fair share of ups and downs over the years, but she always finds inspiration along the way. "This career truly has pushed me to persevere through countless long days, hard work, mental fatigue, and breaks and bruises, but it has all been worth it for the love of the horses." 🐾

HORSE of a Lifetime: *Max*

21-year-old Westphalian warmblood gelding, sired by Pilot, and shown under the name "Peron."

Background?

As a junior, I showed Max in the big equitation classes: USEF Medal, Maclay, WIHS, and the USET Talent Search, along with the junior hunters. He has taken other riders to equitation finals and served as a great teacher.

What's his personality like?

He always has his ears pricked forward and whinnies at me when he sees me from his paddock. He absolutely loves his job as a teacher. He especially likes kids and he is very forgiving when riders make mistakes. At the same time, he is tuned to gymnastic exercises. He has always had a great work ethic.

What's he like to ride?

He is versatile enough for me to teach upper-level dressage lessons for one rider or go straight to jumping hunter/equitation style courses with another rider. He doesn't need a lot of training rides by me, but I do enjoy riding him. I'll ride him bareback to work on balance, flatting, and over small jumps. Sometimes I'll get on him from the pasture with just the halter and lead rope.

Favorite memories with him?

My favorite memories with him were from Indoors my last junior year. We really clicked, even though we had only known each other for a couple months. Max was the kind of horse that was talented and level-headed, so any nerves I had just seemed to dissolve once I was on his back. That quality of him is something that I still see today. He is lovely, patient, and willing to carry his rider to where they want to be. Even at 21 years old, he is sound and supple to ride.

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