

★ WASHINGTON INTERNATIONAL HORSE SHOW ★
OCTOBER 26-31 | MILL SPRING, NORTH CAROLINA

Gibbs Completes His Equitation Career On A High Note

The 18-year-old reflects on the horse that brought him to the national stage.

By Kimberly Loushin And Laura Lemon

As Dominic Gibbs sat with his mother Erin Gibbs on an airplane bound for the Brussels Airport, he had no idea what lay in store for him. He was fresh off a win in the 2018 Hamel Foundation 3'3" Equitation Championship at the National Horse Show (Kentucky) after working through his mental game, and the 3'6" equitation felt well within reach.

After that win, Tom De Bel, who runs Equestrix Agency in Belgium, had reached out to Erin. He'd sourced Limitless, the horse Dominic rode in the Hamel, and offered to help them find a high junior jumper. De Bel drove the Gibbs family around Germany and Belgium as Dominic looked for the right fit.

Though he must have tried dozens, Dominic kept thinking about a dark bay stallion he'd ridden early in the process. Cent 15 had five-star experience with Norwegian show jumper Margrethe Hartmann, and Dominic clicked with the Hanoverian (Carenzo—Sarafina, Silvio I) immediately.

"We were saying to ourselves, 'This is too good to be true.

We still have to try some other horses,' " Dominic recalled. "And [I] tried a bunch of other ones and went back to Cent and knew that he was the one."

It was Cent's demeanor that sold Dominic.

"I could take him into any ring, on any footing—grass, sand, concrete—and he would not be bothered, and I absolutely adored that about him," he said. "I feel like I could gallop into a war

with him, and he would go right in with me. I think being able to have that trust factor with a horse is a really big thing."

They took Cent to Dominic's jumper trainers Henri and Katie Prudent at Plain Bay Sales, and Dominic was disappointed in the lackluster response.

"I took him over to my jumper barn and had a lesson and was told that, 'This is not a jumper, but he looks like he'd be an equitation horse,' which left me a little disgruntled. But then I took him back over to Beacon Hill and started training him as an equitation horse," said Dominic. "He really just shined in the equitation ring from Day 1, and that's where he said he was happy, and everything else after that is history."

Dominic initially got into the equitation ring because Erin wanted to make sure he had a strong base before heading to the jumper ring. He decided to stick with it even after he'd turned to the world of striped poles and jump-offs.

"I realized that I could have success with that and that being in both the equitation and the jumper ring would kind of complement each other," he said. "The equitation could help me execute those more difficult tracks without the danger of height or speed, and I think now being able to master those courses will help me do it better over bigger fences."

Dominic's equitation trainer Stacia Madden said she's proud

WIHS Equitation Finals Mill Spring, N.C.—Oct. 29-30	
Rider	Hometown
1. Dominic Gibbs	Colorado Springs, Colo.
2. Skyler Wireman	Bonsal, Calif.
3. Augusta Iwasaki	Calabasas, Calif.
4. Tessa Downey	Houston, Texas
5. Luke Jensen	Denton, Texas
6. Catalina Peralta	Geneva, Fla.
7. Mimi Gochman	New York, N.Y.
8. Natalie Jayne	Elgin, Ill.
9. Alexander Alston	New Albany, Ohio
10. Zayno Rizvi	Wellington, Fla.

▶40 riders competed.



Dominic Gibbs closed out his junior career with a win in the WIHS Equitation Finals aboard Cent 15. KIMBERLY LOUSHIN PHOTO

that Dominic has brought the horse along himself.

"He did all the work," she said. "I'm not going to say that the professionals that help at Beacon Hill [didn't have] a huge part in developing him also, but Dominic didn't start off winning every class on him, and he never gave up. He always realized the strengths that that horse had to offer and always was looking to better each round and never cared if he made a little bit of a mistake as long as he was learning from it."

In that first year, the pair won the Palm Beach

International Academy Junior Equitation Championships at Capital Challenge (Maryland), and Dominic went from a relatively unknown kid from Colorado Springs, Colorado, to one to watch.

"I think actually that win helped my mental space more than my actual riding," he said. "It gave me a whole lot of confidence going into that final season and then into years after that. And it gave me a sense of, I know I can win on a national level, and having that in my head was a good confidence booster and helps me and helps my

HORSE SHOWS

partnership with my horse come to play in those national finals.”

As their partnership grew, Dominic described his relationship with Cent as “telepathic.”

“I feel like I know him so well now, almost like the back of my hand,” he said. “I can really just count on him to perform his best every time we go in the ring, and the rest is just up to me to perform my best. He’s one of the most magnificent partners I’ve had, and I’m so grateful to have had him as a consistent one in the last few years as a junior.”

Dominic went on to win the 2020 ASPCA Maclay Final (Kentucky) and has earned top ribbons in all of the equitation finals, but he’s also experienced the disappointment of falling short. At this year’s Dover Saddlery/USEF Hunter Seat Medal Finals (Pennsylvania) he finished outside of the ribbons. But he’s learned to let go of those frustrating moments.

“Everyone is going to experience days on high and days on a low, so I really just try to be consistent and deliver the best rounds that I can, and if doesn’t work out for me, then I really try to learn from the mistakes and better prepare myself for the next time in the ring,” he said.

The Washington International Horse Show, held Oct. 26-31 at the Tryon International Equestrian Center in Mill Spring, North Carolina, marked the final competition of Dominic’s junior career. But he refused to think about that as he and his 13-year-old gelding headed out on course in the WIHS Equitation Finals. He needed to close out the excess noise and deliver when it counted.

“I knew that I would get caught up in the moment, so I tried to just bury that thought in the back of my head and really just focus on the rides,” he said. “[There’s] nothing that I really try to think about consciously. I try to honestly just drain my head of thoughts and really just feel the horse while I’m going around the ring and focus on the course.”

Dominic sat third following the hunter phase and moved into the lead after a silky smooth jumper phase. He clinched it with his work-off round aboard reserve champion Skylar Wireman’s Fix Blue. Augusta Iwasaki finished third.

“I’ve judged him many times, and I just am consistently amazed by him,” said Sissy Wickes, who judged the class alongside Callan Solem, Ralph Caristo and Anne Kursinski. “He’s so soft and so accurate, and to get off of his horse which I’ve seen him ride before, and onto the other horse it was like glass. Callan Solem, with whom I was sitting, said, ‘If you close your eyes, you wouldn’t hear him cantering the course.’ That’s how soft he and that horse are, yet incredibly technical.”

GET TO KNOW VIRGINIA BONNIE

2021 continues to be quite a year for Virginia Bonnie. After winning team gold at the FEI Jumping Nations Cup Youth Final in the Netherlands, she and Efodea, a 12-year-old Dutch Warmblood mare (Kashmir Van Schuttershof—Fodea) bred by FA Luimstra, won the high junior/amateur-owner jumper championship at the Washington International Horse Show. But there’s more to Bonnie than just gold medals and tricolor ribbons.

- She comes from a long line of famous horsemen and women. Her great-grandmother is the famed Mrs. A.C. Randolph—referred to as “the first lady of foxhunting” by the New York Times—who owned numerous champion hunters and helped kickstart the careers of riders like Kathy Kusner, Rodney Jenkins and Charlie Weaver. Bonnie’s grandparents are USEF Lifetime Achievement Award recipients Nina and Ned Bonnie. Nina founded the Kentucky Horse Park Foundation in 1985, and Ned, while also involved in steeplechasing, was responsible for bringing forth the U.S. Equestrian Federation’s drug rules. The legacy continues with her father Shelby Bonnie and uncle Robert Bonnie.

“It’s really great just to have family members before you who have been there, done it, understand the ups and the downs,” said the 18-year-old from Upperville, Virginia. “They have really taught me how to have patience and courage and all these important qualities that you really need at horse shows.”

- Her father is the MFH of the Piedmont Foxhounds, so if you don’t see her in the jumper ring, Virginia’s out in the field following the hounds.

“That has also taught me a lot throughout my riding, a lot of riding forward, balance,

you know, all of the qualities that are so important going into the jumper ring,” she said.

Through her family’s connection to the steeplechase industry, Virginia also has strong ties to the Thoroughbreds and restarting them for foxhunting.

“At the farm we have young, off-the-track Thoroughbreds, and I learned how to break a pony over there,” she said, “so it’s a lot of really great lessons that I’ve learned through this other aspect of my time as a rider.”

- To de-stress, Virginia creates art—both traditional and digital. Often she finds her subjects in animals and uses Mondays as her designated art day—although at random times during the week you may spot her messing around on Procreate on her phone.

“It really allows me to process through whatever happened throughout the prior week, whether there was a show or just a few really difficult assignments,” she said.

As a current senior at Foxcroft School (Virginia), she hopes to at least minor in art in college.

“It gives me a really great way to explore that intimacy between human and animal, and I like to believe it makes me more appreciative and attentive to the creatures in my life. I want to really be able to finesse those skills, so I can continue to explore those relationships.”

Virginia Bonnie and Efodea earned the tricolor in the high junior/amateur-owner jumper division at the Washington International.
LAURA LEMON PHOTO



HORSE SHOWS

Mimi Gochman guided her catch-ride Commentary to the small junior hunter, 16-17, championship and grand junior hunter honors at the Washington International. LAURA LEMON PHOTO



RETURNING TO HER ROOTS

In the summer of 2019, Mimi Gochman's junior hunter career quietly wound down. Her longtime partner and recent Devon (Pennsylvania) grand junior champion Evermore got hurt, which led to his eventual retirement. And her other mount Remarkable found a less demanding job in a college program. Gochman had won it all in that discipline, and like her older sister Sophie Gochman, she no longer felt that strong pull to actively pursue it.

"I sort of just fizzled out in the hunters," Mimi said. "I didn't continue. I always loved the hunters, but I was really excited to do jumpers."

With her crew of Ken Berkley, Scott Stewart and Amanda Derbyshire, Mimi followed that passion across the globe—competing on the Global Champions Tour from Monaco to France and winning in open two-star and three-star classes.

"All of my trainers are super really good at giving good advice and trying to make it so that everything seems

easy for me and simple," she said. "They give very direct instructions. Training with them has been insane. I love it."

In the jumper world, Derbyshire and Berkley assumed the biggest roles. With their help, Mimi competed in her first FEI North American Youth Championships in 2019 (New York), winning the individual junior title—something she repeated in 2021 at the young rider level. And to top it all off, she represented the U.S. in the FEI Jumping Nations Cup Youth Final (the Netherlands).

"Amanda's been like a sister," said Mimi. "I've known Amanda for literally my entire life, but she is a good trainer. She shows herself, so it's always good to watch her and see what she does at the ring and watch her school. She's kind of an example for me to see what she does as a professional."

"Then Scott and Ken, I've also been training with them basically my whole entire life," she continued. "Ken's super tough on you, and he just has game. He wants to

FUQUA-CERTIFIED EXERCISES

Kat Fuqua is known for her dominance in multiple disciplines, with an Adequan/USEF Junior Dressage National Championship title to her name and plenty of championship coolers from the hunters. When she's not in the show ring with trainer Jimmy Torano on the rail, she's riding her horses at home in Atlanta. After she earned yet another indoor championship, this time in the large junior, 15 and under, division with Grand Remo, we caught up with the 14-year-old to give us three of her go-to dressage/flat exercises for her hunters.

1. "One exercise I do at the trot is you go [from] the quarter line to the wall," she said. "That just really [starts] off your ride to get your horse off your legs and make sure they're really listening."
2. "For a canter exercise I like to do on a circle, about a 20-meter circle, counter-canter and then at one end of the circle I'll do a lead change back and then counter-canter the other way."



Kat Fuqua and Grand Remo jumped to the championship in the large junior hunters, 15 and under, at the Washington International Horse Show. LAURA LEMON PHOTO

3. "Serpentines, just stay in counter-canter on serpentines. That really gets your horse listening to you."



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TIDBITS

• **Sterling Malnik** and **Coronation**, a 12-year-old Holsteiner gelding (Caretino—Simona), picked up their most recent victory at the Washington International in the small junior hunter, 15 and under, division.

"He's the best boy I could ever ask for," said Malnik, of Ocean Ridge, Florida. "He does so much for me. He tries so hard, and with indoors this year not being in Washington [District of Columbia] and coming to an outdoor ring after being indoors for Capital Challenge [Maryland] and [the Pennsylvania National] he just proved me right. He just shined so well, and I couldn't be any happier with him."

• **Eva Mackenzie** can say without exaggeration that the 15-year-old Welsh pony **Farmore State Of The Art** (Eyarth Grenadier—Telynu Ballerina B-40419), the first to take her into the small pony division, taught her "everything." From the short stirrup division to her first USEF Pony Finals (Kentucky) in 2019, to her first big win in the WCHR Pony Challenge at Capital Challenge in 2020, the pony has guided the 11-year-old through it all.

"We are so lucky to have him," said her trainer Chance Arakelian. "It's amazing the start that these kids get when they get to start on one that's that exceptional. He's so balanced and big strided and lands on both leads, great lead changes, no spook. "It's been an absolute pleasure to have him in our barn," he continued. "He's pretty much our barn mascot."

Though Mackenzie will continue to own "State," the Washington International Horse Show marked the last time she'd trot into the pony ring. As the perfect way to end that partnership, Mackenzie and State topped three of the small pony classes to win the championship.



"I'm so happy because this is my last show," said Mackenzie, from Darien, Connecticut. "He has a special place [in my heart]."

She earned a second championship aboard **Anisette**, a 15-year-old Welsh pony cross (Cusop Jovial—Northwind Katrina), in the medium pony hunters. She also earned the Best Child Rider on a Pony title and the grand pony championship aboard State.

• In the below-freezing temperatures of New England in the wintertime, **Erin Morera** rode on. Most of her barnmates at Heritage Farm (New York) had traveled to horse paradise, Wellington, Florida, for the warm sun. But Morera bundled up **Nominee** and competed him in the area to qualify for her first season of big shows.

"We went to a lot of smaller, more local shows," said Morera of Greenwich, Connecticut. "It was kind

Eva Mackenzie and Farmore State Of The Art ended their partnership by winning the small pony hunter division and earning grand pony hunter honors at the Washington International. LAURA LEMON PHOTO

of hard because it was in the winter, so there's snow; it was really cold. But we got enough points, so we made it to indoors. He's just the best."

In her first time competing at Washington at the non-local level, she and the 11-year-old New Forest Pony (Woodrow Carisbrooke—Manouska Van De Stompslag) walked away with a giant champion ribbon and WIHS cooler from the large pony hunter division.

"It means a lot because this is my last show on him—and my last show on ponies," she said. "So, it's really amazing to be able to go out with such a bang."

win just as much as you, so he's really tough, but he knows his way around a course, and he's always giving the best instructions."

Mimi's ventured beyond the buzzers and equitation courses only a handful of times since that 2019 summer. But that started to change last winter when Stewart and Berkley approached the 17-year-old with a request.

"This [Winter Equestrian Festival (Florida)] Scott and Ken asked me to catch ride a few of their hunters, so that really got me back into the hunters," said Mimi, from New York City. "I forgot how much fun it could be. It's very perfectionist, and it's a very specific kind of ride that you have to have for the hunters. Scott's obviously the best at it, so I'm very lucky to have that kind of training."

Then Mimi's mom Becky Gochman offered her famed hunter Catch Me.

"I had been doing some junior hunters, and she was like, 'She's in the groove, and it would be kind of fun to see my kid ride him.' So, she let me ride him," said Mimi.

"When I first started riding him, I think I was more nervous just because he just got a 100, and Scott always had a huge win on him," she added. "My mom won every single indoor and [was] circuit champion at WEF countless times. My mom has won everything on him. Scott has won everything on him. So, it was going to be interesting to see if I could keep up with it, and I think after I got a few rounds under my belt I was more comfortable."

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At the Washington International, Mimi was back to her old habits in the jumpers, taking the medium junior/amateur-owner jumper championship with Codi BH, a 9-year-old Holsteiner mare by Casall, and earning the Leading Junior Jumper Rider award and the Junior Jumper Style of Riding award.

But two hunters also joined the Gochman party: Catch Me, a 14-year-old Holsteiner gelding (Casiro I—Wonne D), and Bikoff Equestrian LLC's Commentary, a 10-year-old warmblood gelding (Coolidge—Quinni). With her mom's "Snoopy," she earned the championship tricolor in the large junior, 16-17, division. And on the catch-ride for her friend Ella Bikoff, Mimi swept the the small junior, 16-17, division and took home the grand junior hunter distinction as well as the Best Child Rider on a Horse honors.

"The hunters are actually good [with helping me with the other disciplines]," Mimi added. "It keeps your eye open and keeps you relaxed because sometimes in the eq or the jumpers you can get really stiff and tight. I think that having that open eye and being able to move up and not be fussing with the horse the whole time and just

WIHS Pony Equitation Finals Mill Spring, N.C.—Oct. 30	
Rider	Hometown
1. Maddie Tash	Milton, Ga.
2. Olivia Sweetnam	Wellington, Fla.
3. Elle Boyd	Camden, S.C.
4. Ava Barnes	Liberty Township, Ohio
5. Eva Mackenzie	Danen, Conn.
6. JJ Torano	Wellington, Fla.
7. Emil Richard	Middlefield, Conn.
8. Emma Brody	New York, N.Y.
9. Collin Sweetnam	Wellington, Fla.
10. Ava Hartman	Marietta, Ga.

➤25 Riders competed.

being able to keep going and hunt your way around the ring is a good skill to have.

"I'm glad I got back into it, because I never would've been able to ride Commentary or ride Snoopy," she continued. "I'm really glad that Scott and Ken actually gave me that opportunity." 🍷

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Washington International Horse Show Junior Mill Spring, N.C.—Oct. 26-31

Small Pony Hunter CH: Farmore State Of The Art, Eva Mackenzie.

RES: H.G. Mud Puddles, Jet Show Stable.

Medium Pony Hunter CH: Anisetta, Eva Mackenzie.

RES: Northwind Tag You're It, Jet Show Stable.

Large Pony Hunter CH: Nominee, GC Ponies LLC.

RES: Goldmark, Take 3 LLC.

Small Jr. Hunter, 15 & Under CH: Coronation, Sterling Malnik.

RES: Lucador, Batsee Parker.

Small Jr. Hunter, 16-17 CH: Commentary, Bikoff Equestrian LLC.

RES: E Di Luca, Reynolds Cole.

Large Jr. Hunter, 15 & Under CH: Grand Remo, Kat Fuqua.

RES: Small Occasion, Shadowfax Equestrian LLC.

Large Jr. Hunter, 16-17 CH: Catch Me, Gochman Sport Horse LLC.

RES: Montauk, Libbie Gordon.

\$10,000 WIHS Children's Hunter CH: Notable, Kaycie Miranda.

RES: Rafferty, Sophia Strickler.

Low Jr./Amateur-Owner Jumper CH: Skyfall, Caroline Dugas.

RES: Skans Glen's Signature, Myers Equestrian LLC.

Med. Jr./Amateur-Owner Jumper CH: Codi BH, Gochman Sport Horse LLC.

RES: Birja, Emily Aitken.

High Jr./Amateur-Owner Jumper CH: Efodia, Nina Bonnie.

RES: Santauer, Take Two LLC.

\$10,000 WIHS Children's Jumper CH: Sekhmet De Kerala, Marleen Melchoir.

RES: Gold Lux, Siboney Ranch.

Grand Pony Hunter CH: Farmore State Of The Art, Eva Mackenzie.

Georgetown High-Score Jr. Hunter Owner-Rider: Grand Remo, Kat Fuqua.

Potomac Trophy High-Score Jr. Rider, Pony: Eva Mackenzie.

Grand Jr. Hunter CH: Commentary, Bikoff Equestrian LLC.

Jr. Jumper Style Of Riding Award: Mimi Gochman.

Gochman Style Of Riding Award: Ava Barnes.

Best Child Rider, Pony: Eva Mackenzie.

Best Child Rider, Horse: Mimi Gochman.

Hollow Brook Wealth Management Sportsmanship Award: Brooke Brombach.

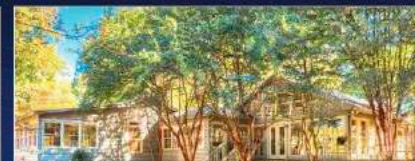
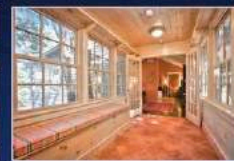
Leading Jr. Jumper Rider: Mimi Gochman.

Lugano Memorial Trophy, WIHS Equitation Classic Horse: Cent 15, Mountain King Ranch LLC.

Loading Equitation Trainer: Stacia Madden.



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