



24
HOURS IN THE **LIFE** of

Globe Trotter

Sharn Wordley

Well-traveled Wordley is no stranger to winning on the world stage. The Olympics, Nations Cups and being ranked among the top 50 riders in the world.

by Ben Baugh
Photos by Andrew Ryback Photography

New Zealand's Sharr Wordley now calls Ocala, Florida, home. He's become a fixture at World Equestrian Center, winning his share of Grands Prix and placing consistently in the ribbons.

World Equestrian Center's deep schedule provides Wordley and many other exhibitors the opportunity to earn a significant amount of money, while being based at one location.

"The good thing about Florida is that you have some of the best riders in the world here and you don't have to go and compete internationally," said Wordley. "You're competing against Aaron Vale and Tracy Fenney and some of the best in the world."

Wordley was previously based in Kentucky but made the decision to relocate to Marion County because of World Equestrian Center – Ocala. It's made an indelible impression on the athlete, who has competed globally. Ocala's location makes it the ideal place for exhibitors, who find themselves with ample opportunities to compete in other places within the state, but it's the presence of World Equestrian Center that continues to attract the interest of the best athletes in the world, both human and equine.

"When you enter that arena, it's fantastic," said Wordley. "It's such an amazing stadium to compete in. The jumps are great, the footing is great, the prizes are great. It's well run. It's fabulous. I've had a farm in Kentucky for more than 10 years and I used to base in Wellington in the winter



A Day with Sharr Wordley

As told to Brianna Miller

Good Morning

Our daily schedule varies quite often because we are always all over the country showing. We were at WEC for 21 weeks alone. We might only have eight weeks out of the year when we aren't at a horse show. Four of those eight weeks we visit my fiancé, Lauren Balcomb's family in Australia and my family in New Zealand. During the rest of the year, we are traveling to different horse shows across the country.

On a normal day at the farm, I wake around 6:30am and play with our baby Poppy. She loves to run around in the arena, it's her giant sandbox.

Time to Ride

Around 9am I ride the horses. We don't have too many and I don't really have any clients, so I just focus on the horses that I have.

It's similar at horse shows. I don't have to do that much running around which makes everything even more enjoyable.

Afternoon at the Office

My main focus is our businesses. We have a footing and property development company, Wordley Martin Equestrian. We develop, renovate and design top level equestrian farms.

We work with farms across the country. We have a few big projects here in Ocala that I am really excited about. So, throughout the day, I work on the big projects for Wordley Martin Equestrian.

Winding Down

Off the bat I couldn't really tell you what I do at the end of the day. I am doing so much during the day, I am shocked when it is over.

When we have time, we like to go out to dinner and visit friends. Every night we play with Poppy before dinner. She is such a goof ball. We are hoping she is going to be a good little rider one day. She already adores the horses so much.

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and Kentucky in the summer. Ocala has the best of everything, so you only need one place, when you're here in Ocala, especially with the World Equestrian Center with their summer shows. Ocala is the best place period to base out of. It doesn't matter where you're competing, you can compete at Wellington from Ocala, you can do summer shows from Ocala, it's the place to be."

Wordley has enjoyed success with a number of horses over the past decade, including Barnetta, Famoso D Ive Z, Any Supreme, Esmee and Popstar Lozonais.

Barnetta, a Westphalian gelding (Baloubet du Rouet x Polydor), played an instrumental role in Wordley's career.

"Barnetta was a horse that was second twice in the U.S. Open in Central Park and he was third in the World Cup in Toronto," said Wordley. "He was also second in the 5* Million in New York."

Sharn Wordley *Must Haves:*

Wordley Martin Equestrian

In 2006, Craig and I started the company. We do site development and design. Both myself and Craig are Grand Prix riders which is what I think sets us apart. We are able to have a different approach when it comes to the build because we have both traveled all over the globe to compete, so we are very particular when it comes to the finished product.

CWD

I have ridden in CWD saddles for decades. The service and quality are second to none for me, I always use their tack.

One critical component that has played a large role in Wordley's success is his staff, providing him with outstanding support so he and his horses can perform at their optimal best. The fact that he has depth in his barn has also allowed him to excel at the elite level.

"The staff is crucial," said Wordley. "It helps us get a lot done during the day when we have such a good team."

It's been that ability to ride at the elite level for a sustained period of time that has led to a distinguished career for the horseman, who has travelled around the globe, competed in the Olympics and multiple Nations Cups. Wordley's steadiness has made him a formidable force on the showjumping circuit, enabling him to achieve certain milestones.

"I think breaking into the top 50 in the world was a momentous thing for us," said Wordley. "And just

being able to be consistent enough to be in the top 100 in the world, demonstrates consistency in the program. So, that was certainly a highlight.”

Wordley competed in the inaugural \$75,000 WEC Grand Prix, finishing fifth and sixth, with Esmee and Casper in January 2021. However, one of the highlights for the rider, who added another milestone to his vaunted career, was eclipsing the \$250,000 threshold in earnings for National Snaffle Bit Association sanctioned shows at World Equestrian Center.

Last July saw Wordley finish one-two in the \$75,000 Stella Artois Grand Prix, with two of his stalwarts, Gatsby and Casper.

Gatsby is a crowd favorite and one of the more recognizable horses competing consistently on the Grands Prix winter and summer circuits at World Equestrian Center Ocala’s Grand Outdoor Arena. The 18-year-old Irish Sport Horse (Simba x Daisy Cruise), has been with Wordley for the past five years, after previously being exhibited by Andrew Bourns and Darragh Kenny. Wordley also won the \$75,000 Captive One Advisors Grand Prix in March 2021.

“He’s extremely consistent,” said Wordley. “He looks great which is an added bonus. He always gives 110%. He’s a real sport horse, real fast and he knows when it’s show time.”

Casper a 16-year-old bay Oldenburg gelding (Contender x Baloubet du Rouet), who has been another consistent performer in Wordley’s deep string, a barn that possesses 19 horses.

“He can jump the big class or run in a b class,” said Wordley. “He really loves his job. He has lots of character and he’s been an integral part of my team for about six years now.”

The speedy Valentine Car is also among the horses that have been exhibited by Wordley with success at WEC – Ocala. The 13-year-old Warmblood gelding is an Ocala-bred horse owned by Fernando Cardenas and is by Son of Car x Sofia’s Car. Wordley and Valentine Car won the 1.45-meter class in January at WEC – Ocala.

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It seems as if Wordley is always on the go, if he's not with the horses, he's with his family. Wordley has several businesses outside of the show ring that he's extremely involved with and they provide him with the additional challenge of juggling the different variables in his life. He and his business partner, veteran exhibitor Craig Martin, own Wordley-Martin. However, Wordley is quick to acknowledge the importance of having a competent team in place and their role in his success.

"Craig and I started that company over 15 years ago," said Wordley. "We've built 170 arenas around the country, for some of the most high-profile competitors. It's a product that we like to do, building arenas is fun for us. But it's not really our primary business. It's sort of a side business for us. It's one of those things like anything that you enjoy doing, often at times, you can be good at it. We have a property development company as well. That's kind of our main business. To balance family, 19 horses in the barn and three other companies, isn't that easy, but we have a good team of people. We get it done."

Wordley and Martin find themselves in the perfect place, as Marion County continues to evolve, transforming markedly from one discipline that used to be their calling card, to others that are now far more prominent and have a deeper presence on the current topography that is so synonymous with Ocala.

"We develop horse farms, we'll renovate them, put in arenas, landscape, tailor make it to the hunter/jumper world," said Wordley. "We remake them from Thoroughbred farms into hunter/jumper ones and then we sell them. That's kind of our business. We've done it in Kentucky, here in Ocala, in Wellington, different places. And now, we have some very nice developments here that we're excited about over the next year or so."

World Equestrian Center – Ocala is shining the spotlight on Marion County and its international presence is attracting the attention of horseman from around the globe. The United States

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Equestrian Federation's recent decision to sanction WEC – Ocala's summer series is adding to the appeal of one of the most talked about and admired equestrian destinations in the world.

"I think that's great for everybody," said Wordley. "I think it's great for WEC, I think it's great for the USEF, both are going to benefit out of the new alliance. I'm glad that they

could figure it out. I think it's great for property value in Ocala. I think it's great for everything that we could have some sort of harmonious relationship that benefits everybody here. It means that we can get more prize money now, so they can give more prize money that is befitting of such a facility. It's great for the competitors. Having FEI here brings it to the world stage. It's the best facility in the world, hands down, so it should be on the world stage." 🍷

