

BEEZIE MADDEN SHOW JUMPING ICON

By Nada H. Abdelmoniem

HORSES HAVE ALWAYS BEEN AN IMPORTANT PART OF LEGENDARY BEEZIE MADDEN'S LIFE SINCE SHE RECEIVED HER FIRST PONY AT THE AGE OF FIVE. AT THE AGE OF 50, WHEN MOST ATHLETES MIGHT CONSIDER RETIREMENT, THIS TWO-TIME OLYMPIC AND WORLD EQUESTRIAN GAMES MEDALLIST, 2013 ROLEX FEI WORLD CHAMPION AND SECOND-RANKED RIDER IN THE FEI LONGINES RANKINGS WITH MILES OF EXPERIENCE IN THE SADDLE, REMAINS A STELLAR AND HEAD-TURNING COMPETITOR TO WATCH AND A WOMAN OF STEEL DISPLAYING CONTINUOUS DETERMINATION. HT SPOKE WITH BEEZIE ABOUT THE CHALLENGES SHE HAS FACED, HOW SHE PERCEIVES SUCCESS, AND WHAT MAKES HER WANT TO CONTINUE TO ACHIEVE MORE.

© CHRONICLE OF THE HORSE





Beezie & Simon during the 2013 Rolex FEI World Cup

Many of us know about your astounding and prolific career; how did you handle the challenges you have faced?

The road has not always been easy, but I have been fortunate enough to get together with people like Katie Prudent and later my husband John, who have helped me get to the top. There are many challenges, from picking the right horses and developing them correctly and recovering when something unexpected happens, like lameness.

You have won the best there is to win, from Olympic medals to five-star show jumping events; what is it that gives you the strength to make you want to continue to

shine through?

I love the horses and seeing them improve, and I love to compete. Both of these things keep me passionate about continuing to ride and improve.

Were there times when you questioned your passion for the sport?

Not really. There have been challenges over the years, from rebuilding our string after older horses retired and getting through shows that didn't go as planned, but that's horses and the sport. You have to enjoy the entire process to stay intact in this sport.

Your lifelong experience with horses combined with naturally,

hard work, are probably what got you to where you are now. From your point of view, what is it that you look for when pursuing success?

You have to never give up. Not succeeding cannot be an option and there is no magic shortcut. Hard work and doing the little things right on a daily basis are what lead to success. You have to never give up.

So, you think success is a choice?

John and I always say we prefer to hire someone with the right attitude and work ethic over natural ability, so in some ways, yes. You choose to work hard and keep striving to improve and do things right for the horses every day.

In your early riding years, who would you credit most for your development and passion for riding?

My parents were big supporters in my early years. John, my husband, took a chance on me as a young rider as well and has been by my side helping me develop as a professional.

How do you prepare mentally and physically for an important show jumping competition?

I don't know as I do differently on the day of a big class than any other day! We treat each day and class as important and follow the same system, which keeps regularity for the horses.

You made your Grand Prix debut in 1985, meaning you have been professionally competing for 28 years. The rules of show jumping were a little different back then and so were the horses themselves. Which do you think is more difficult: the sport then or now – and what is it that you look for in horses now?

I don't think what we look for in horses has changed too much. John and I still like the same type of horse, one that's a bit of a Thoroughbred type that has a lot of blood. We like to see a horse that has the right attitude and aptitude to learn and improve.

I was present during the Rolex World Cup Final in Sweden and watched you win the first day's competitions and ultimately be crowned the World Champion on the last day. Many had bets riding on other riders; what were your instincts about competing at the World Cup and what would you tell those who didn't bet on you?

The World Cup Final was one we had been trying to win for years. We had come close in the past with other horses, but it just all came together this year with Simon. He is a great horse for those types of events, where the pressure is on, the crowd is big and the competition lasts over several days. He's the type that has enough blood and endurance to last. I felt good going into the Final; I had confidence in Simon and our relationship that has developed and that served us both well.

Over the past 15 years, show jumping has tremendously developed in the Middle East and we have seen many young and promising riders emerge on the scene. Have you been watching any Arab riders compete and if so, who would you say has potential to make a mark in the next five years?

Years ago Kamal Bahamdan rode with John and me, and I think he has made a mark on the Saudi team and will continue to do so in the next five years. He is a serious student of the sport and brings that focus to developing his horses.

There has been talk about some objecting to the sponsorship of the Saudi Equestrian Fund to the FEI Nations Cup; how would you comment to that and do you think this sponsorship deal changes the competition format, positively or negatively?

Any time you have a new sponsor ready to support our sport, it's a good thing, in my opinion. I think the new format of the Nations Cup brings some new excitement to it and it's a little less confusing to the fans to have one big final everyone is working towards. With it being the first year, there may be small questions to be ironed out in the future, but I think



John Madden

the changes made by the FEI were positive for the riders, horses and supporters of the sport.

Beyond show jumping, are there any other sports or horse sports that you enjoy?

I enjoy dressage and, outside of horses, I enjoy downhill skiing.

If there is something about Beezie that you would change, what would that be?

I am always working on myself, so this is ever-changing.

Where will the world have the honour of watching you compete next – and what do you hope to

achieve in the next two years?

This fall I will compete at the New Albany Classic, the Nation's Cup Final in Spain and then a few of the indoor shows here in the United States. Over the next two years, I would love to continue to represent the USA on teams, including the World Equestrian Games.

With all of your experience and successes, what words of advice would you give young riders?

Expect to work hard every day. John and I always attribute our success in the ring to all the day-to-day hard work we put in. There are lots of opportunities for young riders if they are willing to work hard and have a good attitude. 🐾