

Holly Bachor

In the Tack or at the Ingate

By Lindsay Brock

Holly Bachor always knew where she wanted to go with her life and shaped her career around horses. She just took a few unexpected, and unusual, turns in the road on her way there.

Growing up in the rolling hills just outside Catskill Park in Kingston, New York, Holly was born into an archetypal all-American family. Her father, Tom, owned his own construction company alongside her mother, Joanne, who was a special education teacher. Together they raised three daughters, of which Holly was the youngest. While her sisters dabbled in riding for a time, Holly caught the horse bug early on and could never shake it.

“My grandfather always had horses in the backyard for my mother when she was growing up,” said Holly, who followed in her mother’s footsteps to become involved with the Woodstock Riding Club in New York. “She grew up so close to the shows that they would host. She would ride her horse there, show all day and then ride home. She had a love for the horses much like I do.”

When Holly was 8, her parents brought her to Flying Change Farm in Accord, New York, where she began taking lessons with Diane Schoonmaker. Competitions soon followed with Holly being a second-generation participant at Woodstock Riding Club events and qualifying for the New York State Fair in Syracuse on several occasions.



Holly in Edinburgh, Scotland

FIRST HORSE

Five years after her first lesson, Holly's parents found her a horse of her own; Holly still owns the Quarter Horse named Fancy. After inspiring Holly to make horses a part of her life permanently, the mare remains at Flying Change Farm doing the same for other young riders as a trusted member of their lesson program.

When it came time to decide a path for her adult life, Holly knew she didn't want horses to simply be a weekend hobby. She attended Cazenovia College in Cazenovia, New York, to study equine business management, and it was there that she also joined their Intercollegiate Horse Show Association (IHSA) team.

"My experiences at Cazenovia are what led me to the horse sport industry," said Holly. "For the love of the horses, I knew I wanted to

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stay in the industry, but I also knew how hard it is to make a living. My goal was to stay on the business side to try and be a little bit more successful."

To that end, Holly made a call at the end of her junior year of college while searching for internship opportunities. The corporate office for HITS Horse Shows was right up the road from where she grew up and she had worked as an intern there during the summer before her final year of college.

"I worked enough that my internship was done in a week and a half, but they hired me on for the rest of the summer and then full time after I graduated [in 2006]," said Holly. "I was there for five years and really did a little bit of everything. Horse shows are an 'all hands on deck' thing. I was involved in everything from vendors to running a gate to being a horse show secretary, and I really learned all aspects of the horse show industry."

Photos from top to bottom:
Holly and Veerle
Photo by ESI

Holly Bachor and her Australian Shepherd, Zoe





GOING FULL CIRCLE

Holly transitioned from the horse show industry to working directly with a barn in 2010 after meeting her partner of eight years, trainer David Jennings, who owns Full Circle Farm, with bases in Franklin, Tennessee, and Ocala, Florida. Stepping into a barn manager role, Holly manages the horses of Full Circle Farm while also getting back to riding.

"I've seen David develop horses and riders from the ponies all the way to the grand prix level," said Holly who, through David, earned the opportunity to own her own horse again. "He has been very generous in allowing me to ride and, three years ago, I purchased a bay mare named L. Amazing Grace. I don't know what it is about good mares, but they seem to fall in my lap."

With David's guidance, Holly is producing the 6-year-old L. Amazing Grace herself. They've competed in the adult amateur and in jumper divisions this year.

"It's nice to be successful in the ring, but bringing along this horse has been very rewarding as well," she said. "Seeing her jump around courses is in itself a really nice feeling."

Holly and David spend the majority of their time on the road traveling to horse shows, and

it was on one of those trips six years ago that they found themselves at the Vermont Summer Festival in East Dorset, Vermont, and met Billy Glass, the technical coordinator. Fast friends through their shared passion for sport fishing, David, Billy, and Holly found themselves on a boat together in Florida two years ago when a new opportunity came up.

"Billy was on the phone and when he hung up, he said that he needed someone to run a gate in Vermont for the second half of the six-week circuit," recalled Holly. "I told him I would do it and he looked surprised. I don't think he realized I even knew how to run a gate, but I like to try and keep my foot in the door on that side of the industry as much as I can."

SUMMERS IN VERMONT

Holly took on the position during the 2016 season and, when the opportunity arose again, didn't hesitate to accept a gate for all six weeks during the 2018 season. As the weather warms, Holly, David and the horses of Full Circle Farm will head north and grow temporary roots in the mountains of southern Vermont.

"The fact that I started working on the horse show [management] side of the industry was a coincidence because I knew nothing

about it at the time, but it's where my skill set developed and it's what I'm good at," said Holly. "Horses come and go and sometimes you need something to fall back on. But it's more than a fallback for me, I love coming into the horse show every morning and working with the people."

The people are what makes days at a Vermont Summer Festival ingate so special for Holly.

"Billy once told me that it isn't hard to work in Vermont because the people are all happy to be there, and it's true," she said. "The show has created an atmosphere where everyone loves what they're doing and that makes them all — from riders to staff — great to work with."

Holly has had the unique opportunity to see both sides of an intricate industry and she maintains that she's better for it. Knowing what a horse show secretary faces each day has made her a highly-organized barn manager, and understanding how hard show managers work has made her an appreciative competitor.

Anticipating a summer of hard, yet enjoyable, work at the Vermont Summer Festival, Holly concluded, "You hear all these sayings about doing what you love, but it's true. What I do never feels like a job!" 

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