



Behind the Brand

KINGSLAND

Lin Kingsrød sat on the sideline of the International Arena in Wellington this past March and watched as her once modest line of equestrian-inspired clothing continued to grow on a global scale. Notably it was eighteen years ago when a preliminary business plan among friends grew into what is now Kingsland Equestrian.

Best known for stylish logo patches on classic sweaters and breeches, iconic bomber jackets and even the occasional bikini, Kingsrød's clothing sensation sprang from a simple effort to improve her own comfort while in the tack.

A rider since the age of seven, Kingsrød grew up in a small town outside Oslo, Norway. She and her twin sister got their first pony at age 12, which they shared for a year before each having one of their own. From that first pony, Kingsrød went on to compete throughout Norway, Belgium, Poland and Switzerland before making an appearance at the European Championships as a 15-year-old pony rider.

A lawyer by trade, she met her husband, Norwegian rider Dag Ove Kingsrød, at age 22. Once she completed her studies, the couple moved to Germany to follow her husband's riding schedule. While starting a family Kingsrød helped in the stables, but she stayed on the ground while pregnant with her first of three children. The Kingsland seed was planted at this time.

"I was approached by a Norwegian friend who was living in Hong Kong with close ties to the textile industry; she asked if I wanted to start something up with her," explained Kingsrød. "It was then that I had the idea to start doing something with clothing."

THE CARDBOARD BOX ERA

Inspired by fashion and function, Kingsland's humble beginnings included a storage facility in Kingsrød's home and cardboard boxes of merchandise in her trunk, as she embarked on a line with a few pieces focused on fit, comfort and quality.

"I went to a fair in Germany, rented a space and built a stand," said Kingsrød. "Then I met a tack shop owner in Spain and asked if he would look at the boxes I had. The next day he sold out, so I gave him more boxes and we went from there."

Traveling from horse show to trade show, Kingsrød began to make a name for herself in equine fashion. "I sold out of those boxes one item at the time," she said. "I designed, packed, talked, hauled, travelled, pushed and prayed. Soon, some of the big riding names discovered that I actually carried something new and better."

After three years the cardboard box era led to something bigger.

THE EXPLOSIVE BOMBER JACKET

While Kingsrød started successfully with a few styles of breeches, shirts and tall socks, the game changer was her leap of faith with the Kingsland bomber jacket.

Kingsrød admits that she didn't have a clue how much work went into making a jacket. When she approached her manufacturer in



Kingsland founder, Lin Kingsrød (middle), and Gianluca Caron (left), the brand's Manager for North and South America.

Hong Kong about what she wanted, they told her that she had to make a minimum 600 of each model — 1,200 in total. A big shift from the cardboard box era, "That jacket was my dream, but I didn't know how we were going to sell all that merchandise," she said.

Even today, she isn't sure how she sold that initial run of 1,200 jackets. A credit to her foresight, Kingsrød wisely chose to develop a line that the market embraced. A strong symbol of Kingsland quality, the bomber jacket, still available today, exploded on the market fifteen years ago, escalating the brand to a new level.

WEARS WELL AND LOOKS GREAT

One thing remains steadfast with the Kingsland line; this is workwear. Whether it's white, pink, classic or fashion-forward, it's worn by equestrians that encounter dirt, wind, rain and sun on a daily basis.

Holding true to this motto, seventy percent of each collection consists of the classical Kingsland look, while thirty percent is geared towards fashion trends.

Kingsrød submits each garment to heavy testing before manufacturing to ensure it can live up to both the Kingsland standard and the equestrian lifestyle. "We test everything. We get some samples, test them, make changes and send them back," she said. "The clothes we make are for work and it's important to remember that when creating competition wear."

EMBRACING NORTH AMERICA

Kingsland has a strong grip on European buyers with sponsored riders, including the likes of show jumpers Marcus Ehning, Beat Mändli, as well as dressage royalty Charlotte Dujardin, flying the Kingsland flag. So expansion into North America was a natural progression for Kingsrød's plan. Signing U.S. Olympian Reed Kessler at the end of 2013 was a start. The young phenom wears Kingsland while competing all over the world. The next step was establishing a North American headquarters in Wellington, FL.

Partnering with retailers, and taking on the title sponsorship of the CSIO Wellington Nations Cup this past winter, Kingsland began advancing their U.S. presence and sponsorships. The strategy included recognizing up and coming riders who would take Kingsland along as they continued to rise to the pinnacle of their sport. Choosing Canadian cover model Julia Tops, and up and coming show jumpers Sophie Simpson and Spencer Smith, as well as break-out dressage rider Laura Graves, illustrates the rise of both the brand and the athletes.

"We always wanted to experience this market, and to partner with young riders who can increase our awareness is a good thing," said Kingsrød. "It's not that different [from Europe]. These riders like classic clothes. It would be nice to come back in a few years and see everyone at all levels wearing the clothing."



Kamilla Ladies Show Shirt



Abbey Ladies Softshell Show Jacket



Loureen Ladies Show Shirt



Arran Unisex Sweat Jacket

Classic Summer Bomber Jacket



COMFORT ZONE

Since 1999, Kingsland has grown to 40 employees with offices in Norway, Denmark, China and the United States. The company releases 400 new styles in each of its seasonal collections, is sold through more than 1,000 stores worldwide, however Kingsrød always looks for ways to improve the product.

She admits that she's happy if, at the end of a long day at the barn or show, people don't want to take their riding clothes off. "Riders buy what they like and what they are comfortable in," she said. "I hope the riders respond to our attention to comfort and quality."

The market for both classic riding apparel as well as fashionable barn wear has changed in the the almost two decades since Kingsland hit the scene, but, Kingsrød couldn't be happier that she made the leap all those years ago. She still can't believe how an idea to make more comfortable clothes has evolved from the trunk of her car into the Kingsland empire of today. **HS**



Belvedere Ladies Show Shirt and Kelly Ladies Breeches

Julia Tops

Gaining Notoriety *in Kingsland*

Julia Tops loves Netflix. She is a self-proclaimed excellent parallel parker. And the up and coming young equestrian also loves rescuing animals – she has eight dogs, two cats, two sheep, two birds and a chinchilla. How could you not love this girl?

Tops has strong show jumping lineage. Her father, Jan Tops, is the Founder and President of the Longines Global Champions Tour and an Olympic Team Gold medalist for The Netherlands. Her mother, Tani Ziedler, is an international show jumper and a member of the Canadian Equestrian Team.

Born in Lucerne, Switzerland, Tops now lives in Calgary, Alberta, Canada, where she rides at her mother's Ziedler Farm and grew up competing at Spruce Meadows. At just 17 years of age, she has already made a name for herself in the ranks of international show jumping.

"My mom used to put me in the little baby björn in front of her and hack around, so I guess I have been riding my whole life," Tops explained. "It was kind of in my blood to go down this road, but I have also always loved animals and horses. It has been my passion just as much as my family's."

As a rising young star, Tops has had the benefit of working with many well-known riders and trainers. Her list of tutors includes Lauren Hough, Missy Clark and John Brennan, Bobbie Reber, Eddie Macken, Susie Schroer, Dick Carvin and Francie Steinwedell-Carvin.

"I never really trained with either of my parents; they wanted me to learn from a lot of different people," Tops noted. "Actually I think one of the most valuable things in my riding thus far is that I have never really had a consistent trainer. I just keep learning new things from many trainers, which has been really beneficial for me."

Among her greatest achievements, Tops was the youngest ever winner of the CET Medal Western Regional Final in Vancouver, BC, at 13 years of age. That same year, she also competed in her first grand prix in British Columbia. Tops has represented Canada on the junior team at the North American Junior/Young Rider Championships and has shown and placed at various locations on the Global Champions Tour.



Julia is wearing Kingsland's Gina Ladies Body Warmer, Bayport Ladies Polo, Kirstie Ladies Technical Breeches and Alert Low Canvas Shoes



Julia is wearing Kingsland's Amelia Ladies Fleece Jacket, Karen Ladies Breeches, Lois Coolmax Knee Socks and Aleen High Canvas Shoes

Currently competing in the High Junior Jumpers as well as the 1.40m and 1.45m classes, Tops is also looking for a new horse to step up to the grand prix level. A few of her present mounts include Castillio (a 14-year-old Swedish Warmblood gelding), India Blue ZF (a homebred nine-year-old Dutch Warmblood mare), and Lady Margaret ZF (a homebred six-year-old Holsteiner mare).

As any young rider, Tops has her idols in the sport and tries to learn something from all of the leading competitors.

"There are so many great riders," she admitted. "As a Canadian, I admire Eric Lamaze - his ability to just give his all every time he steps in the ring and his sheer passion and commitment to any decision that he makes. He does not look at how anyone else rides. He just has his own plan, and he really commits to that and that is something I really value. I look up to having that kind of absolute commitment in all decisions."

While excelling in the sport of show jumping, Tops has always stayed focused on her scholastic accomplishments. She recently graduated as a First Class Honors student from Calgary's Strathcona Tweedsmuir School, where she was involved in the Model United Nations program and traveled to conferences around the world. Set to attend the University of Toronto in September, Tops was accepted into a competitive 20-person program to study International Relations with a minor in Political Science.

"I want to go to Law School, but then I can always do something with my degree if I decide not to," Tops detailed. "My dream is to work for the United Nations one day."

She also gives back to the community by volunteering at her local food bank and also by being a Rider Ambassador for JustWorld International.

If show jumping talent, impressive scholastic accolades or inspiring



Photo © Lindsay Fisher

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If show jumping talent, impressive scholastic accolades or inspiring philanthropic work are not enough, Tops is also the first junior rider in North America to be sponsored by leading equestrian apparel company, Kingsland Equestrian. Having entered into a partnership agreement in 2014, she now competes from head to toe in Kingsland fashion and proudly represents the brand.

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Tops took matters into her own hands to secure the Kingsland sponsorship. She sent the company her resume and asked if they had room for a new addition. At first the answer was no, but one week later Kingsland's Founder and Owner, Lin Kingsrød, replied to Tops herself with good news.

"I love Kingsland and I knew it was a company that I would be honored to represent," Tops explained. "When they originally replied to me and said that they did not have a spot for me, I thought, 'Okay, at least I put myself out there.' Then Lin emailed me and said they had created a spot for me because I was so passionate about it and took the initiative to email them and seek it out. I was thrilled. I cannot say enough good things about that company and their products."

In her riding, Tops hopes to turn professional and go on to represent Canada in championship competition one day. At the moment, she is still managing school and riding as well as upholding her other obligations.

"I think Kingsland has really good family values," Tops said. "Kingsland itself is such a close, tight-knit family. They value the idea of balance, which is something I feel strongly about as well, with school and riding, and personal life."

For now, Tops is committed to moving up the equestrian ranks and furthering her education. After competing at the Spruce Meadows Summer Series through June and July, she will compete in Europe until she returns for the start of her freshman year in Toronto. **HS**