

Armand Leone:

FROM NATIONS CUP TEAMS TO THE COURT ROOM

By Lindsay Brock



Armand Leone
Photo by Jump Media

A Armand Leone of Leone Equestrian Law LLC is an attorney by trade and a horseman by passion. A graduate of the Columbia Business School in New York and the Columbia University School of Law, he also received his M.D. from New York Medical College and his B.A. from the University of Virginia. While his professional endeavors led him into legal practice, his personal goals saw him collecting an impressive list of international riding accomplishments, including World Cup Finals appearances and Nations Cup victories.

Noticing a lack of legal representation for equine issues, Leone blended his experience as a lawyer with his dedication to horse sport and formed Leone Equestrian Law LLC in 2014. He operates that business under the principles of fair play, safe sport and clean competition.

Sidelines caught up with Armand to find out more about his riding and law careers.

What's your most memorable moment as a rider?

Being the lead rider on the 1980 Nations Cup Team and purposefully galloping through the finish timers after the last element of the triple combination in the Dublin CSIO with a clear round and coming in just 0.1 seconds under the time allowed. It was my first clear round in a Nations Cup. I jumped a second clear round and we won the Aga Khan Trophy.

What led you to study law and open an equestrian-specific practice?

I started studying law in 1988 and, after graduating in 1991, I began working as a health care and personal injury attorney while continuing to stay involved with horses. In 2012, I leased a horse that became injured and was involved in a lengthy and expensive arbitration for which I hired an attorney. I ended up having to teach the attorney about horses and our industry. I realized that I could help more people by representing them when equestrian legal issues arise, so I started an equestrian practice. From USEF hearings to litigation, horse people need someone who understands their world.

How is the horse sport industry different from other industries?

Horses are unique. The way they're bought, sold and leased is unlike any other product. Horses are constantly changing and the way they're handled, trained and ridden affects current performance and soundness. Paying to educate an attorney about the horse business is not a cost-effective way to resolve legal matters.

What's the most pressing legal issue facing the horse sport industry today?

Horse abuse — both in terms of medication and training methods. This is the most important legal issue because the public perception of the sport depends on promoting horse welfare.

What's most rewarding about being an equine lawyer?

Finding efficient solutions for clients. If you understand the underlying issues, you're able to recognize things that non-equestrian lawyers don't.

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