



Frank Madden with students; photo © Jump Media

THIS MONTH'S QUESTION:

“What are important elements to consider when developing the talents of young riders? What can the United States do to make the sport accessible and to connect young talent with good opportunities?”

Each issue, a new question is answered by an industry professional. Have a question you want answered? Send it to sarah@horseandstylemag.com

“You could write a book on this subject! I think for developing young riders there are two avenues to consider. First, you have what the federations are trying to provide us with at the horse shows. One of the major initiatives we have seen is the addition of the Under 25 division. We have added U25 classes to our Old Salem Farm Spring Horse Shows, which have been very well received and a great addition for not only the show, but also the riders at that age. There is also the Emerging Athletes Program (EAP) through the USHJA, which helps riders gain the knowledge and experience they need to excel.

The other avenue you have to consider is how an aspiring young rider gets ahead in the sport, and I think that comes through individual help. Most importantly, seasoned professionals in our sport need to be constantly aware of the young talent coming along and do what they can to help further their education. At Old Salem Farm, we have developed a working student program to give young riders opportunities to gain experience with professional trainers, and to compete quality horses, while also contributing to the farm itself.

It is a complicated question, and it seems that the sport has grown so much from when I was a kid. The demand for the top horses that young riders and young professionals need to ride in order to advance in the sport is bigger than ever. That increases the value of those horses, which in turn makes them difficult to obtain. However, the good news is that the sport is booming and when the right horse comes along, there are so many exceptional shows, and good prize money to be won. This attracts the best talent and contributes greatly to developing a rider's aspirations of moving up in the industry.”

— FRANK MADDEN,
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