



## Q and A

### Gustavo Mirabal of G&C Farm

**G**ustavo Mirabal and his wife, Carolina, made a splash on the international jumping scene in 2010 after moving from their native Venezuela to Wellington, Florida, with their three daughters. They bought a farm, entered into a major sponsorship at the Winter Equestrian Festival, and supported Venezuelan jumping athlete Pablo Barrios. Their support of Barrios led to his ascension to the top 25 in the world rankings, and they continued to help other Latin American riders including Gustavo Arroyo, Mark Bluman, Luis Fernando Larrazabal, and Luis Miguel Martinez. Gustavo and Carolina themselves were extremely successful amateur riders, claiming victories across North America and Europe on the Longines Global Champions Tour.

The couple worked with Nelson, Rodrigo, and Helio Pessoa, and extended their sponsorship to major equestrian events in North America, including the American Invitational, Spruce Meadows, and Live Oak International, as well as in Europe at the former Gucci Paris Masters. In early 2015, the Mirabals moved to Madrid and formed a successful new partnership with Spanish Olympian Sergio Alvarez Moya, which continues to this day.

With the addition of a fourth child, Gustavo Jr., and increasing work responsibilities, Gustavo has made the difficult decision to retire from the sport and limit the number of horses under his ownership. While the majority of his horses are now sold, he will continue to own Charmeur for Moya as well as support American-based Larrazabal of Venezuela with G&C Close Up.

**Q** There has been word in the industry about your retirement from the equestrian world. What can you tell us about it?

**A** First of all, thank you very much for this interview. I have decided to retire as a rider since I have to dedicate more time to my other businesses, but retiring from the



*Gustavo and Carolina Mirabal.*

equestrian world completely is impossible, at least for me. Those of us that are in love with this sport and fascinated with jumping and horses can never be fully retired.

**Q** Is G&C Farm still operating?

**A** The company, G&C Farm, was created to support Grand Prix jumping. When we moved to Wellington, we decided to support the Winter Equestrian Festival and I have to thank Mark Bellissimo for helping us. However, in the last months the company was mainly focused on supporting my participation as an amateur rider. Now that I have decided not to compete anymore, it does not make any sense to maintain a company with high operational costs, especially now that my horses are under the structure of Sergio Alvarez Moya's company, making everything simpler for me.

**Q** Are you still associated with Sergio?

**A** Of course. I will always be associated with Sergio because we consider him as part of our family. Carolina, my children, and I have a very special relationship with him. I talked to Sergio and we agreed that when I acquire a special horse, we could go back to business.

**Q** What happened with the G&C horses you had with Sergio?

**A** The horses that were competing at Grand Prix level were sold. G&C Don Vito was sold a year ago in London, G&C Unicstar sold in Japan, and Arrayan was recently sold to Carlos Lopez. That is the big difference of

being a partner with Sergio because, for the first time, money goes back into my bank account! That part of the sport is also very satisfactory.

**Q** What has been the difference between Sergio and your other riders?

**A** Actually, I only supported two riders at the Grand Prix level: Pablo Barrios and Sergio Alvarez Moya. Rodrigo Pessoa was an instructor/trainer for young riders such as Mark Bluman and Luis Fernando Larrazabal. The difference between Pablo and Sergio is very difficult to explain. For example, with Pablo it was more like taking a go kart driver all the way up to Formula 1, which implied a lot of personal and economic sacrifice. It was great though. We had a lot of success and placed the Venezuelan flag in the highest level of the sport, but I always felt the weight on my shoulders. With Sergio, it was as if Lewis Hamilton called you and said, "I want to drive your car." Sergio has always been a Formula 1 pilot; with or without sponsors, he will always be.

**Q** And Gustavo Arroyo?

**A** My relationship with Gustavo Arroyo was focused on developing young horses. This endeavor was very satisfactory because, for example, with G&C Quitador we had great success and it led to my association with Sergio, which brought me even greater satisfaction in this sport. Gustavo was part of all that, too, and I have to thank him for convincing me to ride again and compete. He was my instructor, and we had great wins together.

**Q** And what about Luis Miguel Martinez? He has been with you since you started G&C Farm.

**A** Certainly, Luis has been with me since the idea of G&C was born, before the creation of the company. Sometimes, while having some drinks, we remember all the different anecdotes of this great adventure and we laugh a lot. Luis, Karine Dalle, and Jorge Gomes were the first members of the team and were there the whole time. I also have to thank Leopoldo Palacios, who was instrumental in helping us start G&C Farm. Luis had confidence in a young horse, G&C Don Vito, and he made him from scratch



*Sergio Alvarez Moya and G&C Quitador Rochelais with Gustavo Mirabal.*

when nobody believed in this horse. Luis always said; "He will be a top horse, have patience." We had patience and Don Vito proved to be a winner and was sold at a high price. It was one of the great satisfactions I had in this sport. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all the people that have accompanied me during all these years with G&C Farm, the people that are always in the office and nobody sees: Beatriz Llana, Maria Fernanda Faria, Iveth Landa, Jennifer Wood and her team, as well as my riders Luis Fernando Larrazabal, Mark Bluman (with whom we laughed a lot every day), Manuel Machillanda, our veterinarian Dr. Jorge Gomez who was always very professional, and my super grooms, Karine and Jorge Gomes.

**Q** How about your experience with the Pessosas?

**A** Can you imagine! I was very lucky to work with the three Pessosas: Neco, Rodrigo and Helio; just being close to them you obtain a deep understanding of the sport. They are expert equestrians and good friends.

**Q** What are your happiest moments with G&C?

**A** I had many. I fondly remember the G&C FEI Nations' Cup in Wellington, especially the moment when I handed out the prize while seeing the Venezuelan flag waving. I also will

always remember the night at LGCT Cannes in 2017 when Sergio won the Grand Prix with G&C Arrayan. What a night. We were there with my son, Gustavo, who did not know what was going on but was looking at me and Carolina jumping for joy, and of course he did the same. I also remember each one of my triumphs being rewarded with the music of my country's national anthem.

**Q** Do your children like horses?

**A** None of them have caught the bug, but they have been an important part of this adventure. Actually, three of them were born after I created the company.

**Q** Will you bring back G&C in the future?

**A** I will do it again if Gustavo Junior likes horses! It would be great, and I will not have to pay for the newbie mistakes.

**Q** Do you have any regrets?

**A** Not having begun the relationship with Sergio earlier.

**Q** So, this is not a goodbye?

**A** Never, it would be impossible.

Photo: courtesy of G&C Farm