

Hannah Selleck Pursues her Passion

Reaching for the top requires hard work and dedication, even for the children of celebrities



Hannah and Barla, an Oldenburg mare by Baloubet du Rouet, who is her current first-string horse.

by Pamela Young

What is it like growing up as the daughter of a famous actor? Don't ask Hannah Selleck, whose father, Tom, has been a household name for two generations of TV fans. Hannah was brought up in an environment that only bore the trimmings of celebrity, but was never consumed by it.

In fact, it was kind of an ordinary upbringing. She was raised by her parents on their ranch, attended a local school, did her homework, played basketball, went to prom. Not so typical

was the disproportionate amount of time spent riding and training to become the professional equestrian she is today.

The 29-year-old college graduate runs a string of four from her bases at El Campeon Farms in Thousand Oaks, CA, and Wellington, FL; shows horses for clients, teaches a bit, and is in charge of a boutique breeding operation aimed at producing a supply chain of sport horses to enrich her career. *Horse Sport* caught up with her just before she headed off to Spruce Meadows for the summer series.



ASHLEY NEUHOF PHOTOGRAPHY

How hectic is your life right now?

My life is constantly on the go. This past winter was especially so, because I was riding at both Thermal [California] and WEF [Florida]. A typical day when I'm at home in California is up by 7:00 a.m. and at the barn to start riding at 8:00 a.m. I try and do a workout in the afternoon or occasionally I get up early for a session with my personal trainer at the gym. In the afternoon most days there are appointments for the horses with the chiropractor, farrier, or vets.

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How did you get interested in horses?

My earliest horse memory is taking a leadline lesson at Foxfield Riding School [near Thousand Oaks]. It was on a black Shetland pony named Sheba. Sheba was naughty and rooted the reins out of my hands and pulled me right off over her head. I got right back on and she did it again – in the dirt I went! Sheba didn't scare me off and I came back for more lessons every week on different ponies. I guess somewhere along the way I was hooked.

How involved are your parents in your equestrian career?

My parents have been supportive of my equestrian career, but they have always let me lead the way. Both my mom and dad discovered their own passion and talent and they encouraged me to do the same. I happened to fall in love with horses and then it turned into a passion for the sport. They have never been 'helicopter parents' driving my equestrian career. My dad came up with the idea to start breeding some of my top mounts when they retired, and from that they encouraged me to pursue a breeding operation. Instead of buying horses ready to go at the top of the sport, why not produce our own?

Can you identify a time when your hobby turned into a serious pursuit?

Thinking back, I have always pursued this sport seriously. Once you commit a significant amount

of time and finances to something it becomes serious, or at least for me that's the way it was. Preparing for the national medal finals as a junior was a serious pursuit for me. I set my goals and it took several tries, but by my last junior year I accomplished what I set forth to do, finishing second in the USEF Hunt Seat Medal Finals. That continued with winning the USEF Talent Search Finals, which was the greatest goal of my junior career. Then I moved on to Young Riders' goals, which also came to fruition when I won team and individual gold. Every time I accomplished a goal I felt that more reassured; that 'wow, maybe I can really do this!'

After university was the turning point for me. I took a job in public relations as I was finishing school. I knew I always had to have the horses in my life, but I didn't know to what extent. I thought that having a good career and riding/showing on the weekends as a high-level amateur would suffice. I quickly learned that being away from the horses and only pursuing this as a hobby did not make me happy. I went to my dad and he told me if I wanted to only ride I had to work. That year I turned professional and went for it.

Tell us something that would surprise people about you.

A lot of people actually don't know about my family's sport horse breeding operation, Descanso Farm. We started the breeding program with one of my best mares, Tosca [a Belgian Warmblood], and we now have seven horses on the

ground, the oldest of which is seven. We're really dedicated to producing top-quality jumpers here in the US, and it's been exciting to see that goal coming to fruition already with our young horses.

How are you going about that?

A good friend of mine, Sohnke Theymann, is very knowledgeable and comes from a family of breeders. He's very good at matching the mares to the appropriate stallions. Our choice is limited in the sense that we only use fresh semen because it works best on our older mares. We bred a couple of our mares to Barb Ellison's stallions at Wild Turkey Farm. She has also been very helpful. We use mainly Holsteiner and Oldenburger lines.

Horsepower and an ultra-competitive nature aside, is there another ingredient that gives you an edge?

No matter how much talent you have, you have to work hard and immerse yourself in the sport. There is always more to learn.

Who's played a role in your education as a rider?

Michelle Grubb helps me now, but Karen Healey really brought me along as a young rider. My first job was as an assistant to her. Leslie Howard and Ian Millar were also influential, as was Katie Prudent and Laura Kraut. Will Simpson I have known since I was a kid and he's now riding some of our babies. Everyone has their own system. You take what you like from each system and formulate your own.

How would you describe yourself?

It's hard to be objective about yourself, I'll leave that to others to decide!

Where is your favourite place in the entire world?

My family's ranch.

Where would you most like to go that you haven't been?

Russia. I've wanted to go since high school, but haven't been able to fit it into my schedule. I'd like to go because I think it would be so different to anywhere else I've been – so foreign.

When and where did you last go on vacation?

I went to a friend's wedding in Capri, Italy, last summer.

Do you have a health and fitness regimen?

Yes, my main focus is staying healthy for my sport. I try to stretch daily, work out with a personal trainer at least twice a week, and I do cardio on the other days, like running or spin class. This past season at WEF I started boxing and really enjoyed it.

Can you recommend a book or movie from the last year?

I love Christopher Nolan's films. *Dunkirk* was cinematically very interesting and wasn't your typical war movie. It was very emotional.

What's your guilty pleasure?

Eating cookie dough.

If you had a life lesson to share with us, what would it be?

Learn from your experiences and enjoy the process.

What's on the horizon for you in 2018?

Up next is Spruce Meadows' Summer Series, which is always one of my favourite venues. Then I'm looking forward to Split Rock Sonoma. Now that I'm based back home in California, it's nice to have more FEI shows with great prize money on the West Coast.

Do you have a burning ambition?

I have goals, but nothing immediate. My goal would be to put a string of horses together capable of taking me to the top tier and to be successful there. 🐾



ELENA LOSENTI

FAST FACTS:

DOB: December 16, 1988

Domicile: Thousand Oaks, California

Achievements: 2008 NAJYRC Individual and team gold medals and 2006 NAJYRC Team silver riding Bauer; 1st \$38,000 CSI2* Canadian Pacific Grand Prix at the 2015 Longines Masters of Los Angeles and 2nd and 3rd-place finishes at the CSI3* Blenheim Spring Classic in 2018 (Barla)

Status: Single

Education: Loyola Marymount University

Top Mount: Barla, 14-year-old bay Oldenburg mare

Giving Back: Serves as an ambassador for Brooke USA, a charity dedicated to improving the welfare of working equines in the developing world