



Caitlyn Shiels

Growing up in Sheffield, MA, Caitlyn Shiels fell in love with riding at the age of eight and quickly dedicated herself to equestrian sport. As a junior rider, Caitlyn began commuting to New York to train with Andre Dignelli as a working student at Heritage Farm. Under his tutelage, she finished in the top 10 of each of the major American equitation finals and claimed both the team and individual gold medals at the 2004 North American Young Rider Championships.

In 2018, after spending several years working with and learning from top hunter and jumper professionals—including McLain Ward and Ken and Emily Smith—Caitlyn launched her own hunter/jumper training and sales operation, True North Stables, now based in Illinois and Florida.

THE BASICS

Name: Caitlyn Shiels

Age: 35

Business: True North Stables

THE FUN STUFF

Do you have any nicknames? I have two, "Gucci" and "Thing." Several years ago, I worked for show jumpers Jonathan and Christine McCrea in East Windsor, CT, and Jon gave me the "Gucci" nickname. It stuck with a bunch of my friends that still call me that! My good friend and my very first client at True North, Michelle Durpetti, coined the "Thing" nickname. We're "Thing 1" and "Thing 2," and to her I'm "Thing."

Who do you look up to? I really greatly admire my parents, Michael and Lynne Shiels. Among countless other things, they've been incredible examples to me of love, hard work, and dedication. I also really look up to Andre Dignelli; he continues to be a mentor who I really value.

What famous horse would you love to

ride? HH Azur in the jumpers and Private Practice in the hunters.

If you could have any super power, what would it be? Being able to read minds—of both humans and horses!

What is the last thing you binge watched? *Law and Order SVU* and *The Kids Baking Championship*.

Do you have any lucky charms? I don't have any physical items or superstitions, but I do think Michelle Durpetti is a good luck charm for me. I ride a lot of her horses, and it's always a good omen when she is at the ring. It could be luck, or it could be the way she reminds me that we're just there to go jump some jumps and have fun!

What's your guilty pleasure? Eating Sour Patch Kids!

What's the first thing you do when you get home after a long day? Collapsing on the couch! I was diagnosed with Lupus a few years ago, and it's not something

that I talk about often or that I ever let get in the way of my riding, but that can leave me extra wiped out or fatigued at the end of a long show day!

Who is your equestrian idol? Germany's Marcus Ehning. He rides so beautifully and correctly. Every time that I watch him, I feel like he's giving a riding lesson.

What song do you love to have on repeat? Lady Gaga and Bradley Cooper's "Shallow."

What is on your riding bucket list? I've never shown in Europe, and that's high on my list of bucket list goals.

What is your favorite horse movie? *Secretariat*.

What was your worst fall off a horse? I had a freak fall in Kentucky one year. The horse landed off of the jump, got stuck in the footing, and we both flipped. It was definitely a scary fall! It resulted in a broken collarbone for me, but fortunately the horse was okay. 🐾