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47 riders, drivers, and vaulters share their stories, and those of their medal-winning horses.

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## Get a Glimpse Behind the Medals in “Riding for the Team”

**By Molly Sorge/Jump Media LLC** • When Robert Ridland arrived in Gladstone, NJ, to ride with Bertalan de Némethy as part of the U.S. Equestrian Team, he was just 18 and owned one pair of breeches. This situation led to an uncomfortable morning, as Ridland describes in “Riding for the Team,” a compilation of stories from 47 horsemen and horsewomen who have served on a championship team for the U.S., including show jumpers, eventers, dressage riders, para-dressage riders, reiners, endurance riders, drivers, and vaulters.

They all shared stories about their struggles, their triumphs, and their journey to the top of the sport. Renowned equestrian journalist Nancy Jaffer compiled and edited their first-person accounts. The book, from the U.S. Equestrian Team Foundation and full of fantastic photos like Margie Engle at age five on a pony ride and Phillip Dutton dressed in Australian Outback gear with his Pony Club as well as fascinating behind-the-scenes stories, is a must-read for any fan of the sport.

“One of the many requirements involved always dressing appropriately in boots and breeches,” Ridland recalls about his time at Gladstone. “It also meant making sure they were clean.

A few times, we had to have the washer and dryer working on our breeches at the last minute before we got on the horses in the morning.”

One winter morning, Ridland didn’t time his laundry well, and was stuck with wet breeches for his lesson with de Némethy. A California native, Ridland was new to cold mornings. “Once we got outside, my breeches basically froze,” he remembers in the book.

“Riding for the Team” is packed with insightful accounts like Ridland’s, tales of what went on behind the medal-winning efforts of U.S. athletes that made headlines. “The compelling stories collected in this volume, as told by the athletes who have become part of equestrian history, demonstrate how to make dreams reality, while acknowledging sacrifice as the other side of achievement,” Jaffer writes in the book’s Introduction. “Those who compete at the highest level share several characteristics in addition to the love and appreciation of the horse. All have demonstrated singular focus to achieve excellence, putting aside other pursuits as they strive to represent their country.”

Perfect to learn more about your favorite stars or for a holiday gift, “Riding for the Team” is now available for pre-order. Proceeds benefit the U.S. Equestrian Team Foundation, the not-for-profit organization that helps provide funding for the High Performance competition, training, coaching, travel, and educational needs of America’s elite and developing athletes and horses in partnership with US Equestrian.



**1.** The cover of the new “Riding for the Team” book from the USET Foundation. **2.** Margie Engle at 12 years old showing Gladewinds Angelwings in 1973. Courtesy of Margie Engle. **3.** Representing the United States in international team competition was Robert Ridland (second left) with Chef d’Equipe Bertalan de Némethy (far left). Photo by USET Archive. **4.** Beezie Madden and Authentic, the book cover stars, in their victory gallop at the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. Photo by Jenny Ross.

In the book, Beezie Madden, who has won two Olympic team gold medals in show jumping for the U.S., recalls her first team competition for her country, when she was a last-minute substitute. “I went double-clear and we won. That was a milestone in my career. I never imagined being good enough to ride for the Team. I was a kid from the Midwest who did seven or eight shows year until my last junior year. I wasn’t on anyone’s radar, including my own,” Madden said.

Dressage star Laura Graves details her persistence with a difficult young Verdades on the way to their international successes. Michelle Gibson, who rode on the U.S. bronze-medal dressage team at the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games, talks about how she made the team while a working student in Europe with no budget for travel. Gina Miles reveals that after she presented McKinlaigh at the first horse inspection of the 2008 Olympic Games, she went back to the hotel and gave her young children a bath and put them to bed.

“The stories are all different, but they share common threads—love for the horse, a passion to succeed, pride in representing their country,” said Jaffer. “After decades of writing about equestrian sport for newspapers, magazines, and websites, I knew many of the people featured in the book before I started the project. Yet it gave me greater insight to learn more about them because we had the ability to talk at length, rather than being confined to quick question-and-answer sessions in the heat of a competition. I gained greater understanding of those I had known, and also met some others with whom I hadn’t previously interacted. They are all remarkable people, not only for their athletic ability but also for the way they interact with their horses, who of course have a starring role in every story.”

The book is a sequel to “Riding for America,” which Jaffer also compiled and was published in 1990. “Riding for America” highlighted key figures on the American equestrian scene from 1976 to 1990 and followed the tradition of the 1976 volume, “The USET Book of Riding: The First Quarter Century of the USET,” which was put together by the late USET chairman emeritus and Olympic show jumping gold medalist Bill Steinkraus.

Published by Trafalgar Square Books, “Riding for the Team” is now available for pre-order at [uset.org/riding-for-the-team-book-sale/](https://uset.org/riding-for-the-team-book-sale/). The 302-page hardback volume will be a treasured part of any horseman’s library, and proceeds from the sale of “Riding for the Team” will help support athletes representing the United States of America.