

# SLOANE COLES

## Riding Her Own Path

By Lindsay Brock

Sloane Coles is living every young rider's dream. It's a somewhat universal bucket list—to start out on the ponies and junior hunters, get good experience in the junior jumpers, finish your junior career with top ribbons on every major equitation final, move from the junior jumper ranks to working for top riders, then compete in grand prix classes and make a U.S. Nations Cup team.

Sloane has checked every one of those goals off her to-do list, and it's all a result of hard work and making the most of opportunities that came her way. In September 2019, the pieces all came together, and she jumped in her first U.S. senior Nations Cup when she donned a team "pinque" coat and rode Chippendale's Boy DZ in the Spruce Meadows 'Masters' Nations Cup CSIO5\*. Sloane will be one to keep an eye on in the Winter Equestrian Festival grand prix classes this winter.

"During every lesson as a junior and every big event, I was always told, 'All of this preparation is for the moment when you're in a Nations Cup representing your country,'" said Sloane. "I was so surprised with how at ease I felt when I finally rode on the team. I have no doubt that it's because it was engrained in me from the beginning. I was always told that if I wanted to be a team rider, I was going to have to ride with an extra level of fight, and I feel like I did."



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Sloane grew up in the heart of Virginia horse country in The Plains. Her father, John, is a former steeplechase jockey and currently serves as Joint Master of Fox Hounds for the prestigious Orange County Hounds foxhunt. Her mother, Julie, is an accomplished hunter and jumper competitor in her own right and also foxhunts. With parents like hers, Sloane was born into equestrian sport with no doubt that the back of a horse is where she belongs.

Sloane enjoyed a successful career as a junior, winning equitation, hunter, and show jumping titles at top shows throughout North America, while also consciously preparing for an opportunity to ride for her country one day. Her riding is the product of influences from many prominent trainers she's worked with, including Johnny and Kitty Barker, John and Beezie Madden, Stacia Madden, and Andre Dignelli.

Sloane attended college at Drew University, pursuing a degree in sociology and business and training with

Mark Leone. She graduated in 2011 and decided to expand her horizons by working for the top Belgian trainer and dealer Francois Mathy. She returned home and started her Springledge LLC in 2013.

Life changed for Sloane when Chippendale's Boy DZ joined her string. "We found him in the north of Holland from Tonny Leeuwen, and he had only competed up to 1.40m," said Sloane of the 10-year-old Zangersheide gelding she decided to take a chance on by buying herself a year ago. "No one believed he would turn out to be much."

According to Sloane, "Chip" has always had an amazing jump with carefulness and scope to spare, but his rideability required significant work on her part. Sloane took a step back and focused on her flatwork before asking him to step up a level.

"We even spent a lot of time trail riding in a rope halter so he could stop and eat grass whenever he wanted," she said. "That has become his favorite activity, but now every time I ask him to do something new, he is always there, ready to master it."

Sloane and Chip are based out of her own Springledge LLC in The Plains, VA, where her family also operates a retirement program caring for more than 50 horses.

"I feel very lucky to do what I do, but also to have the horse I have," said Sloane, who is hopeful that she and Chip will soon find themselves representing the U.S. again. "I know horses like him and opportunities like I have had recently are hard to come by, but I really feel like Chip is a championship horse and we are both ready to make names for ourselves at this level together."

