

# THE ONES TO WATCH

## Sloane Coles

If there was ever a person destined to spend her days on the back of a horse, Sloane Coles qualifies as the ideal candidate. Born into an equestrian family, Sloane inherited much of her passion for horses and talent in the saddle from her parents. Her father, John, is a former steeplechase jockey and currently serves as Joint Master of Foxhounds for the prestigious Orange County Hounds hunt. Her mother, Julie, is an accomplished hunter and jumper competitor. As a child, Sloane could be found trailing her mother and father through the

fields or on a hunt, which instilled in her a steadfast appreciation for horses and the Virginia countryside she calls home.

### Learning the ropes

Sloane's riding style and competitive drive were shaped by top trainers from all corners of the world. She has learned from professionals like John and Beezie Madden, Stacia Madden of Beacon Hill Show Stables, Heritage Farm's Andre Dignelli, and U.S. Olympian Lauren Hough. Her junior career was underscored by top placings at all the coveted national

equitation finals, including winning the 2006 North American Equitation Championship and the 2006 Bates USA Equitation Year-End Rider Award. In 2010, she was named to the U.S. Equestrian

Federation

Developing Rider Show Jumping tour. While riding has always been her passion, Sloane attended the Foxcroft School in Middleburg, VA, where she was inducted into the institution's sports hall of fame as an accomplished lacrosse player. While attending Drew University in New Jersey, Sloane rode with former U.S. Show Jumping Team member, Mark Leone, and also played on the lacrosse team. In fact, Sloane's first

international sports competition was not in show jumping but lacrosse, as she played for the victorious U.S. Team in the Southern Crosse Tournament in Australia. Sloane graduated from Drew University in 2011 with a degree in sociology and business.

### Spreading her wings

After graduation, Sloane decided it was time to spread her wings in the horse sport world. She boarded a plane for Belgium to take a riding position in the sales barn of 1976 Olympic bronze medallist François Mathy. While working there, she honed her skills as a rider and perfected an eye for talented young horses. In 2013, the hills of Virginia called Sloane home. Upon arrival, she partnered with her parents and formed the training business, Springledge LLC. "I always knew that I wanted to return to Virginia and create my own business here," said Sloane, whose family also operates a 350-acre farm that includes a



Sloane Coles and Chippendale's Boy DZ.





*Sloane Coles and Chippendale's Boy DZ making their Nations' Cup debut together at the CSIO5\* Spruce Meadows 'Masters' tournament in Calgary, Canada, in 2019.*

retirement program caring for more than 50 horses. "It felt like the right time for me to go out on my own. I've made connections all over the world, and while there are always more to make, I was prepared and have worked hard to accomplish my goals ever since."

### **Stepping into the spotlight**

By the age of 25, Sloane had quickly made a name for herself as an accomplished rider with a knack for developing young horses in both the hunter and jumper rings. She guided Autumn Rhythm to multiple victories in the first year green hunter division in 2014. Grand Prix success came in 2017 aboard *Esprit*, a Belgian Warmblood gelding by *Querlybet Hero*, and she first dipped her toes into international competition with *MTF Saint Simeon*, a Selle Français mare by *Calvaro Z*. "What I love is training young horses and helping people improve their relationships and skills with their horses," said Sloane, who has gathered a loyal

group of clients including amateur and junior jumper and equitation riders. "It's about the relationships and discovering what works best for each partnership. If a horse or rider needs a unique approach to solve a problem or improve a performance, I'll work hard to figure out that ideal solution."

### **Nations cup**

In addition to helping her students find their way, Sloane recently reached a goal she had set for herself as a child. With the addition of *Chippendale's Boy DZ*, a 10-year-old Zangersheide gelding by *Chippendale Z*, to her competition string in 2018, Sloane's dream of representing her country on the international stage came true. In September 2019, Sloane, now 31, and 'Chip' made their Nations' Cup debut together at the CSIO5\* Spruce Meadows 'Masters' tournament in Calgary, Canada. "My ultimate goal was always to have top-level Grand Prix horses and

I really believe that 'Chip' is the start of something really exciting for me," said Sloane. "To be chosen for my first Nations' Cup team at a CSIO5\* competition alongside *Beezie Madden* and *McLain Ward* at one of the best venues in the world – it was all so surreal. I have been lucky to be surrounded by top riders for most of my life, but to be their teammate added an element of 'I've made it!'" Sloane closed out the 2019 season with top placings in the Longines FEI Jumper World Cup™ North American League in Ohio and Kentucky. She was also named the winner of the Michael Meller "Style of Riding Award" at the prestigious 2019 National Horse Show in Lexington, Kentucky. "This past year has been the reward for a lifetime of hard work," said Sloane. "The future looks promising for me and 'Chip' and our performance in Calgary proved to me that we have what it takes to shine at the next level. I can't wait for what's next!" ■