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Questions With: TODD MINIKUS

By **Tori Repole**

Photo By **Shawn McMillen Photography**



Todd Minikus rode Amex Z to win the \$214,000 WIHS President's Cup Grand Prix CSI4* at the Tryon International Equestrian Center.

Todd Minikus has been based at the Tryon International Equestrian Center since July, but after his victory in the \$214,000 WIHS President's Cup Grand Prix CSI4*, Oct. 24 in Mill Spring, North Carolina, he got behind the wheel and trailered his horses home to Wellington, Florida.

Minikus, 58, began driving his horses to shows roughly 40 years ago after his Thoroughbred gelding Thriller had to be euthanized following a trailer accident.

"I've just always driven my own horses since then," said Minikus. "Somebody else was driving, and it went bad. Now I don't have to blame anybody other than myself for how they arrive. It was a very good horse, and some people maybe

think that was the best horse I ever had."

Minikus has had his share of top-caliber horses, the latest of which is Amex Z, the 11-year-old Zangersheide mare he rode to beat a field of 50 in the grand prix at TIEC.

"I have a couple young horses that I think are quite talented and then Amex, who is kind of coming into her own this year," said Minikus. "She won several nice classes this year, and hopefully, a couple of the young ones I have will jump in on the bandwagon with her."

Minikus partnered with "Amex" (Andiamo Z—Senne, Landaris) three years ago.

"She kind of has a strong personality, but that didn't scare me," Minikus said. "It took me a little while to get her on my

side, but she's had an awesome year so far. I think the future looks bright for her."

1. What's your recipe for success?

I work hard at it every single day. Ever since I was a little kid, I've truly loved horses and like being around the horses. Still, to this point, I'm driving my own horses—not flying in an airplane. I pride myself on being one of the better horsemen, and I think that's what makes and keeps me successful.

2. How have you been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic?

It hasn't been that much different. Maybe we didn't get to go to some of the places we were hoping to go to, but we've still been able to do what we do: ride horses every day, and we're fortunate enough that some of the show facilities were opened up.

We're just training horses; it doesn't have anything to do with COVID. We get to do that every single day; we're very lucky. The office doesn't close because we've still got to take care of them; we've still got to train them. Maybe sales have been slowed down a little bit because people were unable to travel, but other than that, it's all been the same. You can't just lock the door and walk away and say, "Oh, we can't open up." No matter what, the horses rely on you 100 percent for their care, and that's what's awesome about it.

3. Talk about the journey of producing Amex into a five-star contender.

She's all mare. Sometimes you have to work hard to get the mares on your side. It's not just mares in particular; it's horses in general. Sometimes it takes a while to get them to think the way you want them to think, so basically, you've got to find good athletes and hope that you can mold them into being on your team.

4. You had a lot of success with Babalou 41, a horse you began producing when she was 5 years old. How did you switch gears when she moved to Darragh Kenny's barn two years ago?

Unfortunately, the owner had some issues, and [Babalou] and I had to go our separate ways, but she was always my horse. I started her over poles on the ground.

There are new horses born every single day, and probably the best horses haven't even been born yet. Having a horse is like having a sports franchise—players come out of college and go into the pro range every single year, and then there are players that have to retire. So, you always have to keep adjusting your team.

They're professional athletes, and you've got to make sure

you pay attention to the kids that are playing little leagues, then into high school and then into college before they come into the pros. And hopefully, you can find some world-class athletes.

5. You live in Wellington with your wife Amanda Minikus and your son Colt, 12, and daughter Langley, 10. Do your kids ride?

They both have ridden a bit, maybe Langley a little bit more than Colt. Just because Dad loves getting up every day to ride horses doesn't mean that they have to. So, my wife and I have never really pushed it. If they say they want to ride, then we help get a pony ready or whatever, but my life's passion is riding horses and training horses, and maybe their passion is different. Maybe it is riding and training horses, but I want them to figure that out, and I don't want to direct them. 🐾

\$214,000 WIHS President's Cup Grand Prix CSI4* Tryon, N.C.—Oct. 24			
HORSE/RIDER/COUNTRY	FAULTS	TIME	PURSE
1. Amex Z/Todd Minikus/USA	0-0	36.52	\$70,620
2. Caillou 24/Karl Cook/USA	0-0	36.82	42,800
3T. Galan S/Beat Mändli/SUI	0-0	37.39	26,750
3T. Fasther/Lillie Keenan/USA	0-0	37.39	26,750
5. Amsterdam 27/Mario Deslauriers/CAN	0-0	37.70	12,840
6. Antidote De Mars/Bliss Heers/USA	0-0	38.37	9,630
7. Explosion W/Ben Maher/GBR	0-0	38.39	6,420
8. Gemma W/Daniel Bluman/ISR	0-0	38.83	5,350
9. VDL Cartello/Lorcan Gallagher/IRL	0-0	38.92	4,280
10. Eddie Blue/Devin Ryan/USA	0-0	39.91	4,280
11. Cornwall BH/Amanda Derbyshire/GBR	0-0	46.92	2,140
12. Garant/Beezie Madden/USA	0-4	38.91	2,140
13. Armani SL Z/Eugenio Garza Perez/MEX	0-4	39.99	2,140
14. Gazelle/Kent Farrington/USA	0-4	44.86	-
15. Eristov/Jordan Coyle/IRL	0-8	42.93	-

► Also competed: 16. Volnay Du Boisdeville/T. Vlock/ISR, 4; 17. Scarlett Du Sart Z/D. Kenny/IRL, 4; 18. Loriele 2/F. Norris/GBR, 4; 19. Baloutine/A. Prudent/USA, 4; 20. Lissino/D. Kerins/IRL, 4; 21. Amice Z/C. Jayne/USA, 4; 22. Bull Run's Prince Of Peace/K. VanderVeen/USA, 4; 23. Contagious/M. Ward/USA, 4; 24. Country Boy/T. Korotkin/USA, 4; 25. HH Callas/M. McDermott/USA, 4; 26. Vargas Rouge/K. Prince/USA, 4; 27. Ginger Pop/A. Robitaille/USA, 4; 28. Carlito's Way 6/R. Pessoa/BRA, 4; 29. Royce/M. Engle/USA, 4; 30. Robin De Ponthual/S. Riley/USA, 4; 31. Just A Gamble/A. Sternlicht/USA, 4; 32. Fellini S/E. Ballard/CAN, 4; 33. Chance Ste Hermelle/N. Dean/USA, 4; 34. Adamo/M. Ashe Cawley/USA, 5; 35. Villamoura/S. Shulman/ISR, 8; 36. Rocksy Music/R. Moloney/IRL, 8; 37. Skara Glen's Chancelloress/P. O'Shea/IRL, 8; 38. Essenan Crixus/S. Manship/USA, 8; 39. Prescott/A. Vale/USA, 8; 40. Quibelle/S. Smith/USA, 9; 41. Salamandra Baloubina/T. De Sá E Silva/BRA, 12; 42. Batida PJ/J. McAllister/USA, 13; 43. VT Majeur De Brecey/J. Gnecco/COL, 13; 44. Dez' Ooktoff/R. Teran Tafur/COL, 13; 45. Chatou 7/N. Hirt/USA, 13; 46. With Wings/K. Polle/JPN, 16; 47. Quintessence/D. Payne/USA, 23; Canamera 2/L. Hough/USA, VW; Chaqui Z/S. Sweetnam/IRL, VW; Akuna Mattata/N. Shahinian-Simpson/USA, VW.