

2020 HOT HORSEMEN *TJ O'Mara*

TJ O'Mara grew up watching his three older sisters ride. Even when he began riding himself, though, it was uncertain if "horseman" was in his future. "Initially, I wasn't attached to horses," TJ admitted, "but after experiencing a bond with one particular horse, I was hooked — I also took any chance I got to be competitive with my sisters!"

That competitive spirit led TJ through a successful junior career to becoming a young professional, when he balanced riding professionally with graduating from the University of Kentucky in only three years. Last year, he spent six months in Belgium riding and competing young horses for Jos Lansink, and now TJ works for Max Amaya at Stonehenge Stables in Colts Neck, New Jersey, and Wellington, Florida.

"I like the experience of true competition in our discipline," TJ said. "It's fascinating to see the level of competition in hunters, equitation and show jumping. They all offer something different, and it's great that so many professionals can make a proper career out of each respective division."

After growing up riding with Max, TJ is grateful for the opportunities he's been given to succeed in the sport as a professional. He's looking forward to building his career and seeing what his future holds — but horses are more than just his career, they're TJ's life.

"Any day away from the horses is a bad day for me, but on my days off I enjoy traveling and visiting different cities," he said. "It's rare to get a day off, but my goal is to visit as many places as possible."

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