

► BETWEEN ROUNDS WITH:

JEREMY STEINBERG

The Next Best Thing To Coldplay

Our columnist took his own advice about taking control of his life and career and is reaping the rewards of doing what he most loves.

This last month I was thinking to myself maybe it's time to write about something upbeat, something happy. I enjoy my life with horses so very much and am so fortunate and lucky to be in the position I am. I have two amazing young horses, fantastic friends and great work to do. Not a week goes by that I don't think I have, next to maybe being in the band Coldplay, probably one of the best jobs in the world.

I love Coldplay to the point of being a little bit ridiculous. I have every song, every album, have seen every Youtube video there is as well as listened to every interview. I love the way lead singer Chris Martin will often say, "We are not the best band, best musicians or best artists, but we try harder than anyone else, love what we do, and appreciate every minute of it, and our fans respond to that."

I try to take some of that advice and channel my inner Chris Martin: Love what you do, don't claim to be the best at it, work hard, and see what comes of it. Never lose the love for what got you started, and wake up each day grateful for the circumstances that have brought you to this point.

Last week my friend Alison Brock was giving me the lowdown on her adventures as a U.S. Equestrian Federation



High Performance rider. I admire Ali in so many ways. Watching her rise up with Fritz and Claudine Kundrun's horse Rosevelt has been beyond cool, and no one deserves the success more than she does. She minds her own business, works hard, and always seems to put her horse first. She doesn't boast or talk about how great she is. I never hear her talking about "her system" as if to say she's invented the wheel. She's humble and forthright, kind and easy going.

She was telling me about how she decided to lay low for a few weeks during the height of the show season in Wellington, Fla., even with the pressure of an Olympic year, for the good of her horse. I really respected this decision and loved seeing her make it in the heat of the pressure. She did so on her own accord and to much success when she returned to the show ring. She did it without a press release or ado, fanfare or acclaim. She just made a plan, went home, put it into action, and came out improved from it—all for the love of her horse.

I see Ali seamlessly work the ins and outs of being a sponsored rider who wants to do the best by the owners who have become family and to provide the best care of the horses they have left in her hands. She's a role model on

Jeremy Steinberg tries to channel the advice of Coldplay's Chris Martin: Love what you do, don't claim to be the best at it, work hard, and see what comes of it. A. RICARDO PHOTO

many levels. She's become an amazing rider right in front of our eyes, and a lot of people who were not watching or didn't know her before are wondering where she came from, which I find fantastic. Between Sue Blinks, Jan Brink, Kyra Kyrklund, Richard White and Michael Barisone, they have created a winner.

When A Hero Becomes A Friend

I bring Ali up as back in January I had a visit with my friend Ann Boehning and her two daughters Ellanor and Kennedy, who were staying in Loxahatchee for the early part of the Florida season. I went to teach some lessons and visit with them and was impressed with what exceptional horsewomen they are turning into: kind, compassionate, caring and just plain old crazy in love with horses.

In the two days I spent with them I noticed that they know, above and beyond, how lucky they are to have the horses they do. Their horses are just normal horses. They are not super expensive, top-level equines purchased for them to win any class they enter. They

are average horses, purchased for them because they were appropriate, and it is the girls who have made them special. These girls love and care for their horses like

they have already been Olympic champions. They understand how fortunate they are just to be around and with horses in their lives, and that is going to turn them into top riders and amazing horsewomen.

I got to thinking that they should meet Ali. I never really mentioned her by her full name. I just said I wanted them to see another farm, meet my friend Ali, see some nice horses, and get out for an afternoon outing. In the car on the way over, they mentioned having just been at a night of freestyles at the Adequan Global Dressage Festival and were blown away by the rides. I told them they probably saw my friend Ali and asked if they remembered her. Ann said, "Wait, your friend Ali as in Alison Brock? That's whose farm we are going to?" The girls went nuts.

When we pulled into the farm, they were speechless and wide eyed. They met Ali, saw "Rosi" and Ali's other horses, and couldn't contain themselves; they started talking and talking, giggling and squirming. They were starstruck. Ali was a kind of idol to them.

Ali took them around the barn, introduced them to everyone, animal and human, and then sat in the tack room talking with them, showing them pictures, looking at books, and just being a good human being and educator to these girls whom she'd never met. For those girls, it was like they had a conclave with the Pope and got to ask all the secret questions the public doesn't get to ask and see the inner workings of the team. Ali was their captive audience, and the sparkle in their eyes was one I won't soon forget.

I walked away from that thinking about what it is about horses that keeps us going on a day-to-day basis. What makes my eyes sparkle like the girls did, and what makes me still get giddy and excited?

Ali shared a story about how

“I was horse crazy and still am.”

she was in the salon and ended up sitting next to Beezie Madden. Ali was beside herself, excited to be next to and talking to such a legend in

the horse world. It reminded me of that childlike sense of amazement when a hero becomes a friend.

Raw Adoration Of The Horse

Why do I ride? What is it that I love?

For me, the answer is complex and layered. Some of the reasons I'm happy to talk about; others I keep quiet and like to own privately.

I saw these girls in love with their horses, careful and responsible, respectful and kind. They loved to ride and be around these majestic creatures not for what the horses could do for them but just for the love of the horse. This raw adoration for the horse was so obvious and amazing, and the thought of a horse as a vessel was the furthest thing from their minds. It reminded me of how and why I started riding and how much I also just love my horses.

My mother started me in the craft and gave me what she wasn't able to have when she was my age. She was horse crazy and never got to live that dream until late in life. It took some coaxing on her part to convince me that I would like it, but before long I was galloping on every trail, road or pathway in our town just outside of Seattle. I tagged along with the local cowboy Russ, who looked a lot like the Marlborough Man up on his giant gray gelding, waxed long coat, cigarette hanging from his lips. I'd hear hoofbeats coming down the street and grab my pony Daisy and later my first horse, an off-the-track Thoroughbred named Sinbad, tack them up as fast as I could, and go galloping down the concrete behind him to catch up.

We looked like Don Quixote and Sancho Panza going on an adventure to save a princess. All we lacked between us was wits and a lance. I went with Russ on day long adventures down steep hills, up cliff sides, galloping across fields till I couldn't see because the wind in my eyes made me tear up, across the small

river, swimming our horses from bank to bank and home again like a hobbit on an adventure of a lifetime.

I went with my mom to the barn and did my dressage work and jumped when I could. My friend Jen Hanson and I rode the 20 miles of trails back and forth to each others' house for overnight trips. My neighbor Christi Simonsen and I rode in the dark and in the rain. I'd go on midnight moonlit trail rides and disappear for hours on end. I'd ride anything I could get my leg over and often stole my mom's horse when she wasn't home. We'd swap horses and ride double, jump logs on the trail, and go in halters for miles. We'd race cars near busy roads and thought we owned the world with our beloved steeds. We did all of this around the ages of 12-16, and looking back I can't believe what we did.

Through it all, one thing always stands out: the love we shared for riding and our horses. We would do anything for them. I used to sleep in my horse's stall, skip school to go for day-long rides. I'd pick pastures, rake arenas and clean stalls just to have another riding lesson. I was horse crazy and still am.

Riding For The Love Of It

As adults we have to ride sometimes for different reasons, and the day-to-day toil can be hard. Working for owners who sell a horse or send it to another trainer right as the going gets good, having to push one or show one you know isn't ready because of the pressure you are getting at home, having to sell one because of financial struggle, being a benevolent slave to the clients—sometimes to the damage of our own relationships or life—in order to keep them working well and coming back.

Although I know other people have faced these problems as well, I'm not the most optimistic person at times because of it. I really do seem to look at the world around me in a glass half empty kind of way, but not a day goes by that I don't think how fortunate I am to be around these amazing and majestic creatures.

About 20 years ago I started to think I wanted to follow in my mentor's footsteps and teach for a living instead of being a competition rider and trainer. I wanted to ride and compete and train no doubt, but I started to

► DRESSAGE

find a love for teaching and education that my mentor Dietrich von Hopffgarten helped instill.

In the late '90s and early '00s I started getting more and more phone calls for clinics and realized I could teach every weekend and cut down on the number of horses I had in training to save my body but still have a life with horses. The teaching and weekend work has in a way completely taken over my life and become an incredible passion, almost even more so than the riding itself. Don't get me wrong, I *love* to ride and do so every day, but even more so, I *love* to teach. The weekend clinics and teaching requests have left me with the opportunity to work selectively with the horses and riders I want during the week at home, own my own horses, and really focus on making my living on the weekends.

This has afforded me the chance not only to see the country and more and more parts of the world, but also the opportunity to get back to owning my own horses, riding for the love of it, and not worrying about producing results or ribbons. I feel like I'm getting to turn back the clock to a simpler time of life, and I'm enjoying every minute of it. I feel like an amateur rider as I work mostly to support my own horses and life.

When I see kids like Kennedy and Ellanor, they're a reminder of doing it for the love.

Having the time to teach them, in turn, actually teaches me far more than they'll ever understand. My students and work have become a form of advertisement, and I find myself drifting further and further away from the show arena. After all, I don't have the weekends free anymore, and any quiet time I do have I want to enjoy alone with my horses or at home recharging. I haven't been to a horse show in going on five years now and am no less happy because of it. My only complaint these days seems to be I want more time with my own two horses and to play my cello. It reminds me of the days I was wide eyed and happy like the Boehning girls and just in love with my horses with no care in the world other than what adventure awaits my horses and me today.



Jeremy Steinberg shared his respect for Alison Brock (pictured) as a rider, horseman and person: "She doesn't boast or talk about how great she is. I never hear her talking about 'her system' as if to say she's invented the wheel. She's humble and forthright, kind and easy going." LINDSAY BERRETH PHOTO

Owning My Destiny

Currently I own two mares by Sir Gregory. Augie is turning 4, and Una is 5. I decided a few years ago to work to buy my own horses instead of waiting for someone to buy me one. I wanted to own my own destiny so to speak and not wait for that special horse to come along in training.

Right now I have a horse in training I don't charge for as I just enjoy the challenge of figuring her out, and I realize she does far more for me than I do for her. I ride Augie every day I'm home and have given the ride on Una to my good friend Marie.

I was struggling a bit with Una last year to not over do it or ask too much of her; she is a love and has an outstanding heart. I asked Marie if she'd consider riding her for a few weeks for me, as I was heading out on a three-week overseas teaching trip and wanted her to stay in work. When I came home and

watched her go she looked stunning, was happy, and Marie was in love with her.

A few weeks have turned into a few months, and I find myself enjoying watching her go almost more than riding her. I feel like I'm part of something special and am sort of the captain of the ship, with Marie at the helm and Una as first mate. I was toying with the idea of selling her, as owning two horses in southern California is not a cheap task, but seeing her work every day brings me such a happy heart that I couldn't imagine being without her at this point, even if I end up a sponsor to Marie.

I groom her almost every day, play with her on the ground and in her stall, and teach Marie on her any day I'm home. Marie has had plenty of nice horses to ride, but she says Una is the nicest. The look on Marie's face on those special days of work when the stars align just right and you get a glimpse into a horse-and-rider combination's

future is one we all know and one that makes my soul sing.

Marie's happiness on those days and seeing my horses' happiness reminds me why I ride. It takes me back to that time in life when riding was only for fun. It makes me work harder and love every minute of it knowing what the work is supporting and the joy it brings my horses, my friends and my students.

When I wrote the column a few years ago "Teach Your Children Well" about the youth in this country and their guidance, where they are heading, the future of our sport and the struggles they face, I never knew it would be as self reflecting to me as it was. I was going through a struggle of my own, and it made me really think about how I was raised and where my own roots in riding are. I have told countless kids over the years to stop looking for sponsors to buy them horses and get an education, get a job, become well rounded, buy your own horse instead of looking for a meal ticket.

I still am so very fortunate to work with a lot of kids around the country, now in an unofficial capacity, and get to work with them on a level I was never allowed to do before. Even two years after stepping down as youth coach for the USEF, I still find the kids and I gravitating toward each other. The simple love of the horses is a common bond we share, one that seems recognizable from miles away. Luckily for me, my work teaching has allowed me to become more outspoken about my beliefs and connect with new and interesting people because of it.

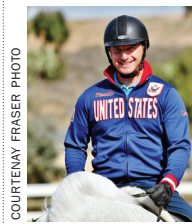
I'm grateful for kids like Kennedy and Ellanor and riders like Ali and Marie who continually give me those added boosts and reminders as to why we ride and what's important.

What keeps you riding? What is it that keeps you coming back every day?

My friends and clients share a common bond of love of the art, the sport and the animal, and I am forever grateful for their friendship and communal vision. Seeing them become artists of their own, hedonistic yet unselfish, in our own small Bohemia is magical and unreal. It's a beautiful thing to see the spark in a child's eye, the success of a great human and friend, the childlike joy of an adult trainer on a nice horse, and they all give me a

reason to wake up every morning excited to see and work with these amazing creatures and remember from where the roots of love stemmed.

Thank your mothers or fathers, thank your teachers, thank your friends and anyone else who has helped deliver you into the hands of these horses and horse life we are all so lucky to be a part of. Remember what got you started, and like the Boehning girls, stay down to earth. Remember the joy for the sake of the joy, the wind in your hair and the tears streaming down your cheeks. Be a kid and revel in the life we are all so very fortunate to live with horses. ●



COURTESY FRASER PHOTO

JEREMY STEINBERG was the U.S. Equestrian Federation Youth Coach from 2010-2014. He's a well-known rider, trainer and competitor based out of Del Mar, Calif. He's also a selector for the USEF

Developing Horse Program and one of five clinicians who works with the U.S. Dressage Federation in its Platinum Performance/USDF junior and young rider clinic series. He worked with longtime friend and mentor Dietrich von Hopffgarten extensively until his passing in 2004. Jeremy has trained and shown through the Grand Prix level. He now runs a small "boutique"-type training business and travels the country giving clinics. More information can be found at steinbergdressage.com.

► Lucky To Do It My Way

I did an interview last year for *The Horse Magazine* in Australia when I was there teaching a clinic. It was at the end of a long day after teaching, and Rebecca Ashton, who did the interview, had been at the clinic most of the day and at previous clinics watching, so we'd had the chance to talk before.

We went into the house and sat down with a glass of wine, a voice recorder and just talked. She asked me if it was OK to record our conversation, which I was happy to have her do. I could do my usual "stream of consciousness" verbal jettisoning of thoughts, and she could just go back through later and take out what she wanted. In the end, she more or less published the entire interview as it was. It hit the Internet and went crazy.

There were tons of people who were very upset at what I said but also many people who liked it. I received both hate and fan mail over it, and in the end, it made no difference to me whether someone agreed or didn't, as it was just my own opinion. It was not a new chapter of the gospel, and I wasn't claiming to ride or train better than the next guy. I didn't claim to have all the answers or claim to ride the best in the world; I was just commenting on what I see and talking about how blessed and understanding I was to have the education I did.

Although receiving hate mail is never fun, my phone was ringing like crazy with people wanting to take lessons and have me out for clinics. I had a few people say they would never say something so controversial or go out on a limb like that, even more telling me to try to have it retracted, and a few who found the need to attack me personally via email and on the Internet.

A couple people told me being outspoken will get me blacklisted in the dressage world, which always makes me laugh. Now don't get me wrong, I don't laugh when people are upset by something I say or write, but the notion of worrying that the dressage "higher ups" are going to somehow do something to my career that will take away my love for horses, art and riding is preposterous.

I've written many times about encouraging others to be more outspoken and to do so in a fair way, but I am fortunate that I have that luxury to speak freely as I make my living in a very different way than the average horse person. That interview created a lot of commotion, but the best thing it did was once again give me a reminder of why I work the way I do and why I ride: because I love the horse. I followed my heart into the industry and in doing so have created a world where I am free to do what I love, say what I feel needs to be said, make a living, and be graced with the beauty of the beast that is an equine.