

Lolly McLellan

COMPETING & WINNING FROM COAST TO COAST

By Emily Riden

It doesn't take long into a conversation with Lolly McLellan before one is struck by the young rider's poise and determination — traits that are also evident every time the 17-year-old steps foot in the show ring.

That same composure and resolve are also what have landed the Oregon native where she is today: on the East Coast, winning at the Capital Challenge Horse Show and competing at the nation's most prestigious equitation finals.

Lolly and her 17-year-old Warmblood gelding, Rockford, traveled from Ashland, Oregon, to win the Capital Challenge 16-Year-Old Equitation Championship, before also finishing fourth in the North American Junior Equitation Championships. Her top-five finish in the first major equitation final of the indoor season also put Lolly one step closer to her goal of making the second round of each of the equitation finals in which she's competing this fall.

Traveling Across Country

That goal is one that, for any rider, requires a great deal of hard work, talent and commitment, and for Lolly it also perhaps requires a few thousand extra air miles and several additional nights spent in hotels and on the road. In an effort to give the equitation finals her best shot, Lolly now balances living on the West Coast with competing and training on the East Coast with Stacia Madden and Max Amaya.

"I particularly enjoy the equitation," said Lolly. "The West Coast is wonderful. There are lots of great trainers, great riders and great shows, but we know that the heart of equitation really lies on the East Coast. My family knew that if I really wanted to get an edge, I should go back there and work with some of the top equitation trainers."

With that in mind, Lolly's West Coast trainer, Wendy Krohn, placed a call to Max and Stacia,



Lolly McLellan and Rockford
Photo courtesy of Lolly McLellan

and Lolly began training with them at the 2016 Winter Equestrian Festival (WEF) in Florida.

"They run such a good business," Lolly said of Max and Stacia. "They have such a great staff. They're very welcoming, and it's pretty easy to fall in line with them."

Special Bonds

Lolly and Rockford then spent the summer back at home in Oregon training with Wendy out of her Westport Stables, where Lolly has trained for years.

"Wendy's a wonderful trainer," said Lolly, who originally got her start in the saddle at the age of 5, under the guidance of a dressage coach. "Wendy taught me a lot of what I know about riding courses and jumping. I'd mostly done flatwork before I came, and I got my first horse

with her. I've been riding with her for several years now."

Being on the road for the majority of the year has meant some sacrifices for Lolly, who, like so many young riders competing on the horse show circuit today, is foregoing a more traditional high school experience in favor of online schooling. However, Lolly is also quick to acknowledge that any sacrifices are far outweighed by the benefits and the incredible opportunity to actively pursue the sport that she loves, with a horse that she loves just as much.

"Rockford is my best friend," Lolly said. "I don't think I'll ever love another horse as much as I do him. He's a trier, and he has a heart of gold."

Lolly continued, "He likes to compete. He has a really funny quirk where if he's not braided,



Lolly finished fourth in the North American Junior Equitation Championships and was named the 16-Year-Old Equitation Division Champion.

Photo by Shawn McMillen Photography

he might be a little lazy or hit a couple of rails or be a little sluggish, but then the minute you put braids in, he just rises to the occasion. I think he knows that it's important."

Lolly acquired Rockford in California three years ago with Wendy's guidance, and now Lolly can't imagine traveling the horse show circuit with any other horse.

"He was for sale for three years before we got him. Nobody really wanted him," Lolly said. "We got him home, and he's just risen and become a wonderful equitation horse."

Pattern For Success

The pair's success at this year's Capital Challenge Horse Show marked the two West Coast natives' first visit to the Prince George's Equestrian Center in Upper Marlboro, Maryland, but after their accomplishments and highly enjoyable experience, it likely won't be their last.

"I really liked Capital Challenge a lot," Lolly said. "It was lovely. Horse shows like Harrisburg

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are wonderful horse shows, but the horses are indoors all the time. At Capital Challenge, I think it's really nice that they have all of that time outdoors — they're stabled outdoors, they get to jump outdoors, and then they get to come into

that great indoor arena. It's a lovely mix, and it's a great warm-up for the other indoor finals as well."

Capital Challenge proved to be just that for Lolly, as fresh off their Capital Challenge success, Lolly and Rockford made the second round of the Pessoa/U.S. Hunter Seat Medal Finals at the Pennsylvania National Horse Show. With 277 horses and riders competing in the first round and only the top 25 returning for the second round, Lolly's accomplishment of her goal is particularly impressive.

After competing in the ASPCA Maclay Horsemanship Championships, Lolly will return home to Oregon and begin the traveling cycle all over again for her final junior year — a cycle the talented young rider wouldn't trade for anything.

The 2017 Capital Challenge Horse Show returns as the home of the nation's best horses and riders on September 30–October 8. For more information on the Capital Challenge Horse Show, visit www.capitalchallenge.org. **IS**