

# THE PEOPLE'S CHOICE

## Lauren Osborne The People's Choice Amateur Of The Year

By Kendra Peebles

In only her first year out of the junior exhibitor ranks, Lauren Osborne made a huge splash in the amateur world and earned the title of People's Choice Amateur of the Year. Lauren hails from Oklahoma City, Okla., and she made a most glorious return to her hometown for the 2016 Morgan Grand National and World Championships. She competed in 10 classes, and of those 10, she and her horses earned that Oklahoma blue ribbon seven times. In all, she earned two World Championships, one Reserve World Championship, and five Grand National titles between her three horses.

Lauren's exceptional year was not all smooth sailing, however, as she broke the medial condyle of her right femur and sported a moderate puncture wound on June 1, 2016. Lauren explained the injury "a freak accident" that happened after she tripped into her American Saddlebred's stall at the Indianapolis Charity Horse Show and was kicked by her understandably spooked horse. She was immediately taken to the University of Indiana Medical Center via ambulance and entered surgery just a few hours later. Lauren was told that she would not be able to start riding again for a full two months. She credits her speedy recovery to a great physical therapist at the University of Louisville, which is also the university she is currently attending.

Lauren's injury did not slow her down. She could be seen, on crutches, hopping around Columbus, Ohio at the Gold Cup Regional Morgan Horse Show rooting on her Triumph Farm family a mere two weeks after her surgery. She admits to riding a month earlier than her doctor had recommended for 10-15 minutes at a time. She gained back her strength and went on to show at Buckeye Morgan Challenge, Shelbyville, the Kentucky State Fair, and the Jubilee Morgan Regional all before September 1. "I rode hard, but not as hard as I would have normally and was a little timid," Lauren recalls. "Morgan Grand Nationals was the first show that I really felt back to normal as far as my leg."

Unsurprisingly, Lauren says her most memorable rides of the year were when she won the Western Pleasure Youth World Championship and Western Pleasure Amateur World Championship, both in unanimous fashion. Her mount was EQE Maker's Mark CH or "Oscar" as he known around the barn. This striking Palomino caught Lauren and her mother Catherine Sconzo Blackburn's eyes when he was a junior horse. Trainer Belle Hufferd showed him in the western pleasure three-year-old division in 2014. Following the end of that season, Lauren and her family, the Glitter Farms, LLC, purchased Oscar. Belle continued to show him during his four-year-old year and earned the blue in the Grand National Western Pleasure Four-Year-Old Stallion/Gelding class and the Reserve World Champion Western Pleasure Four-Year-Old title. Lauren says that she had some trouble with Oscar early on in their first show season together, which made their comeback in Oklahoma City that much sweeter.

Of course, Oscar was not the only winning ride Lauren had at the Grand Nationals. DSD Gratzl is a dark bay mare and is a new face in the hunter pleasure world. This year was her first time showing in performance classes. Following Lauren's injury, Belle had to make a new plan for Gratzl. She remembers saying, "If I do my part and have these horses ready for Lauren, then she'll do her part and we will be all good, because she works so hard." Lauren first showed her to a pair of wins at the Buckeye Morgan Challenge. She topped off her season with a win in the Grand National Hunter Pleasure Ladies Amateur Mare class. This was an extra special win as Lauren has been the only person to show this five-year-old in her performance career.



*The People's Choice Amateur Of The Year, Lauren Osborne stepped up to the amateur division in 2016 along with her beloved Wind Blu Locomotion GCH as they continued their winning ways.*

Not only did Lauren have success in the hunter pleasure division with DSD Gratzl, she also returned to the ring with her former equitation mount Wind Blu Locomotion GCH. They topped the Grand National Hunter Pleasure Youth Stallions/Gelding Section A with the unanimous support of the judges, and they also captured the blue in the Grand National Hunter Pleasure Amateur Stallion/Gelding class. Belle Hufferd noted that she did not make any big changes in telling Lauren how to approach her classes as she transitioned out of the junior exhibitor ranks and into the amateur world. Belle believes that the amateur world is just as competitive as the junior exhibitor divisions, and Lauren was able to find her success in both because of her drive and her willingness to work hard. Lauren and "Loco" also captured the Reserve World Champion titles in both the Hunter Pleasure Amateur World Championship and the Hunter Pleasure Youth World Championship. "She knows what she wants and she works hard for it," Belle simply said.

*It was a group celebration at Triumph Stables following Lauren's Amateur Western Pleasure World Championship victory aboard EQE Maker's Mark CH. (Left to right) Aaryn Whitacre, Lauren Osborne, Catherine Blackburn, John and Belle Hufferd.*



*Taking place in her hometown of Oklahoma City, Lauren enjoys a big cheering section at the Morgan Grand National including her dad Jim Osborne.*

Aaryn Whitacre, assistant trainer at Triumph Stables, echoed Belle by saying, "There are so many things that come to mind when talking about Lauren. She is such an amazing young woman inside and outside of the show ring. Everyone knows she has a great show record and horses, but the things I love about Lauren are her ambition for success and her ability to laugh at herself and others. She strives to work hard at work, at her job, and at life in general. She has a sense of humor that you would not believe. I believe she is a wonderful role model for aspiring young equestrians. I am so unbelievably proud to be a part of her life, not only with the horses, but outside of it as well."

Lauren typically makes the trip to Triumph Stables about twice a month. Over the course of the long weekend in Indiana, she rides as many horses as she can each day. Belle says,

"Lauren rides anything and everything, and she rides all day long." When she is not riding, Lauren is studying at the University of Louisville. She is a communications major and works part-time as a waitress off campus. She enjoys reading, cooking, hanging out with her beloved French Bulldog Serena, and drinking lots of coffee. She has a passion for cooking and also for learning as much as she can about the Presidents of the United States. In her free time, she reads presidential biographies and learns fun facts about each president. She is working on visiting all of the presidential libraries. Lauren clearly shares her newfound knowledge at the barn, because when asked what

Lauren likes besides horses, Belle immediately said, "Presidents!" Lauren also enjoys volunteering for events that benefit Alzheimer's research. Early in 2017, she participated in the Walk To End Alzheimer's. The Walk is the world's largest event to raise awareness and funds for Alzheimer's care, support, and research.

As she ventured into the amateur ranks in 2016, Lauren left behind an illustrious junior exhibitor career in both the equitation and pleasure divisions. As many will remember, Lauren made New England Regional history in 2015 by winning the senior equitation qualifying classes in the hunt seat, western seat, and saddle seat divisions. Her equitation career featured winning five equitation world championships, two reserve world champion titles, five Grand National wins, and capturing the AMHA Western Seat Gold Medal Finals, as well as three

reserve finishes in the hunt seat and saddle seat Gold Medal Finals. Her wins span the junior and walk/trot age groups all the way to her 17-year-old year. She has also branched out into the world of American Saddlebreds and shows multiple horses. She even made the trip to the Kentucky State Fair and the American Royal last year.

Lauren began her riding career after attending a horse camp. She asked for lessons after that, and her mother took her to Majic Stables in Norman, Okla., to ride. She was nine years old the first time she rode a Morgan, and ten years later, she is still riding hard and soaking up as much knowledge about how best to ride her horses as she can. Through it all, from injury to moving away for college, Lauren has continued to work hard towards becoming the best rider that she can be. Her successes this past year were the product of the teamwork at Triumph Stables, Lauren's past coaches and trainers, and of course, her determination to work through her obstacles and accomplish her goals.



*Lauren's beloved Frenchie Serena is never far from her side. Serena enjoys her perch ringside as she watches Lauren ride and show her horses.*