



# THE PEOPLE'S CHOICE

## Ali DeGray

### The People's Choice Amateur of the Year



In 2017 Twin Willows McDreamy won his third consecutive Road Pony 50" and Under World's Championship and his fifth consecutive Road Pony World's Grand Championship with Ali DeGray at whip. When he left the ring, the crowd gave him a huge cheer when it was announced as his 82nd career win.

**M**aking history in 2015, Ali DeGray won three back to back world titles in the same session in an unprecedented show season that resulted in her being named the People's Choice Amateur of the Year. Continuing on an upward trajectory in 2017, her results were outstanding. Motivated by a deep understanding and love for the horses and ponies she shows and the process of bringing out their best in each performance, she has once again earned your well-deserved recognition as the 2017 People's Choice Amateur of the Year.

Ali and her trainers, Rich and Maureen Campbell of Majestic Oaks Hackney Farm and Tammy DeVore of DeVore Stables, manage a daunting schedule with multiple horses and ponies in the same session under the direction of different barns. We all wonder how Ali has the stamina to keep up the pace. Facing debilitating health issues for most of show season, 2017 was especially challenging. A lesser person may have temporarily stepped down but Ali's soul

is fed by the need to show these animals who love to perform. The results were extraordinary.

We pay special tribute here to Twin Willows McDreamy (Twin Willows McMillan x Twin Willows Katrina), the People's Choice Overall Road Pony of the Year who played such a big part in Ali's success. Marching into the ring as if he owns it (and in a sense, he does), he is rarely beaten. Trained primarily by Dr. Alan Raun until 2014, McDreamy (aka Mickey) caught Ali's attention at the world's championship show that year. "I was grinning from ear to ear. I had never seen a pony who had that much fun. He was an explosive ball of playful energy! I love the wild ones." By the end of show season McDreamy was purchased, moving to Majestic Oaks Hackney Farm under the direction of Rich and Maureen Campbell.

Rich and Maureen wisely continued with a similar training regimen established by Dr. Raun whose help was invaluable. Never needing a warm up before a class, McDreamy is hitched up and is

trusted to do his job. "You have to understand him", said Maureen, "He has such a big heart... he shows you right off the bat who he is." Perfectly matched, McDreamy and Ali were undefeated during the 2015 and 2016 seasons, claiming the Road Pony 50 inches and Under World's Championship and the Open Road Pony World's Grand Championship.

Smart and playful, McDreamy needs to think that everything he is asked to do is his idea. "He's a wild pony and you have to love it", said Ali affectionately. "He's so funny but Maureen has his number! I wish they all could have as much fun in life as Mickey. I wouldn't change a thing!" A pony with opinions, Ali has to stay one step ahead of him all the time. She knows him so well that just the flick of an ear or just a slight change in the bridle offer a clue that he could have an alternative plan. She loves the challenge. Able to harness his enthusiasm, she has enormous fun while achieving great results. Undefeated again in Louisville last year, Ali and this great pony won their third consecutive Road Pony 50 inches and Under World's Championship and his fifth consecutive Road Pony World's Grand Championship. When they left the ring, the crowd gave him a huge cheer when it was announced as his 82nd career win!

Ali will be the first to tell you that none of this would be possible without the support of her mother, Helen Rich, who owns and loves the horses and ponies that Ali shows. They are as close as a mother and daughter can be. An accomplished, world titled horsewoman herself, Helen is Ali's biggest supporter, sharing her views on what is important. "It's never about the ribbon", she has been known to say. "If I just wanted ribbons I would have bought a ribbon factory." The motivation may not be about the ribbons but the results are spectacular. The partnership Ali develops with each horse and pony transcends the ordinary. She spends time with them in their stalls, learning their personalities and tapping into the hearts and minds of each animal to achieve the best possible results. The following are just some of the highlights in an outstanding show season.

Heartland High Tech, stunningly beautiful, has an almost perfect record in a 14 year career. That he showed at all in 2017 was something of a miracle. In 2015 he lost so much weight that Rich and Maureen knew something was seriously wrong. Diagnosed with a



*Wrapped in roses, Ali and Maureen Campbell celebrated an incredibly successful show for the Majestic Oaks Hackney Farm.*

severe case of IBS, they actually thought they might lose him and even if he survived, he may not be strong enough to show again. With excellent veterinary care, a new feeding regimen and lots of TLC he gradually improved. His performances at Louisville in 2017 were some of the biggest highlights of Rich and Maureen Campbell's year. "He could have died", said Maureen, "But he made such a huge comeback!" After winning the Amateur Ladies Hackney Pony World's Championship and the Amateur Hackney Pony World's Championship unanimously last year it was decided that Ali should take him back in the open stake on Friday night. With a flawless performance, Heartland High Tech was announced as the Hackney Pony World's Grand Champion, again with a unanimous vote of the judges. Ali was so overcome by emotion and love for this pony she thought she might lose, she was unable to do the interview after the victory pass.

The multi-titled Craycroft Matador, undefeated with Ali at whip, is another of her 'forever' ponies. Also a special favorite of Rich Campbell, Matador is a perfect gentleman. He won the 2017 Hackney Pony Stallion/Gelding World's Championship for the third year in a row, also with a unanimous vote. Heartland American Idol, a new entry last year, enjoyed well-earned victory passes as the Four-Year Old Road Pony World's Champion and the Junior Road Pony Reserve World's Champion of Champions. Ali had great fun showing this personable youngster. Recently sold, he is well-prepared to compete against the senior ponies.

Another of Ali's biggest thrills last year was that of showing her park mare, Enchanted Kiss, under the direction of Tammy DeVore. She was selected by Tammy for Ali to show and for Tammy's brother, Derrick Westbrook to work. Often sitting on a razor edge between perfect and wild, the mare was a challenge but Derrick has done a terrific job of getting her ready for Ali to show. At the same time, Ali successfully stepped up to the kind



*One of Ali's biggest thrills last year was her world's championship class with her park mare, Enchanted Kiss who won the Reserve World's Champion Amateur Three-Gaited Park and the Reserve World's Champion of Champions Amateur Three-Gaited Park under the direction of DeVore Stables.*

of riding challenge she had probably not faced before. "She's definitely a wild woman", Ali stated – "the toughest park horse I have ever ridden but my second class with her at Louisville was the most thrilling I will ever have!" Enchanted Kiss was outstanding at Louisville last year, winning reserve in the Amateur Three-Gaited Park Division 2 and the Amateur Three-Gaited Park Reserve World's Championship, second only to the great CH It's Aerosmith. These wins were also some of Tammy's outstanding memories of 2017. Their world's championship class was considered by many as one of the most exciting of the show.

Another great memory for Tammy DeVore was Ali's performance with her new roadster, Game Changer, who Tammy had always loved and admired. The Amateur Roadster to Bike World's Champion with Tom Fiedler in 2016, Game Changer joined the show string for the 2017 season. Learning to manage his power, he and Ali came together better with each drive and distinguished themselves as the Ladies Amateur Roadster to Bike World's Grand Champions. With Tammy at whip he was also the Roadster to Bike Reserve World's Grand Champion.

Perfect in every way, CH Memories of Cabo, her partner since 2015, won the Amateur Five-Gaited Stallion/Geldings Reserve World's Championship and the Amateur Five-Gaited World's Championship. Receiving the enthusiastic support of the crowd, this bright chestnut favorite will always have a home with Ali and Helen.

Always motivated by a new challenge, Ali had an exciting show ring debut with Man on the Move last year, earning the Ladies Amateur Five-Gaited Geldings Division 1 World's Championship. Tammy DeVore loves the thrill of winning but shares Ali and Helen's view that the process of getting there provides the moti-



*Tammy DeVore, Ali and Tyler DeVore enjoyed a moment of celebration after a very successful River Ridge show last year. Ali went on to earn world's and reserve world's championships with Enchanted Kiss, Game Changer, CH Memories of Cabo and Man on the Move under the direction of DeVore Stables.*



*Ali and her mom, Helen Rich are as close as a mother and daughter can be, united by the love for the horses and ponies in their care.*

vation. "They are good people and I'm very blessed to have them", said Tammy, with great appreciation for the wonderful horses they have brought her way. "I know it sounds corny but it really is a dream come true."

Ending a great 2017 show season at the Southern Saddlebred Fall Finale, Ali was at the top of the ribbons with horses that included some of her long time, personal favorites Jolly Mon Sing and Happy Boy in the hunter pleasure and show pleasure driving divisions, Northern Asset in the three-gaited division and CH Billy De Luxe in the five-gaited division. One of her few regrets is that of being unable to show her beloved Jolly Mon Sing at Louisville where there is no hunter division. A passionate advocate for the Saddlebred hunter, she hopes this will change before too long.

Only in her 20's, Ali DeGray has already made a huge impact on the Saddlebred and Hackney pony worlds. Always humble about her achievements, she gives the credit to the wonderful horses and ponies she shows as well as her trainers, Rich and Maureen Campbell, Tammy DeVore and Derrick Westbrook, who love them as much as she does and who keep them in top winning form. She is very grateful to all of them for what they do to make her successful. Rich, Maureen and Tammy are equally appreciative of Ali as a competitor who is cool, calm and collected, never letting stress get in the way of performance. "She's an all-around classy individual", stated Maureen, summing up what they all feel.

Never assuming she will win, Ali treats each class as a new opportunity and is genuinely thrilled when her number is called. Extraordinarily successful, she is still in awe of the people she admired while growing up and is honored to be showing in the same ring. The epitome of horsemanship and sportsmanship, we are proud to name Ali DeGray once more as the 2017 People's Choice Amateur of the Year and are delighted that Twin Willows McDreamy, the pony who gives her so much joy, is the 2017 People's Choice Overall Road Pony of the Year. We wish them the best for a successful 2018 show season.