

TEAM DESMAR

MARK TURNER: THE PEOPLE'S CHOICE

Trainer Of The Year

CAITLIN COOPER: THE PEOPLE'S CHOICE

Assistant Trainer Of The Year

BROOKE APPLGATE: THE PEOPLE'S CHOICE

Instructor Of The Year

BY SARA PIZZUTO

In the equine industry, excelling in one division is deemed impressive. Succeeding in multiple offerings is even more remarkable. However, that is exactly the feat Desmar Stables achieved in 2021. The Kentucky based establishment enjoyed a season that featured triple crown equitation honors and five-gaited national champions mixed with world's titles and top ribbons in a myriad of performance ranks. Mark Turner, Caitlin Cooper, and Brooke Applegate head the team at Desmar and were responsible for their widely successful season. For their outstanding accomplishments and their ability to excel across multiple disciplines, Mark Turner, Caitlin Cooper, and Brooke Applegate have now earned your vote as the People's Choice Trainer Of The Year, Assistant Trainer Of The Year, and Instructor Of The Year.

Mark Turner was first introduced to horses in his native South Africa. His father

would send him to work for different horse trainers during his summer breaks from school. He learned from both from Pietie Joubert and Chappie Scott and soon knew he was destined for a career in the horse industry.

"I loved reading magazines from the U.S. and watching videos of all the great horses," he said. "I remember watching videos of Skywatch and Imperator and dreaming of one day being able to be on that 'big stage.' In South Africa I loved watching trainers like Harold Poil and Mike Arnold work horses and show great horses and I knew that's what I wanted to do."

His dreams of becoming a horse trainer came to fruition in 1989 when Chappie Scott got Turner a job working for John Biggins.

"I to this day think John is one of the greatest horse men to ever work with a Saddlebred," Turner said. "I not only learned about training horses, but he instilled

a work ethic in me that has stuck with me over the years."

Turner then served one year in the army in South Africa before returning to America to join the team at Delovely Farm. He worked alongside Todd Miles, and Raymond and Lillian Shively for 25 years, with whom he said taught him not only about training but about all aspects of the industry.

It was at Delovely Farm where Turner's paths crossed with Caitlin Cooper. Cooper was nine years old when her parents bought her five riding lessons from Delovely for Christmas. Those initial lessons blossomed into a career in the horse industry working with Mark Turner, Todd Miles, and Raymond and Lillian Shively.

"All I wanted to do was be at the barn," Cooper said. "When Missy Hughes Smith worked at Delovely I think I probably spent more time with her than I did my parents. I was there every minute I could possibly be there. Even when I went to college, I came home every Thursday so I could work Friday and Saturday and even fed with Mark and Todd on Sunday mornings. I would go back to the University of Kentucky at 4:00 a.m. on Monday morning so I could get to class. It took me an extra semester to get my degree but so worth it. I learned more about caring for and training horses in those years than I could have ever learned in a classroom."

Mark Turner eventually opened the doors to his own farm, Desmar Stables, in 2015. He gave Caitlin Cooper the opportunity to join him and grow professionally as his assistant trainer. Instructor Brooke Applegate is the latest member to join the team in Kentucky.

The love of the American Saddlebred has been instilled in Applegate through her family, beginning with her maternal grandfather. Applegate showed with her family on the Kentucky county fair circuit as a junior exhibitor. As an adult, she started her own riding program at her family's farm in Ewing, Kentucky before eventually joining Desmar in Harrodsburg as an instructor.

"I love this sport with my whole heart," she said. "I always enjoyed being involved in anyway needed. I feel like teaching comes naturally to me and I feel very blessed to be able to make a living doing something that doesn't seem like work. There is not a more satisfying feeling than watching a rider continue to grow in their own personal riding journey and achieve goals, big or small, that they have set out to accomplish."

Together, Turner, Cooper, and Applegate, are tasked with the training and instruction of the many horse and rider combinations that make their home at Desmar. The farm has a reputation for equitation greatness and has developed many champion equestrians. Applegate explained that Desmar instructs equitation riders ranging from walk/trot competitors to senior equitation exhibitors. Some of their students live within driving distance to the barn while others travel great distances to train. When they are at the barn, they each ride multiple times a day on both lessons horses as well as their show horses. Desmar additionally has a thriving academy program, with three of their lesson students debuting at Louisville in 2021.

"We share with each of them from the beginning that their goals and dreams are our goals and dreams and we will give them 110% every day to work towards those," Applegate said. "I feel that keeping them mentally confident is a huge key to their success."

Desmar's equitation riders earned both world's and national titles in 2021. Turner, Applegate, and Cooper, were the proud trainers and instructors of both Alayna Applegate, the Kentucky State Fair Senior Equitation World's Champion of Champions, her cousin Addyson Hamby the Walk/Trot Saddle Seat Equitation 9-10 World's Champion of Champions and Brie Keeton, the junior equitation reserve world's champion of champions. Keeton and stablemate Brooklyn Gaskill additionally swept the top two spots in the UPHA Junior Challenge Cup National Championship.

One of the most impressive feats of the year came as Alayna Applegate, Brooke Applegate's daughter, became just the 15th ever saddle seat equitation triple crown winner. Under the direction of the team at Desmar, Alayna Applegate and her partner CH-EQ Altar Of The Sun were the Good Hands Finals National Champions, the UPHA Senior Challenge Cup National Champions, and the USEF Saddle Seat Medal Finals National Champions in addition to their success in Louisville. Brooke Applegate explained that it was her daughter's longtime dream to win the triple crown and worked tirelessly towards that goal.

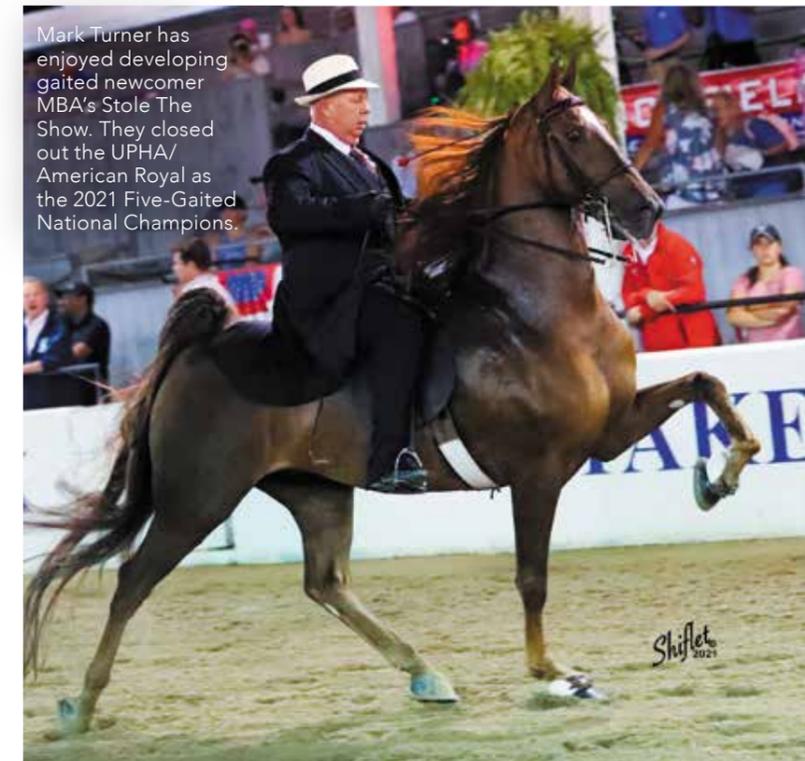
"At the end of 2020, things changed for her," Applegate said. "She went to an entirely different level of commitment and focus. When she came to us, we sat down and came up with a plan. The lesson and workout plan wasn't as challenging as keeping her mentally confident in herself. We knew that she and 'Sunny' could do it and she knew they could do it, but the highs and lows of the journey make that challenging along the way."

One of those challenges came as Alayna Applegate's partner, CH-EQ Altar Of The Sun, was fairly new to the equitation division. Mark Turner explained that equitating "Sunny" was a team effort between him and Alayna Applegate.

"He is game, but he is very smart," Turner said. "We really have our friends at Kalarama to thank for getting 'Sunny' to us. Danny Lockhart asked us to take him to try and sell him and that he really thought he would equitate. I honestly didn't



Alayna Applegate and CH-EQ Altar Of The Sun celebrated with Caitlin Cooper following her win in the USEF Saddle Seat Medal Finals. With this victory, she became the 15th ever saddle seat equitation triple crown winner.



Mark Turner has enjoyed developing gaited newcomer MBA's Stole The Show. They closed out the UPHA/American Royal as the 2021 Five-Gaited National Champions.

The team at Desmar Stables, led by Mark Turner, Caitlin Cooper, and Brooke Applegate celebrated a widely successful 2021 show season across multiple divisions.



Brie Keeton was part of Desmar's tricolor sweep in the UPHA Junior Challenge Cup Finals. Keeton claimed the national title aboard Super Scandal after also earning two world's titles in Louisville.



Brooke Applegate guided Brooklyn Gaskill and Viva La Fantasia to the reserve honors in the UPHA Junior Challenge Cup Finals. This young rider also had success throughout the season aboard her three-gaited teammate Seven Oaks Heir Show.

believe him at the time but I guess him and the horse made a liar out of me. We ended up needing a horse for Alayna at the time and we asked 'Sunny' and her to step up and they did. Alayna puts so much into it and seeing all our hard work pay off on a horse that we made was so gratifying."

Alayna Applegate began her partnership with CH-EQ Altar Of The Sun at the end of 2020. "Sunny" had been training as an equitation horse for a mere month before he and Applegate were crowned the Good Hands Finals Reserve National Champions. They carried that momentum into 2021, becoming Desmar's first triple crown winners. It was an especially memorable season for Alayna Applegate's mother, Brooke.

"Being able to share Alayna and 'Sunny's' triple crown journey is without a doubt something I will treasure and thank God for blessing me to be a part of forever," she said. "It is the most satisfying and accomplished feeling to watch your child and rider give their life, heart, and soul to a dream and have it become a reality. We will forever be grateful for the opportunities that she was given along the way and everyone that helped her on such an incredible ride."

From the intricacies of equitation, to the power of the performance division, Desmar excelled in all facets of the industry in 2021. Mark Turner closed out the UPHA/American Royal in November aboard MBA's Stole The Show, the Five-Gaited National Champion. The gaited newcomer has been developing under the direction of Desmar Stables since he was purchased from Prospect Lane in July of 2020 by the Fiola/Lindstrom partnership.

"Tre' Lee is a good friend of mine, and he did most of the hard work and has been a big help to me since day one," Turner said. "I've tried to take it slow and let him mature. He is a very game but kind horse. I have tried to just let him channel all that in the right direction. Winning the stake in Kansas City was special because I felt like all the work was finally going in the right direction. I am very lucky to have such great clients that own him and have allowed me to bring him along slowly and trusted the process. It was a real treat to get the opportunity to show him and I am very excited about his future. I can't thank Jessica, Dan, Doug and Janet enough for their support."

Mark Turner's five-gaited success has also revolved around the great CH The Daily Lottery. Turner explained that the former world's grand champion is known at Desmar as their foundation horse as the Rainbolt-Forbes family had just purchased the entry and put him back under the direction of Turner when Desmar opened its doors. His granddaughter, Daily Gratitude, created a special memory for all at Desmar when she was crowned the 2021 Two-Year-Old Three-Gaited Section Two World's Champion in Louisville. The mare, sired by The Daily Prophet, was presented by Mandy Robinett who also had the riding assignments of CH The Daily Lottery when he was crowned the 2008 Junior Five-Gaited World's Champion of Champions.

"It was perfect," Turner said. "Not only was it 'Dan's' first granddaughter but she was our first world's champion out of Desmar's breeding program as well. So for all that to come full circle was incredible. I cannot take any credit for her training. Tanner Parham did all the work with 'Little Mandy,' as we call her, and I just helped along the way when he needed it. I can tell you she's got more patience than her grandad, but she looks so similar and she's so smart. She likes to go but has a lot of respect for her rider. We just sold her for a young rider in the barn and we believe she will do great things in the future. All in all, we couldn't have written her story with us any better."

From junior horses to junior exhibitors Desmar Stables was represented in the show ring in 2021 by a myriad of winning horse and rider teams. Caitlin Cooper explained that their success across multiple disciplines stems from their teamwork and the team they have built.

"Mark is a great horseman and can put a lot of teams together that some may think wouldn't work," she said. "He doesn't ever stop thinking about the horses and how to make them better. Brooke is a wonderful instructor that has been able to work with each rider individually on what they need at that time for their horse. She watches the horses work and I think that really helps her to teach each rider's needs. I am the one that tries to keep everything as organized as I can and everything running smoothly. I keep a very close eye on each horse and their care every day. I like to know each horse's personality, behavior and mannerisms when they are working and in the stall. What works for one may not work for the other and sometimes little things can go unnoticed that are vital for the horse to perform at their best."

It is this teamwork that is needed to spearhead a training operation as successful as Desmar. The trio of top professionals that is Turner, Cooper, and Applegate have allowed Desmar Stables and its clients to thrive in the American Saddlebred industry, and surge to momentous feats. The results have been remarkably gratifying.

"I have had top notch clients that trust me and the process even when others think we are crazy," Mark said. "But we make it work. With a bigger challenge the reward is so much sweeter in the end."