

JAVA JOE



Jim Modica and Java Joe were a winning team from the beginning of their partnership and both Jim and Jeff considered him to be a once-in-a-lifetime pony.

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He was a joy and a privilege with whom to share our lives

BY LEEANN MIONE

Java Joe and Jim Modica were a perfect fit from the get go. The beautiful roadster pony sired by Truly Yours out of Cherish captured Jim's attention at Kansas City in 2020. Megan Place showed him to win the Missouri/Kansas Roadster Pony class and Jim was hooked "so to speak."

Jim took JJ for a "test drive" and that was it; he had to have him. Trainer Kent Swalla showed him back in the Roadster Pony National Championship for a top three finish. At the time, Jim and his partner Jeff Winton lived in Illinois so JJ soon headed to Northern Tradition Farm in Minooka, Illinois, to spend the winter under Tom Thorpe's direction.

Jim and JJ made their team debut at the 2021 Mid-America Spring Fling. As if they'd been showing together for years, they were crowned the Roadster Pony Grand Champions and also won the open class to go two for two in their first time out. They were equally as successful at their next show, Great River Benefit, and swept the amateur roadster pony division.

IASPHA Summer 2021 was the scene of another sweep of the open roadster pony division. They then showed at Louisville for the first time and earned a good ribbon in a deep field. Both amateur wins at St. Louis and a reserve at Mane Event followed before they were back at Kansas City for the UPHA/American Royal National Championship, a year after they met.

When Jim and Jeff moved back home to New York state late in 2021, JJ moved from Northern Tradition to Ever Glades Farm in Kansas City, Missouri, to be trained by Missy Smith. The pair have a home in

Kansas City which makes it easy to practice and show under the direction of Team Ever Glades.

The 2022 season began with a bang. The pair were in the winner's circle six times in six classes with amateur wins at Des Moines Springfest and UPHA Chapter 5 and won the roadster pony championship and open class at NCHS Kick Off.

Next up was Midwest Charity. Considered to be one of the most competitive shows of the year, Midwest has a tradition of attracting top horses and ponies to Springfield, Illinois. JJ wasn't the least bit bothered. He took on the competition and was third in the amateur class. He and Jim came back to finish as the Amateur Roadster Pony Reserve Grand Champions.

When it was time to head home Saturday June 18th, after the show, JJ and Jeff's hunter country pleasure horse Dreamacres Sir Duke were loaded on the trailer to head back to Ever Glades. The unthinkable happened and a trailer accident resulted in JJ having to be euthanized at the scene. Duke, although injured, was able to be transported home.

JJ might have been on a trajectory like a shooting star but his star was not fleeting. He and Jim were meant to be together and every time in the ring was better than the last. They were on the road to a long and successful partnership.

There is no good news in a story like this but one thing tragedies in our industry always prove: Horse people love their own and will do anything and everything to help wherever and whenever needed. If the rest of the world lives by the mantra that life's challenges show you who

your friends are, horse people can live by the mantra that in the horse world, life's challenges prove that horse people are always your friend in times of tragedy.

Jim and Jeff are thrilled that Duke is continuing to recover and getting better and better. Struttin' The Catwalk, Hollywood Design, He's Gone Platinum and He's The Cat's Pajamas will also help their healing as their successes in and out of the show ring continue.

Jim and Jeff both speak so fondly of JJ who they called a gentleman with everyone he met. His kindness and affection made everyone love him.

"During the American Royal, almost two years ago, I met Java Joe, the first road pony I had the privilege to 'test drive.' Fate happened and 'JJ' became mine.

So much faster than I dreamed possible we became a team, even a winning team. In my eyes JJ was perfect - talented, athletic, mannered, handsome, personable and so affectionate.

JJ will always be my 'once in a lifetime' pony!" said Jim.

Jeff added, "Java Joe was a unicorn in so many ways. When we bought him, people warned us that ponies could be aloof, if not downright nasty. JJ was neither. He never had a bad day, he loved everyone, especially children. He was a joy and a privilege with whom to share our lives.

"Jim and JJ were an instant match from the very beginning and this all-too-rare chemistry helped them achieve great things in our too short time with this wonderful soul."