

Ellen Beard

The teacher's teacher.
The professional's professional.
The trainer's ally.



Hannah Sette and Ellen Beard with Success in Saddles.



Ellen Beard is excellent at timing a rider.

Every horse trainer or riding instructor wishes for more hours in the day, more hands, another set of eyes, a real pro who can help them without threatening them?

A common mantra among these professionals is “Call Ellen.” Veteran horsewoman Ellen Beard, and her Success In Saddles program, is at the forefront of a new trend in the show horse world, the equestrian sharpshooter.

“In the highly competitive business of showing horses, it’s hard for trainers to find a trustworthy colleague with whom we can collaborate without worrying about losing a client,” said Kellie Wendling Budd of Select Show Horses in Sheridan, Ind., “Ellen is like the fairy Godmother who pops in with those sharp, seasoned eyes of hers peeled to my riders and horses, and she shows me things that I might miss because I see them all the time. She can sharpen a rider’s timing like no one I’ve ever seen. She comes for a weekend, or joins us at a show for a few days. And then, poof, she’s gone again, leaving me with great ideas, happy clients and a fresh perspective.”

Many know Ellen because of her esteemed career as an equitation instructor. But those with an inside view of the show horse world know that Ellen is a timing guru. She works stealthily behind the scenes at most major Saddlebred, Morgan and Arabian shows, working alongside some of today’s most revered and up-and-coming trainers.

Ellen cut her teeth on the ground floor and building years at the esteemed Delovely Farm. Along with Raymond and Lillian Shively, she and James Nichols, as well as many others, laid the foundation for what was to emerge. James Nichols and Ellen took that knowledge and nurtured a wildly successful juvenile and amateur program at Cryst-A-Kell Farm, winning multiple World and National titles across multiple divisions. Ellen then returned to her alma mater, Stephens College in Columbia, Mo., where she led the team to restore the school’s faltering Equestrian Studies Program.

Ellen’s Success In Saddles program was born during Ellen’s later years at Stephens at the urging of fellow professionals who needed help polishing their champion combinations. Ellen is often called a “professional’s pro-

essional” because supporting the equestrian professional as they grow the show horse industry is her passion. Ellen’s years as a trainer, instructor and judge, combined with her years of managing high profile committees such as the United States World Cup and USEF Saddle Seat Equitation Committees, taught her to pinpoint talent and to position it to shine. She knows that it takes a well-oiled team to make great things happen, and she is quite comfortable in her offstage role of recent years.

Ellen developed a passion for fitness as a youngster participating in track and field, and also discus throwing. She has long incorporated the training and strengthening concepts of traditional sports into equestrian sport, and she was among the first to use weights and stretching exercises to complement rider development. Today she promotes a specialized line of weighted equestrian training gear that she developed in conjunction with Iron Wear Fitness. Iron Wear is worn by over 250,000 elite athletes who represent Olympic and professional athletes, as well as the amateur and child athlete. The composition of the weights is flexible metal that conforms to a rider in a clothing system. Each piece can help a rider feel a targeted response and can assist the rider to stay in the middle of the horse while learning specific skill sets. The concept is much like shoeing a horse where weight and angles affect motion and leverage.

“This system is not a crutch or gimmick, but rather it’s a tool like a specific martingale or rein to establish a feel for the rider. When the rider gets it right, the horse’s response is so evident,” she says. A more centered rider equates to a more athletic, happy horse. “Once the rider feels the response, it is then easier for the rider to achieve without the tools,” Ellen said. “The body inherently develops muscle memory for a more correct approach.” The concept is one of many secret weapons Ellen shares with her clients.

“I enjoy teaching the teachers,” says Ellen. “It’s my way of giving back to the industry that has been my life’s work. I love to sharp shoot, to mentor, to teach and to operate behind the scenes. I love to work with trainers to develop their riders into balanced, fit athletes who can ride with and not against the powerful horses their trainers are fine tuning.”

Ellen is assisted in running the daily operations of Success In Saddles by her daughter Molly and Hannah Sette, a Stephens College graduate. Together, they recondition, recuperate and train a small string of horses for special clients. They also teach clients who travel in to ride with them for intensive riding and training.

“I met Ellen many years ago and began working with her through my Morgan trainer, Mary Carlton, at Crystal Farms Equestrian Center. Ellen has been a huge part of making me into the rider I am today. Her love and dedication to a rider, horse, and instructor is incomparable. The Iron Wear Fitness products that she uses has helped me build strength and become confident in my own body position, and allowing me to focus on building my horsemanship skills. Ellen strives to make each rider well rounded. She encourages strong and correct form but at the end of the day she wants everyone to be able to ride a horse the best they possibly can. I always felt confident knowing Ellen was right there to help at any second,” explains Sette.

One year ago, Ellen, Molly and Hannah moved SIS to Cash Lovell Stables in Winston-Salem, N.C., to assist Parker Lovell in rebranding the Cash Lovell Stables business. Cash passed away in May 2015 after a lengthy battle with a rare form of dementia. Parker Lovell is continuing the fourth generation business, with changes that reflect her passions. With Cashlyn Lovell, her 13-year-old daughter working by her side, a wider range of riding disciplines is being embraced at CLS these days. But the Saddleseat foundation is firm, as is Parker’s dedication to teaching horsemanship and character development to her riders. CLS’s 40 plus school horses of all breeds and sizes are available to SIS for teaching a specific skill set or getting crucial riding and driving miles.

Ellen and Hannah believe in continuing education and are dedicated to learning the latest techniques for human and horse care. Ellen is currently being certified in Strength and Conditioning for athletes, and Hannah is earning her Vet Tech degree.

“Ellen is an incredibly gifted and insightful instructor. I have seen her change a rider for the better more times than I can count,” said Smith Lilly of Mercer Springs Farm and author of Saddle Seat Horsemanship. “We encourage all our riders - both Performance and Equitation - to take advantage of her clinics at every opportunity.”



Ellen demonstrates in a clinic a pull weight.

Changing times at the storied Cash Lovell Stables



Trail riding is one of the many disciplines now represented at Cash Lovell Stables.

The Cash Lovell name has long been a part of show horse history. For four generations, since 1940, the Lovells have produced champion Saddlebred show horses, and in later years they also made exquisite custom horse bits. Some have questioned the future of Cash Lovell Stables without Cash III, who died in May 2015 after a long battle with a rare form of dementia. Saddle Horse Report caught up with Parker Lovell recently, and here’s what she had to say.

How are things at CLS?

Different. Cash had been sick for close to 10 years when he died. And even though he hadn’t been hands-on for several years, his presence was everywhere. In the end, he couldn’t form words much at all or make decisions. But he could still spot a good horse. If Cash paused to watch a horse work, we paid attention. If he walked past and didn’t give it a second look, it was usually a dud. (Laughing.) Every day I miss him and his laugh. The barn doesn’t sound or feel the same without him.

Do plan to keep operating CLS?

Yes. But under a different business model. Long before Cash died, I knew he wanted me to continue CLS, for Cashlyn, if nothing else. Figuring out how to be in the horse business without him has been really tough. But we’re getting there.

There has been talk about the changes you’re making. Would you like to share?

My passion is working with children and horses. That hasn’t changed. But instead of running a huge riding program and managing a team of instructors, I am back in the ring teaching a lot of our lessons, being hands on with the kids and the horses. The program is smaller and more intimate, by design.

I also have a strong interest in combining modern veterinary care with holistic care. We’re using sound, vibrational and light therapy to heal and enhance our horses. We’re taking a broader view of horse care, and the results are astounding. We have a sound and vibrational expert from Maine coming to the barn to see our machines and how they work. He’s interested in including us in a documentary film on the subject. Really cool stuff.

We’ve also started a little tack shop. And we’re building an online tack store. It’s more of a horse lover’s boutique. There also are plans to restart and expand the Cash Lovell Bit Co. Our philanthropic work continues too. We just opened a second-hand shop on the property, and all of the proceeds go to the school that the barn adopted in Ghana. We’re crazy busy!

You’ve funneled many new riders into the sport of show horses. Will you continue to do that?

We will always support the show horse industry. Some riders are made to ride show horses. I will educate and help them down that path. Right now, we are blessed that Ellen Beard and her Success in Saddles program is based out of CLS. Ellen’s show horse training program is small. And she wants to keep it that way so that she can continue to travel, to teach, coach and assist her colleagues. Without Cash, I don’t ever want to run a show barn again. But I love a nice show horse, and so does Cashlyn. The quality of Ellen’s work, the depth of her knowledge and the fastidious care she takes of her horses and riders – it’s easy and enjoyable to watch. As for the CLS rider who we’re not gearing for the show horse world, we are taking them in other directions, but not necessarily away from the show horse breeds. There are lots of ways to enjoy Saddlebreds, Morgans and Arabs that don’t quite cut it in the show ring. And it’s a great market for these horses.

Did we hear talk of barrel racing?

Yes. Cashlyn has taken up a little barrel racing. We’re not so good at it yet. But we’re having a big time. She approaches the barrel sitting like an equitation rider. Ellen and I die laughing. She’s enjoying learning about trick riding too. She was a flag carrier at a Professional Bull Riding event a few months ago, and she had a ball. Cashlyn’s roots will always be in the show horses. But it’s hard without her Daddy. Harder than I think anyone realizes. We’re taking everything a day at a time. Sometimes an hour at a time. But we’re moving forward. Figuring it out together.