

# Erin Boggs:

## MAKING A DIFFERENCE FOR HER STUDENTS AND HORSES

By: Sara Pizzuto

Erin Boggs has been heralded as many things—a top equestrian competitor, an accomplished trainer, and an exceptional instructor of equitation's elite. Yet Todd White, father of junior exhibitor Ella White, is quick to add something else to this list of characteristics. He credits Boggs for changing his daughter as a person. It was at a clinic in Ohio where Ella White was first introduced to Boggs. After a rough first day of the clinic, Boggs encouraged White to continue with the event and return for day two.

“Erin saw past it and demanded Ella come back for the second day,” Todd White said. “I saw something in Ella that I’ve never experienced—pure joy and confidence. Erin has transformed Ella from a timid person into a national champion.”

It is this unique ability to connect with her students that has cemented Boggs and her Cape Cod Equestrian Center as one of the nation's best-responsible for the creation of world's and national champion horse and rider combinations.

Establishing a career as a horse trainer was a natural progression for Boggs. Her parents, Gene and Kathy Boggs were both horse trainers, operating at their then Cape Cod Farm.

“My start with horses began before I was born,” Boggs said. “I got a lot of opportunities and experiences from having parents who were horse trainers that I may otherwise not have gotten.”

From 2013 through 2018 Erin Boggs (far left) instructed Lexington Junior League's Senior Saddle Seat Equitation Grand Champion. She is pictured with those champions: Aleia Brown (2015 • 14 • 13), Hallie Ricci (2018), and Nicole Rodriguez (2017 • 16).



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As a junior exhibitor Boggs was reserve in the UPHA Challenge Cup National Finals aboard a green five-year-old. She was instructed by her mom, Kathy.



Boggs was a highly-sought catch rider in your junior exhibitor days. Here, she is aboard 1995 Juvenile Five-Gaited World's Champion CH Callaway's Hot Copy, riding for Dr. Gene Scott.

Boggs explained that her parents often tasked her with riding the horses that weren't quite “child-proof” in an effort to help prepare these horses for their next rider. This helped her become a sought after catch rider, most memorably teaming up with Johnny Jones and Dr. Gene Scott's Callaway's Hot Copy for a world's championship title.

Along with her parents, Boggs credits both Gayle Lampe and Enid Norton, whom Boggs trained with in South Africa, as being influential mentors. They helped her evolve her parents' Cape Cod Farm into Cape Cod Equestrian Center, operating out of the same Ohio based facility. Boggs, along with assistant trainer Jose Hernandez, are currently responsible for 30 horses in training, along with 20 lesson horses.

“Jose has gotten quite a few young horses in training and that has been a very fun change from our normal activities,” Boggs said. “He has done a superb job with them.”

In addition to their performance horses, it is Cape Cod Equestrian Center's equitation riders that have made Boggs' name synonymous with success. She explained that many of her current riders are a product of her lesson program and her specially designed Select Academy Team. Students are invited to try out for this academy team when Boggs and riding instructor Elise Hagenow deem that they are ready to take the next step in their riding careers. Boggs explained that tryouts for the Select Academy Team are held at the beginning of each year, with academy team practice sessions and competitions then running from April through October.

“Setting up academy this way has been great for giving the lesson students a goal to strive for,” Boggs said. “It is a big deal to the kids and parents to be invited to be a part of the team.”

Many of her former Select Academy Team members are now successful riders in the show ring, earning top awards at horse shows across the nation. The majority of the Cape Cod Equestrian Center show riders ride at least twice a week on lesson horses to help prepare them for their show horse.

“This allows them to work on their skill, while we prepare the horse, and then they come together in their lesson on their show horse,” Boggs said. “We also do a group lesson every week. Sometimes we will have 15 riders at once and these really help prepare them to have confidence in maneuvering throughout the show ring.”

Many of Boggs' riders spend their summers at the barn, riding as often as they can. Boggs explained that this allows her to build strong relationships with each of her students.

“They are willing to work hard for me and keep reaching for their goals, and this is a major part of their success,” she said. “As an instructor it is important to be able to present constructive criticism in a way that the rider will come out on the other side better. The bond between rider and instructor has to be incredibly strong, that way when a rider is lacking in confidence, they can borrow that confidence and feeling of self-worth from their instructor until they have the ability to find it in themselves.”

One of Boggs' students, Aleia Brown, has ridden with Boggs for the past 18 years. Boggs has been Brown's only instructor throughout her riding career and the two share a close bond.

“Erin knows me not just as rider but as a person, so our coach and student relationship is very real,” Brown said. “She knows exactly how to motivate me in the ring. I love having Erin as my instructor because we have a lot of fun moments together, but we both know when it is time to get serious and focus on our goal. She's helped me in my riding career a lot because she always believes in me, whether it be that I can ride a variety of horses or do any work out. Her confidence in me helps me feel like I can do anything in or out of the saddle. I used to call her my ‘second mom’ as a kid but now our relationship has shifted from just instructor/ rider to best friends and I wouldn't want it to be any other way.”

Aleia Brown reached the pinnacle of equitation success teamed with CH-EQ Madeira's Fame. Under the instruction of Boggs, Brown was crowned the 2014 NHS Good Hands National Champion, 2014 USEF Saddle Seat Medal Finals National Champion,

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## ERIN BOGGS



In 2014, Erin instructed Aleia Brown to the top of the NHS Good Hands Finals and USEF Saddle Seat Medal Finals, in addition to a reserve in the UPHA Senior Challenge Cup National Finals.



Pictured with dad Todd, Ella White is one of the current Cape Cod stars. She was the 2018 UPHA Junior Challenge Cup Finals National Champion and is now making headlines in the senior division.

2014 and 2015 UPHA Challenge Cup Reserve National Champion, and the 2015 Kentucky State Fair Senior Equitation World's Champion of Champions among other national and world's titles.

Boggs explained that becoming a successful equitation competitor, like Brown, requires riders to have great determination, a strong work ethic and mental toughness.

"They have to not take things too personally," she said. "It is very important that they are able to take constructive criticism and grow from it."

In addition to creating top riders, Cape Cod Equestrian Center has become known for creating most of their equitation horses and molding them into winning careers as equitation mounts. CH-EQ Madeira's Fame is one of these horses, who in addition to Brown, also carried Hallie Ricci down victory lane in the equitation division and is now winning top awards with Sugar Knoll rider Isabelle Fischer. When developing a new equitation horse and rider combination, Boggs tries to pick a team that anatomically matches.

"If I have an inexperienced rider, I try to purchase a horse that has more experience than the rider," she said. "If I have a more experienced rider, I look at horses that will grow with them and help develop their skills. I don't necessarily equitate a



Hallie Ricci had several good years with Boggs, including equitation wins from Lexington and Louisville. In 2019, she was the USEF Adult Saddle Seat Medal Finals Reserve National Champion.

horse for a specific rider, they develop together. They each learn skills and put it together. I do a lot of work with the horses myself, and the riders work a lot on lesson horses, and then it all comes together."

During this process of developing equitation teams, Cape Cod Equestrian Center has discovered the Dutch Harness Horse/American Saddlebred cross, which is increasingly growing in popularity. Vive La Fantasia, a Dutch Harness Horse/American Saddlebred entry, has garnered immense success in the equitation ranks, first with Nicole Rodriguez and then with Ella White, who captured the 2018 UPHA Junior Challenge Cup National Championship title. White has since debuted this season with yet another member of this cross, Jalapena Lena, competing in the senior equitation division.

Boggs' talents as a horsewoman, coupled with her rapport with her students have enabled her to continue to thrive as a horse trainer. She has created a positive environment for each of her students and horses, as emphasized by Todd White.

"We're all family at Cape Cod Equestrian Center and the love of the barn, the parents and the care of our horses is beyond exemplary." White said. "Erin and the entire Cape Cod Equestrian Center team have changed our lives."