

FUTURE FORUM

The Up and Coming of Young Trainers

By Britni Kovalenko

This is another segment in a Saddle Horse Report series featuring the stories of young trainers from across the country. There isn't a school for horse training outside of the school of hard knocks so it's interesting to follow the paths taken by these young professionals as they pay their dues in their quest for making a successful career out of their passion for horses.

This week we are featuring Richmond and Jessica DeHart who have Hathaway Farm LLC in Clinton, Wisconsin. "Bred" into the horse industry, Richmond and Jessica became second generation horse trainers. The two worked for and with some of the most prominent trainers in the country, learning the business as they grew. After marrying in 2016, the two opened their own training farm, Hathaway Farm.

Give us a breakdown of where it all began for you.

How did you get involved in horses and at what age?

JESSICA: Both of us were born into the industry as both our parents were horse trainers. I'm sure we were both put on a horse as soon as we came home from the hospital. We were lucky to be raised in the business, so this is all we know, and we wouldn't have it any other way. For me, I started riding even before I could walk. I believe I showed walk-trot-canter as a five-year-old. Richmond took a little longer to get in the saddle because of a little pony mishap as a young child but he showed competitively as a young teenager.

What made you decide to become a professional trainer?

JESSICA: We decided to become professional trainers when we realized this is all we could think about. We felt confident that we could not only work horses but be able to maintain them and care for them along with run a business. We were so passionate about creating our own business that we decided to follow our dreams and become horse trainers.

Have you worked under any other trainers? If so, who?

JESSICA: Richmond has learned from some of the best. His first job outside of high school was working for Tre' and Emily Lee. He also worked for Peter Palmer, where he got his first string of horses to work. After that, he worked for Brian Chappell and learned more about breaking colts and gaiting horses. He worked for Mayo Moctezuma and again had his own string of horses. This is where he was able to take care of almost all aspects of horse training and was introduced to working with clients and giving lessons. Of course, he learned so much from his father, Wyatt DeHart, and to this day, they talk every day about training horses.

As a junior exhibitor, I was very lucky to work with many instructors and trainers along with working for Nealia McCracken and Mayo Moctezuma (my parents). You name a division, I have shown in it. I feel very blessed to have learned such amazing tools from those trainers. I continue to use each and every one of those tools every day while training horses.

Who are your role models/mentors? Why?

JESSICA: Because we worked with such incredible people, we don't just have one role model or one mentor. All of the people that we have worked for or worked with have really shaped our lives and knowledge of horses. If Richmond ever needed immediate advice, he will call Wyatt or Brian. If I ever needed advice, I would call Nealia or Mayo.

What is your favorite thing about being a trainer?

JESSICA: Our favorite things about being horse trainers is being around the horses. We love all aspects of the horse - from breeding, raising, training to everything in between. There is nothing like watching your foals grow up to become the heart-horse for a customer, be kind and give back as a lesson horse, raise the next generation of Saddlebreds, or to be show horses that win world's championship titles. We are addicted to Saddlebreds!

What is the hardest thing about being a trainer?



JESSICA: The hardest thing about being a horse trainer is having to say goodbye to our beloved horses. Whether they sell or it's their time to go to horse heaven, saying goodbye is the hardest. We are around these horses 24/7 and they become family to us. With that being said, it is very rewarding to see the horses we sell go on and win with new owners and trainers!

What advice do you have for the younger generation who have their eyes set on becoming horse trainers?

JESSICA: Our advice for younger people wanting to be trainers is get a business degree, get familiar with taxes, and before you open a barn, have a plan to either buy your own farm or find a place you can rent that you will be able to make money. You're going to get your hands dirty -you cannot be above cleaning stalls, sweeping, organizing or stacking hay. When you are a trainer with your own business, you will have to still do all these things, so get comfortable doing it. There's a lot of highs but also a lot of lows, so the main key is to love horses and devote yourself to do anything for them.

What do you think is essential for the industry to focus on to ensure its success?

JESSICA: To continue to be successful, this industry needs to keep promoting our breed in a positive light and have new customers coming into the business. With the Quarantine happening now, I have been in love with the social media blasts from the Saddlebred community. We need to keep doing this, it's amazing!