

FUTURE FORUM

The Up and Coming of Young Trainers

By Leeann Mione

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 Tyler Lampropoulos, co-head trainer of Northern Belle Stables in Newton, New Hampshire.

Give us a breakdown of where it all began for you. How did you get involved in horses and at what age?

TYLER: My parents have been involved in the horse industry in one capacity or another since they were five-years-old. My parents met while working for Orcland Farms and worked for a variety of notable horsemen and women prior to opening Northgate Stables.

I was fortunate to be born into this industry and worked with and showed ponies from a young age, however my true passion for horses was ignited when I attended Louisville for the first time.

What made you decide to become a professional trainer?

TYLER: Growing up hearing stories and seeing videos of Don Harris and seeing the way he could entertain a crowd and energize an arena had always spoken to me. Finally, mid-week at Louisville, after classes ended for the evening, I gained the courage to walk over to his stalls and ask to talk to him. Don graciously paused what he was doing to speak to me, a kid who he knew nothing about, to tell me about what made him want to begin his career in the horse industry. He talked to me for several hours about his passion, and at that moment, I realized that this was truly what I was most passionate about and what I wanted to do for the rest of my life. I wanted to not only be involved in helping a horse to perform at the best of its ability, but also be able to pair an owner and a horse; to assist young riders and amateurs in achieving their dreams and goals within this industry.

Serving as the Co-Head Trainer at Northern Belle Stables in Newton, New Hampshire, I have been fortunate to have the opportunity to learn from the two people who have supported me the most on this journey. My parents have gone above and beyond to help me become the horseman I am today. From learning lessons growing up in the barn, to being encouraged to pursue my dreams outside of the family business, and now bringing it full circle to re-brand my family's Northgate Stables to Northern Belle Stables, with the merger of Bellewether Stables last year.

The addition of Judy Nason has been a huge asset to our new venture. What could have been a hectic time in merging barns at the start of show season was made seamless with Judy. With her quiet and thoughtful approach, Judy always has something to bring to the table. Our morning training meetings and discussions about past and present horses and work strategies have become the highlight of our mornings. In the quiet, after horses are fed and stalls are cleaned, we have a chance to evaluate our teams and share ideas between trainers for our Northern Belle riders. The ease in which we slid into this routine was as if this relationship between trainers was always meant to be.

However, even more extraordinary was the ease in which our clients formed a barn family. We are blessed well beyond measure to have the clients we do. They have created a tight knit, loving family who show up to support one another in ventures both inside and outside of the barn and show ring. We are excited about the future of Northern Belle Stables and for the show horse industry here in New England.

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

TYLER: I have been fortunate to expand my knowledge through many great mentors, internships and jobs. While still in high school, I started working for Rob Turner at LM Turner Stables. Through Rob's guidance, I learned to always put what was right for the horse above all else, to be patient in developing a horse's mouth and that the time and care put into developing a horse can never be overstated. I was able to further expand on my knowledge while grooming at horse shows for notable trainers such as Nikki Rae Woodworth and Rodney Hicks.

Knowing how hungry I was for a career as a successful horse trainer, my friend, the late Ken Logan, advised me to expand my horizons working for someone outside of New England, which led me to West Virginia to work for Smith Lilly and Mercer Springs Farm. The time I spent there was undoubtedly the most incredible and immersive experience of my life. I have learned so many important lessons from Smith which will carry me through my career, but, the most important lesson he taught me was to never give up. Whether the horse or rider has a bad day, week, or month, you need to never allow doubt to dictate your outlook on the training and management of your stable.

I learned to be innovative in my approach to both horse and rider and to let the big picture, and not the small day to day activities, dictate my future. Alexandra possesses an empathetic nature which gives her an unwavering strength and ability to always see the greater picture for the farm, horses, riders, and in the staff.

There is no one I have met in our industry who is as strong, kind, and truthful as Sandy Lilly. If Sandy believed in you, she would never give up on you, which made every person around her stronger and more confident. The team dynamic at Mercer Springs Farm is something I have worked hard to replicate at Northern Belle Stables to give our horses, clients, and staff the absolute best experience they can have in our industry.



Who are your role models/mentors? Why?

TYLER: I have been fortunate to not only work for a variety of notable trainers, but I have also been blessed with incredible mentors in my career. No matter where or what, both Mike Goebig and Peggy Alderman have always stood in my corner and have challenged me to think outside the box while doing what is best for the horse. Dave Rogers, Ken Logan and Bob Funkhouser are the three people who have helped develop my character the most. I grew up with them as constants in my young adult life and am incredibly thankful for the person they have helped me become.

What is your favorite thing about being a trainer?

TYLER: My favorite thing about being a horse trainer is that, at the end of the day when I lay my head down on the pillow at night, I can say I made a horse or customer a little better than they were the day before. Whether it is gaiting a horse for the first time, taking a young colt into the show ring, bringing an up and coming academy rider like Gracelyn Shepard into the show ring for the first time, or training Regal's Monarch to a Reserve National Championship, it all matters to me.

What is the hardest thing about being a trainer?

TYLER: The hardest part about being a trainer is the need to wear numerous hats in one day. The job doesn't end each day with training the horses. We need to keep our clients up to date on what is going on and help prepare them for the show ring. We need to market to potential clients in new and innovative ways and work to bring riders up through the ranks from introductory lessons and camps, to weekly lessons, academy showing, showing at the local and regional level and beyond. On top of that, there is the day to day management of staff and upkeep of the farm. I know many trainers who aren't only skilled at working horses and managing clientele, but also are handy at making repairs from fixing stalls to assessing arena footing. As a trainer you need to work your personal life around the ability to travel, as necessary, to shows or to shop for horses, as well as being flexible to tailor your day to numerous training and lesson clients. It is a juggling act, but at the end of each day, the ability to balance all these aspects of the industry is what keeps the barn alive and successful.

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

TYLER: My advice for the younger generation interested in pursuing a career in the show horse industry is to know what your goal is and be relentless at achieving it. It is important to set a larger goal with smaller, measurable goals included along the way. Having these goals will help keep you motivated and focused on your day to day operations, as well as your long term successes. What do you think is essential for the industry to focus on to ensure its success?

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

TYLER: We have underutilized the ability to bring new people into the breed through our horse shows. We have focused so much on catering to the exhibitors and trainers and have lost the market to the general public. We need to shift focus from showing horses to ourselves to educating the general public about the benefits of the equestrian industry and excitement of the show horse. We need to find ways to reward show managers not just for filling stalls at horse shows, but also filling the stands to ensure the longevity and success of our industry.