

FUTURE FORUM

The Up and Coming of Young Trainers

by Leeann Mione

This is another segment in the 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 Ryne Swope who is the trainer for Roadshow Morgans at Ten Star Ranch, owned by the Green, Willard and Pruetz families in Morgan Mill, Texas.

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

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

RYNE: As a kid, my childhood best friend was very active in Boy Scouts and was in the process of collecting badges. One of the badges was a horsemanship badge. At the age of eight our parents enrolled us both in a three-day summer camp at a local guided trail riding facility, him for the badge and me to keep him company.

After the first day I was hooked! All I could talk about was horses for the next 72 hours. We found a local barn where I participated in three more weeklong summer camps that same summer. I asked for lessons for every holiday or occasion, and the rest is history.

What made you decide to become a professional trainer?

RYNE: Ever since I can remember I have been enthralled with all things horse. So I guess when I realized I could turn my life's passion into an occupation it was a natural progression for me. I slowly geared my involvement with horses in a way that would prepare me for this career. I remember when traveling to horse shows as a kid, I'd make sure I got to the show grounds as early as I possibly could. This way I could just sit, watch, and study the trainers working their horses. I distinctly remember thinking "I want to do that someday..."

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

RYNE: When I was 14 my parents and I made the decision to move from the local stable I started at to Kelly Kraegel's Cottonwood Creek Ranch. Through an eight-year period I finished out my junior exhibitor career with Kelly and began my professional career as her assistant. Kelly afforded me countless opportunities to learn, grow, and hone my skills in a safe and nurturing environment.

After graduating from college I received a call from David Rand, and upon Cindy Mugnier's recommendation I was off to Maine. In my time at RAND I received invaluable experience on how a very large training operation works, and also how some of the top horses in the country are maintained and cared for. In the more recent years I have been graced with the wisdoms of long time Morgan Horse enthusiasts The John Green Family and their 48 years of life lessons showing and breeding horses.

Who are your role models/mentors? Why?

RYNE: Growing up in the Morgan Horse industry, I feel like I have received mentorship from so many because it truly is one big helping hand of a family. Kelly Kraegel was and continues to be a mentor figure in my life. If I have any questions at all I know I can call her and if she doesn't know the answer she'll search until she finds it. Her late mother Ann Kraegel was a huge supportive figure in my life and journey as a young rider and young professional. Ann always encouraged me to work hard for what I wanted and to take pride in everything I do.

From a young age, I have always held the team at Broadmoor in highest regard. The horses have an effortlessly beautiful way of going, which is only accentuated by the professionalism of both trainer and amateur.

What is your favorite thing about being a trainer?

RYNE: Besides getting to do what I love each and every day of my life, I get great joy out of seeing a horse and rider team come together successfully. As a trainer knowing you've given both horse and rider the tools to succeed, as well as being able to communicate effectively to both is really a special feeling.



Photo by Kim Oplotnik, The Morgan Horse

What is the hardest thing about being a trainer?

RYNE: I would have to say the emotional journey you go on with each and every horse and/or rider. When you see and work with an individual, horse or human, day in and day out it's a strong bond. Win, lose, or draw you are with that individual/team every single step of the way.

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

RYNE: Absorb everything you can. Watch the people and horses that inspire you and see what draws you to them and what makes those individuals successful. Take advantage of every opportunity presented and use it to the fullest. You never know when volunteering your time to help out a friend could lead to your dream job.

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

RYNE: I believe us all coming together to promote our sport and the amazing experiences it can offer to the general public is going to be key to our success in the future. In this ever-changing technological world we live in, we can offer something unique. A hands-on experience that teaches life lessons, brings people together, and provides family fun at many different levels. Even if someone isn't in a position to go out and show, or buy a horse, they can still enjoy the many facets this wonderful horse industry has to offer.