

5* Eventer Katie Ruppel won the OJC Thoroughbred Eventing Champion CCI3* with her off-track Thoroughbred Houdini in 2017.

Photo by Shannon Brinkman.



For Thoroughbreds, the End is Just the Beginning

Story by Jen Roytz, Executive Director of the Retired Racehorse Project

As you drive around Ocala, it's hard to miss. Tens of thousands of miles of fence line enclose the hundreds of Thoroughbred farms and training centers that call Ocala home. This time of year, there are roughly 40,000 Thoroughbreds in Florida, many of them in Ocala where they are gaining the foundational training that will hopefully one day serve them well on the track as racehorses.

Each of these horses is purpose-bred and mindfully raised to be an athlete. Careful research and planning go into each pedigree and mating, just as it has for their sire, dam and the generations that came before them, and that same careful consideration extends into their formative years. How their handled, fed and raised is never left to chance.

The intention for horses bred for racing is for their athleticism to be showcased on the track, earning wins, making headlines and possibly even the right

to play a part in creating the next generation of racing superstars. But just as we know with athletes of the human variety, athletic prowess can extend far beyond a single skill.

That same combination of speed, stamina, agility and power that makes Thoroughbreds so well-suited for the racetrack easily lends itself to equestrian sports, and with the Thoroughbred-specific incentives and awards available these days at horse shows around the country, including the Ocala Jockey Club International Three-Day Event, there has never been a better time to be mounted on a Thoroughbred in the show ring.

Added-Money Classes and Competitions for Thoroughbreds

As is common knowledge in much of the sport horse world, Thoroughbreds once dominated American show rings. They were often hot off the

leg and forward in both thought and motion - traits often lauded by top equestrians, but ones that require skill and patience to ride and mold effectively.

As **Lynn Symansky**, a 5* rider and Team USA member whose OTTB Donner (aka "The Deer") was a traveling reserve for the 2016 Olympics, says: **"There's no breed I'd rather be sitting on at the end of a 5* XC course.** You never really know what level a horse will ultimately get to when you start their career, but I love producing TBs into the sport because they have the most incredible heart, love to work, and show up every day trying. Some of my best partnerships have been OTTBs I started from the beginning of their careers, and it's incredibly rewarding to help give them the recognition they deserve and put some extra money in my pocket to help bring the future ones along. While I love OTTBs, the reason so many of us end up with them is because it's a financially feasible purchase as a young prospect.

To be rewarded for giving them a second career that they thrive in is incredibly important both financially and for their owners. It has helped both the breed and the sport continue to grow."

As the import of European Warmbloods became increasingly prevalent, the popularity of Thoroughbreds waned. The traits that once made them enviable as upper-level mounts became the very reason some chose against them and they became less and less prevalent in the show ring.

In the past decade, several organizations, including the Retired Racehorse Project, the Thoroughbred Incentive Program (T.I.P.) and the TAKE2 Program have been created aimed at incentivizing more equestrians to choose Thoroughbreds for the show ring.

Created with a specific mission to reinvigorate demand for Thoroughbreds after racing, the Retired Racehorse Project puts on clinics and other educational events such as their RRP

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RRP MASTER CLASS

AT THE OCALA JOCKEY CLUB INTERNATIONAL
3-DAY EVENT, OCALA, FL
NOV. 17TH, AT THE CONCLUSION OF STADIUM JUMPING (~3:30PM)
MAIN ARENA

Thoroughbreds have incredible potential as sport horses after racing, but getting started with a new off-track prospect can be a challenge. The RRP Master Class was conceived to give spectators a comprehensive look at what to consider when evaluating prospects and how to approach those early rides off the track.

The Format

Recently retired racehorses from reputable aftercare organizations will be presented to our clinicians for evaluation. Trainers will then be paired randomly with the horses and break out to work independently showcasing their approach to the first ride on a retired racehorse while our commentators offer their expert insights into

what they're seeing and their own approaches. After the training sessions are complete, trainers will provide additional insight into what their impressions were of their horses and what the next few months would look like for the horse in their training program. The clinic concludes with questions from the audience.

Featured trainers:

Tik Maynard
Ashley Johnson
Katie Ruppel

Horses provided by:

Florida Thoroughbred Retirement and Adoptive Care
FL Thoroughbred Retirement of Tampa
Niall Brennan Stables

Commentators:

Rick Wallace
Elisa Wallace
Lauren Turner

Emcee:

Jen Roytz



Master Class series, which pairs notable professional equestrians with recently retired racehorses to showcase for the audience their approach to retraining a Thoroughbred (the next RRP Master Class will be held this Sunday, Nov. 17 at the conclusion of competition in the OJC main arena). The organization, however, is best known for its signature event, the Thoroughbred Makeover a national retraining competition for Thoroughbreds in their first year after retirement from racing.

Trainers apply for the competition in December and January by filling out an application and submitting several letters of reference and a video and resume of their riding abilities. Over the course of 10 months, accepted trainers retrain a newly retired racehorse to compete in one or two of ten disciplines – barrel racing, competitive trail, dressage, eventing, field hunting, freestyle, polo, ranch work, show hunter and show jumping – for more than \$135,000 in prize money and their training journey with their horse is chronicled in a variety of ways.

Elisa Wallace, a 5* Eventer who has traveled the world and works with Thoroughbreds such as Simply Priceless who has competed at events such as Burghley in England and the 5* Land Rover (formerly Rolex) 5* Event, says about the RRP Program: “The RRP is an amazing platform that highlights the athleticism, versatility, and value of amazing Thoroughbreds. On top of that, as a trainer and spectator, it is just plain fun to attend and witness all the different disciplines in one place!”

Created by The Jockey Club, the breed registry for North American Thoroughbreds, the T.I.P. program offers a different approach to a similar goal. Designed to encourage the retraining of Thoroughbreds in other disciplines upon conclusion of their racing or breeding careers, the organization offers incentives for competition horses, recreational horses, young riders and Thoroughbreds in a non-competitive new career. In 2019, the T.I.P. gave out more than 4,000 class, division and high point awards at more than 1,300 shows throughout the U. S. and Canada, as



Elisa Wallace and Simply Priceless, competing at the 2018 OJC Event, jumping over a jump sponsored by Eddie Woods Stables

well as a Championship all-Thoroughbred competition at the Kentucky Horse Park each fall.

To be eligible for T.I.P. awards, a horse must be a registered Thoroughbred on record with The Jockey Club and have an assigned T.I.P. number, which will be required for entry into T.I.P.-sponsored classes as proof of eligibility. Applying for and receiving a T.I.P. number is free through The Jockey Club's Interactive Registration system.

The TAKE2 Program also offers prize money and awards in hunter/jumper classes at horse shows around the country. With a focus on supporting retired racehorses competing in A/AA rated competition, TAKE2 classes are offered at USEF-sanction shows in 23 states, covering 10 of the 12 USEF zones. TAKE2 hunters compete at a height of 3' with the jumpers competing at 1.0 meter.

All-Thoroughbred Horse Shows Gaining Popularity



While horse-showing is fun, horse-showing for a good cause is even better! In addition to organizations that sponsor classes at open shows, there is a growing number of Thoroughbred-only shows around the country, most of which raise

funding for Thoroughbred aftercare or related non-profits. New Vocations Racehorse Adoption Program puts on their annual All-Thoroughbred Charity Horse Show each September in conjunction with the T. I. P.

Championships at the Kentucky Horse Park. Included in the show are classes for hunters, jumpers,

dressage, eventing, Western pleasure, competitive trail and more. The Maryland Jockey Club hosts the annual Totally Thoroughbred Horse Show and, while the event took a hiatus in 2019, organizers have it slated for a 2020 return. Also in Maryland is the MidAtlantic Horse Rescue All Thoroughbred Benefit Show, which offers a wide variety of classes, perfect for everything from beginners to more advanced riders bringing a Thoroughbred up the levels.

An advertisement for Masters Golf Cars Inc. The background is a lush green golf course with palm trees under a blue sky. In the foreground, a red and black golf cart is parked on the grass. The text 'Masters GOLF CARS Inc. EST. 1999' is written in large, stylized yellow letters. Below it, the phone number '(352) 307-0111' is displayed in yellow on a green background. At the bottom, there are four buttons labeled 'SALES', 'MOBILE SERVICE', 'RENTALS', and 'ACCESSORIES'. The address '12885 S HWY 441 BELLEVIEW, FL 34420 (ACROSS FROM MARION MARKET)' is written in yellow. On the right side, there are logos for 'Club Car', 'EZGO', 'YAMAHA AUTHORIZED DEALER', and 'Trojan BATTERY COMPANY'. The website 'MASTERSGOLFCARS.COM' is written in yellow at the bottom right.

Lynn Symansky competing with Donner Syndicate's off-track Thoroughbred Donner, winning the 2016 top Thoroughbred award

offers a wide variety of classes, perfect for everything from beginners to more advanced riders bringing a Thoroughbred up the levels.

On the West Coast, the Thoroughbred Classic Horse Show takes place each December at the Los Angeles Equestrian Center and features a "Trainer-Jockey Calcutta," in which notable personalities from the racing world compete over a show jumping course on the backs of Thoroughbreds retrained for jumping. The event is similar to the Real Rider Cup, which is held in conjunction with the increasingly popular Fair Hill Thoroughbred Show in Unionville, Pa.

In Florida, the Run for the Ribbons, Inc. puts on their annual Run for the Ribbons Horse Show Series, a hunter/jumper show that caters to Thoroughbreds in their second career. They are also the organization behind the Florida Thoroughbred Transformation Expo, a retraining competition that offers classes for both recently retired Thoroughbreds, as well as

Thoroughbreds who have advanced further into their second careers.

Pavla and Erik Nygaard, who own Ocala Jockey Club Farm and assist with the organization of the Ocala Jockey Club International Three-Day Event are Thoroughbred breeders and owners both on track and off. In an effort to encourage more riders to compete on Thoroughbreds at the upper levels, they are once again offering the Thoroughbred Eventing Championship Division, which will award \$15,000 in additional prize money to the top-placing Thoroughbreds in each of the four FEI divisions.

Based in Lexington, Ky., Jen Roytz is the executive director of the Retired Racehorse Project. For more information about anything covered in this article, or to learn more about how you can get more involved with Thoroughbreds, contact her at jroytz@retiredracehorseproject.org.



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TIK MAYNARD

IN THE MIDDLE

**ARE THE
HORSEMEN**

He studied the horse, and human nature, and how the two can find balance.
And in that journey, he may have found himself.

THE FIRST TIME WAS EASY

By TIK MAYNARD. EXCERPT FROM “IN THE MIDDLE ARE THE HORSEMEN”

My hands were in fists, and they were still, steady against my mare’s withers. Twelve strides out and I stood up a fraction in my stirrups. My hands came up and the reins went tight. She pulled against the pressure. Damn it! Pay attention! Her mouth, her weight, her energy, all pulled firmly forward like a train. Seven strides out and I leaned back against the reins. Her head came up, but she didn’t slow down. My knuckles went white. Four strides out and I changed my mind. I let her reach forward again. I urged her on. Come! On! Her mouth closed around the bit. I hit her with my stick. Damn! My arm swung high, I smacked her again. Two strides left.

Maybe, I thought.

And then we hit the jump.

Her legs collapsed above the knees and whipped back toward her ribs. The impact threw her chest forward and her head down. Her body slid over the brush and the log. Bark and branches grabbed at her stifle. Together, we hit the ground face first. I had no idea where she was. I stood up as a soldier stands after battle; the happiness of being alive quickly overcome by the shame of not being dead.

I looked around. Was she okay? Oh my God, I hoped she was okay. Was she okay?

Sapphire was being led off the course. Someone took my arm and steered me after her. The two-way radios burst with noise. Back and forth they talked. Are they okay? they asked. Are they okay?

The first time I evented had not been like this. The first time was easy. It was sensual and tactile. I had smelled the wind as it carried the scents of the Pacific Ocean over Vancouver Island. I saw the light shining through bowed maple leaves and dappling the mossy earth into a thousand hues of green and brown. My mare’s stride had been

rhythmic and perfect, like a long-distance runner’s.

I’d seen a rainbow in our wake through the water. I’d sensed a gull at our wings on the hills.

But this time was no easy gallop in the clouds. This time, coming down to that last jump, it was RAT-TAT-TAT-TAT. Sapphire’s legs moved in the uneven staccato of a Gatling gun. RAT-TAT. There was no dance that day—we were trying too hard! RAT-TAT-TAT. No ocean breezes filled my senses. No spotlight lit our path. There was only courage and shame and love and guilt spilled at that last fence.

This excerpt from *In the Middle Are the Horsemen* is reprinted with permission from Trafalgar Square Books (www.horseandriderbooks.com).

Tik Maynard will be involved in the 2019 Ocala Jockey Club International 3-Day Event in a few ways:

- **Horsemanship demonstration on Saturday in the Main Arena**
- **One of the three featured trainers working with a newly retired Thoroughbred on Sunday in the Retired Racehorse Project Thoroughbred Master Class**
- **Book signings in the Vendor Village**
- **His website is www.tik.ca**