



THE OAK LEAF



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Important Dates

Aug 03

XC Open Schooling @
Oakhurst

Aug 11 & 12

Harmony HT

Aug 11

Westar Silver Dressage
Show

Aug 23 to 26

Oakhurst3DE

Aug 29 to Sept 02

Foshay International

WWCRD? (What Would Coach Ruth Do?)

It takes a Village.

As you know we ran the largest Horse Trial in our existence last weekend and it was with the help of so many fantastic volunteers! One of the coolest parts of my day at an Event is the Jump Judge briefing. I get to see so many faces that I see once or twice a year religiously on Oakhurst Event day. People that used to ride with me that come back time and time again to help support the team in any way they can. And speaking of that I even saw girls that finished their own ride early in the day and then pick up jump judging for those that had started early. As a volunteer it's a very long day, and we appreciate you! We appreciate every job you do from scribing, tack check, jump judging, scoring, secretary, control, whipping in, ring crew, timers, runners and yes even porta-pottie patrol (and more!). You had a huge influence on the success of a day and you managed 147 horses and smiled through the whole thing, congratulations!

One of my other favorite parts of our own Event day is hearing the debrief from riders about their day in their own eyes. Without coaching on the day, we place this enormous amount of trust and faith in each rider to test out what they have been trained to do and I appreciate this is hard, but you all stepped up and the stories of every ride have been tremendous to hear!

This month we have some very exciting dates coming up:

- Friday August 3rd – Open Schooling at Oakhurst (so be prepared for more people to come enjoy the course)
- August 4th & 5th – I am away doing Competition Coach Specialist Evaluations – yay new coaches!!
- August 11th & 12th – Harmony Horse Trials (trailers leaving at 10:00am – aka 9:49am on the 10th)
- August 11th – Westar Silver Dressage Show
- August 18th – 21st – I am away doing Competition Coach and Competition Coach Specialist Evaluations – yay more new coaches!!!

Important Links

[Horse-Sport Review of Oakhurst3DE 2017](#)

[Equestrian Canada Memberships](#)

[Ontario Equestrian Memberships](#)

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- August 23rd – 26th – OAKHURST 3-DAY EVENT!!!! I am so excited about this I am starting to count down the sleeps 😊. If you haven't signed up to ride, consider signing up to volunteer, that gets you in to the dinner Saturday night as well as to the clinics. You can sign up to volunteer through the Oakhurst website <http://www.oakhurstfarm.com/oakhurst3de-volunteer> or by just sending me an email. *As well, those of you pre-planning lessons that week... there will be no lessons while the 3 day is running.*
- August 29th – September 2nd – FOSHAY INTERNATIONAL!!! We have 4 horses in the barn declared and qualified for the Foshay International FEI Event, check it out: <http://www.foshayinternational.com/> . If anyone is interested in a road trip to New Brunswick to cheer let me know!

It's going to be a busy month and thank goodness, the busier the better! Keep it up team you were rock stars on the weekend (riders and volunteers both!).

Ruth

Stuff You Should Know

It takes a village to run Oakhurst3DE– a community of painters, whipper snippers, grass cutters, course flaggers and jump decorators, helpers on the day and in the days before, prize coordinators, etc etc. If you are willing and able to help us get ready or run the big weekend, we would LOVE to have your assistance. Either sign up on the volunteer list in the barn or let Ruth know what skills you can share.

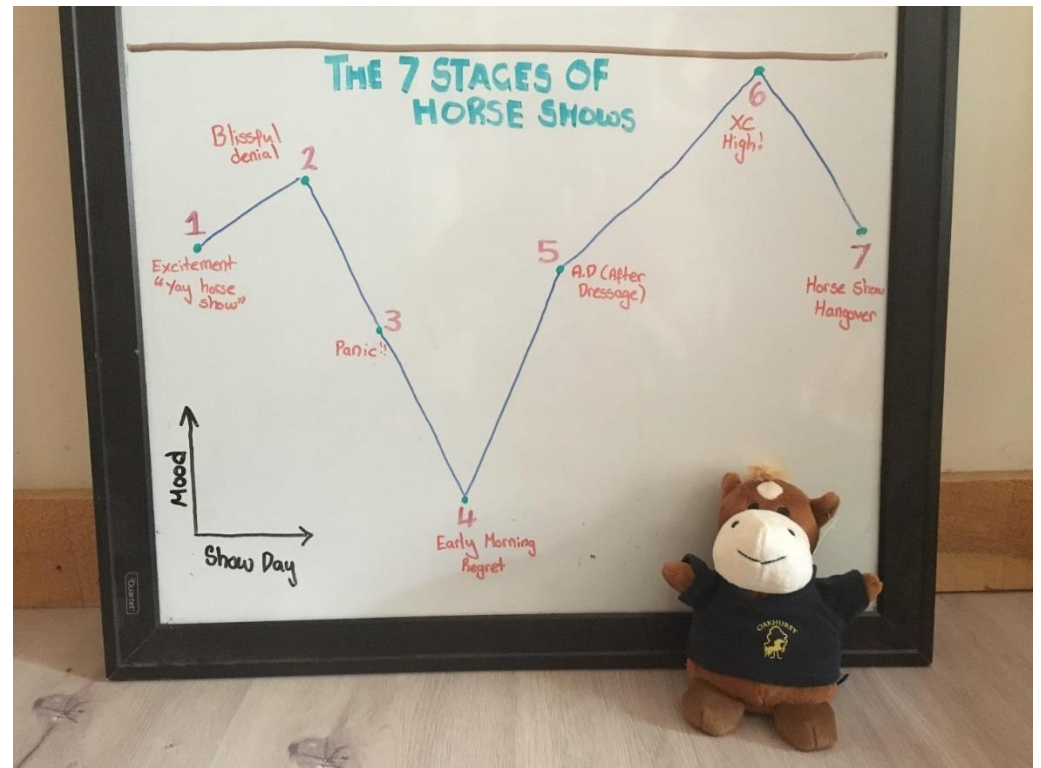
The Hammock Under The Stairs By Michelle Smith (Definitely not ghost written by Meg Quinn)

I should probably start by explaining why my newsletter section is called “The Hammock under the Stairs”. If you've been to the farm recently, you've probably seen the hammock under the stairs to the apartment. It's a great place to hang out, take a nap, or accidentally spook passing horses (My roommate Meg says “Sorry Jason and Toady”).



Black Horse, Spot and I are gearing up for our first FEI event! In just four short weeks, we'll be making the trip to Foshay International in New Brunswick for our first go at the Intro FEI level. For the past six months, I've been going through a bucket-load of emotions, which I think anybody who shows horses can understand.

So I present: **The 7 Stages of Horse Showing**



Stage 1: Excitement

It's months before the event, and you're staring at the freshly released omnibus, hoping that the mountain of snow outside will melt. You're praying to the eventing Gods that spring will come early, and soon you'll be galloping through the water jump, instead of shovelling white stuff off the driveway. August is months away, that's plenty of time to prepare for an FEI event! That sounds like a great idea. Let's do it.

Stage 2: Blissful Denial

Stage two happens when you let yourself believe "Oh, we have plenty of time to prepare!" It's often characterised by phrases such as:

- I don't have to declare yet, that's ages away.
- I should probably read the rule book again at some point.
- We've got time to perfect those leg yields
- It's just a dressage test, how hard can it be to learn?
- If I stare at the pile of dirty show saddle pads for long enough, they might clean themselves

Stage 3: Panic (aka Mad Packing)

The problem with the Blissful Denial stage, is that it's swiftly followed by panic. You'll be prancing around the dressage arena, feeling extra fancy, when your coach makes a passing comment, or you hear the girls in the barn talking about the hotel they booked. Then it dawns on you – The show is this week and you've not started packing! Why

didn't you start organizing three weeks ago? Where did you put your stock pin? Why didn't the laundry do itself? Who decided that taking not one, but two horses to your first FEI event was a good idea? Symptoms of this phase include self-doubt, sleepless nights, and an unexplainable desire to make checklists.

Stage 4: Early Morning Regret

You've arrived at the show, and your horses are settled in. You've managed to remember to pack most of the essentials (and borrow what you've forgotten). You even tried to go to bed early last night, but now it's 4:30am, your alarm is going off, and you've officially entered Stage 4: Early Morning Regret. You wonder "Why do I do this to myself week after week?" and "Do I turn right, or left at C?" Normal people will spend their Sunday sleeping in, or going out for brunch. But not you! You have to get up before the sun to make sure your spotty horse hasn't rolled in something, and that both boys get their breakfast. This stage continues through the Dressage warmup, and symptoms include forgetting to breathe, feeling nauseous, and wondering if you could get your money back if you scratched now. The condition normally clears up as you enter at A, but in some cases, symptoms won't resolve until you've saluted the judge and left the ring.

Stage 5: A.D (After Dressage)

The funny thing about the stages of horse showing, is that they closely resemble a roller coaster. One minute you're up, the next you're down. After Dressage you may experience feelings of relief, excitement, and the desire to shorten your stirrups. You realise you probably should have paid a little closer attention to the stadium course walk – but who cares, you get to jump! You've cruised around stadium, and now the real fun can begin! With your XC times written on your arm, and your watch set, you're on your way to the start box.



The real fun starts A.D. Photo Credit to Jackie Wimbush @Jaxfoto

Stage 6: That Post XC Rush

You jumped all the jumps! You went through all the flags! You did it! You're a rock star! This stage is best described in the series of pictures below. Don't be concerned when you find yourself unable to stop smiling. You may feel the urge to fist pump, or let out a triumphant cry. These are all normal responses, and should be embraced. Curiously,

riders who go through stage 6 seem to forget the negative emotions associated with the previous stages. Horses receive many pats, and the rider may enjoy a beverage or two.



In many cases, the post XC high can start partway around the course. Photo Credit to Jackie Wimbush@Jaxfoto



Meg Quinn and King Stag displaying textbook "Post XC Smile". Photo Credit Emma Johnson @emmakate_j

Stage 7: Horseshow Hangover

As the high wears off you realise you haven't eaten anything since breakfast. You've entered the Horse Show Hangover. Don't plan any strenuous activity for the following day, because you know very well there is no way you're getting out of bed. The problem with a Horse Show Hangover is that when your coach says "Hey, you should enter the next event", you have just enough cross country adrenaline still in your

system that you think it's a good idea. So you look at your calendar and think "Oh that's ages away. We have plenty of time. Let's do it!" And so the cycle continues.

And we wouldn't have it any other way!

Michelle (and/or Meg Q)

Helen's Top 10...

Things a parent of an athlete should do.

As a coach, we are always working on upgrading our coaching skills – becoming better, more educated, and more well-rounded leaders for our athletes. But lately, I've been thinking a lot about the role I play in my 2 daughter's athletic careers as a parent and there are some distinct differences in how I have to play that role to ensure I'm creating a healthy, positive, fun environment for our family to enjoy the sport of Eventing. These are my top 10 things parents of an athlete can do during competition to #WINatParenting

10. It's not all about JUST Eventing. I mean, it IS, if you ask your coach. But the best athletes are well rounded and have lots of other experiences outside of the sport they are competing in. Cross-training with any other sport can be a valuable way to pick up athletic abilities not improved by riding. We all know riding takes core-strength and stamina, but you'll have to ride a lot of horses in a day to build those abilities. Having fun in another or several other sports may improve your balance, strength and stamina when your athlete gets on a horse. That can only be a good thing.

9. It's supposed to be fun. OK, there are nerves on show day and even tears if something doesn't go to plan, but there should be fun. If your whole family is travelling to a competition in another province for the weekend, to support your athlete, there should be some laughs at dinner, some fun working together to get through the weekend, some singing in the car on the way to and fro. It's likely not the Olympics, relax a little. Stop for an ice-cream on the way home and make a happy memory. And try not to take the nerves personally. My girls know, it's OK to be nervous, it's not OK to be nasty and shout or snipe at each other. Or me. Or their dad. If we are not all having fun, we can do other things for our weekends. Like bowling or lawn darts.

8. Bring the food. As a parent, I have to think about the necessities of life. I am in charge of making sure we have a cooler of drinks and snacks. I have to consider keeping my athletes hydrated and fed. I DO NOT pack their riding gear. I have no idea how many corks they are bringing and when they will use them and why. They discuss that with their coach. I'm not their coach. Their coach doesn't bring a water bottle to the warm-up area for them and their parent doesn't need to tell them which bit to use for each phase. I carry the stuff they need, but they have to let me know what it is. I have to make sure they don't pass out from heat exhaustion, and keep them healthy through the day.

7. Be the paparazzi. Someone has to take the videos and pictures of their epic greatness. I'm not coaching them because I'm parenting, so that job falls to me. As a coach, I know that my girls learn from watching themselves. As a parent, I know that everyone loves to post a little video of themselves out there competing and enjoying the sport. As a parent, I try to take as many videos (which anyone who knows me, knows I am epically bad at – I have a tendency to forget to switch my phone to "video mode" and take a pic of the start and a pic of the finish, with none of the greatness in between.) and pictures as I can of the great times, happy faces and good memories as I can. And then parents should post them. Show your kids you had fun watching them have fun.

6. Don't critique. Your athlete has a coach. She'll tell them when they come out of the ring or off the course what could be improved for next time. She will let them know what they did well and what needs work. And they are probably analyzing their own performance too. If your athlete wants to tell you what happened, listen and be understanding, but remember that there are coaches and officials doing their job to make the playing field as fair as possible. Your job is to assure your kids that you love them. Regardless of the result. Regardless of the money spent and the distance travelled, and time spent, the weekend is worth it. Learning happened. And for god's sake don't critique other people's kids. That can only end poorly for everyone.

5. Support the team. Just because we compete as individuals in this sport most of the time doesn't mean we don't work as a team. Wear the blue and yellow, cheer for your athlete's teammates and show your own children good sportsmanship. Every day won't necessarily be your athlete's day to win, but the team travels together and can lift each other up or bring each other down by working together or not. Model good sportsmanship as a lifeskill and your kids will grow up to be good people.

4. Let your children fail. Sometimes your athlete won't win. Sometimes they will have a bad lesson / event / show or day. That's OK. We learn best in uncomfortable situations. Sometimes the lessons we learn the best are the ones that seem like an epic fail. Watching your athlete go in the ring before the whistle and eliminate themselves, or miss the finish flags, or forget a jump, or whatever, can be heartbreaking – you KNOW they could have done it. And that rule is such a small (and ridiculous) one. And there is a temptation to argue with the judge / TD / Official / organizer / coach / other parents / etc. But we want our kids to be respectful in the rest of their lives. Teach them that they can own their own mistakes and learn from them. It's not the end of the world. It's not OK to stomp off and have a fit (for either of you). Own it, grow from it and move on. They will NEVER forget the test, miss the finish line or make that mistake again. You can count on it. The best athletes and people have failed and figured out how to be better next time.

3. Help your child set realistic goals (not your goals). Don't be in a rush to get to Prelim, or Entry, or whatever level you think your athlete should be at. Your athlete and coach will know when they are ready. Equestrian sport is an early start – VERY late maturity sport. They are riding a thousand-pound animal at speed and with many technical questions being asked. There is no rush to move up. My kids have to beg before I know they are truly ready for the next challenge. Their goals should be discussed with their coach to ensure they are realistic and achievable. They should also be discussed with their family to ensure they fit into your schedule, summer plans, budget etc. They should have nothing to do with what you wanted to do but never had the chance to. If it did, my children would be world class ukulele players by now.

2. Listen. After any competition or phase, sometimes our athlete needs to talk out what happened. They will have a debrief from their coach. They are not looking for coaching from you. They are trying to arrange thoughts in their head. They are trying to analyze their performance. They are trying to vent and pass through the stress of competition. Listen to what they have to say but don't critique. Offer encouragement where needed, seek coaching help from their coach if they truly didn't figure out what happened. My girls and I have a rule: Don't take a bad ride out on your family or your team. Give them 2 minutes in the porta-potty to "get over it" if needed but remind them (if necessary) to be good sports, respectful, team players and responsible horse-people. I don't care how badly it went for them out there. They HAVE TO take care of their equine partner. Not completing the course doesn't mean they can throw the reins at you and stomp off. They are better people than that. They need to learn to be better people from their parents.

1. **Say these words as much as you can: “I love watching you ride (or do dressage, jump, gallop, etc.)”**. That’s all your kids need to hear. That you were happy to be there watching them do their thing. They don’t need to hear that they could have done better or that you could have done it better. They don’t need to hear what was wrong or what was right from their parent. This is a game. They started doing this because they loved playing the game. It’s not a job. It’s supposed to be fun. Our kids just need to know that their parent is happy to see them doing it. Period. If you don’t believe me, watch this:

<https://youtu.be/VXw0XGOVQvw>

That’s it. Let them do their thing, enjoy watching them do it, keep them hydrated and fed and be supportive. This is supposed to be fun. Don’t be the cause of their stress. They have enough. They are going to gallop a thousand-pound animal at solid jumps and try to do it within a time limit. Be there to take pictures of their awesomeness and enjoy the journey. Let the coaches do their job and you do yours. You’ve got this. You are going to be amazing.

Now can one of you show me how to videotape properly? My girls are tired of watching a video of the grass as I walk from jump to jump and not themselves jumping the actual jumps.

Helen