

## MEGAN JONES INTERVIEWED FOR TCA'S OWNER'S CORNER OUTLINES TEAM VALOR'S APPROACH TO THOROUGHBRED AFTERCARE STABLE HAS ENTRUSTED CHANGING LEADS, RENAISSANCE RESCUE RANCH

From the Thoroughbred Charities of America's Owner's Corner comes the following interview with Team Valor's Megan Jones:

### What has been your favorite win/moment as an owner?

I guess a question like that could differ in answer between myself and Barry, but in this instance I'm sure it would be the same, Animal Kingdom winning the Kentucky Derby. To be able to provide that moment for some of the long-time partners that were involved in him, we'll be forever grateful, and it was especially rewarding as Team Valor had bred and raised him, raced the mare and Barry just had his fingerprints all over it so that was just the neatest way it could have happened.



*Megan Jones with partners Otis and Allison Boersma in France last year with Spanish Romance.*

### How do you determine when it is time to retire your Thoroughbreds?

Each decision varies from horse to horse as an individual and what is best for that specific horse. With the mares especially, it's important to maximize their value both on the racecourse and for breeding or the sales ring, so that's a balancing act and it is the same for colts with value at stud.

With the geldings or colts who do not have value in the breeding shed, our overall principles remain the same with the only difference being that there isn't criteria factoring into the decision related to breeding value. Essentially, once a horse's best races appear to be behind them we don't feel the need to keep campaigning the horse. Similarly, if they experience an injury during their racing career, we assess their viability to make it back to the races safely and at the same level they were previously competing, which are always two very important factors we evaluate when deciding how to proceed.

### Once it's decided that retirement is necessary, how do you go about determining the most suitable retirement option for your horses?

I believe most horses really enjoy a job and daily interactions with people, so we really try to provide the means for them to make the adjustment to have useful lives in a second career. Luckily in that regard, Team Valor keeps the size stable where Barry and I are able to know our horses very well already, and having that knowledge of their personalities, strengths, quirks or physical issues becomes equally useful when making retirement decisions.

We decide for each horse as an individual what he would be best at and try to match him with an appropriate rehabilitation, rehoming and retraining option.



*Changing Leads placed the former Team Valor charge Dance Marathon with Johanna Routhier, the coach of the English IHSA riding team at Auburn University.*

Team Valor utilizes several nonprofits regularly, including the Changing Leads Thoroughbred Retraining Project, for those sound enough to rehabilitate, retrain and pursue a second career, and Renaissance Rescue Ranch for those horses that are better off not being ridden. I also think what Dale Simanton does at Gate to Great is really fantastic. There are some really thorough programs out there now which is exciting. Even watching Graham Motion's small eventing string of OTTB's with Phillip Dutton has become great fun.

### **What are your thoughts about an owner's role in Thoroughbred aftercare?**

Specific to Team Valor, we have an aftercare amendment in our LLCs, which helps us to provide a donation with most of our retirees in the situations of which there is rehabilitation required for a racing injury. Anytime the horse is going to need some help to get onto a new career path, we want to provide them with the means and entrust them to the right people. If we have a horse claimed off of us, I continue to follow their racing career and keep a tab that their situation is ok in case they ever need any help down the road.

General to the industry, I think one of the trickiest questions to answer is, who is responsible for those horses who have moved around the claiming ranks for years and thus earned money for a lot of different people but no large sum for one owner. Who is responsible for that horse, as they drop down to the lower levels with age and reach the end of their career? One of the most fun OTTBs I have ever ridden, was in that situation once - I did not know him at all in his racing career but a vet I knew did and pointed him out to me when he was 8 - he had won over \$400,000 but for a lot of different folks. He is such a gem of a horse, when I got him off the track the plan was to retrain and rehome him but instead I co-own him with my best friend from college now and we share him. Changing Leads TRP helped us retire him, and programs like that are angels when it comes to those types of horses that are probably ready to call it a day but don't really have anyone that feels too responsible for them as they get older. So, I think that is one of the toughest industry questions and I don't necessarily have the answer, but I do think the industry is really moving in the right direction when it comes to aftercare and owners are taking a more prominent role which is excellent to see.



*Hay Oats and Water won his first combined training and dressage schooling show in August 2015, and finished the high point winner of the day.*

*TCA is proud of Team Valor's responsibility to their horses and proud of the many owners who are dedicated to ensuring a proper retirement for their Thoroughbreds.*