

On Course With Junior Rider Lillie Keenan

By Jan Westmark

Junior rider Lillie Keenan made history in late 2010 when she became one of the youngest riders ever to win a Big Equitation Final. Keenan triumphed through three rounds of the WIHS Equitation Finals to win the class aboard Uno, a horse she borrowed from Madeline Turner and had only ridden for two weeks.

While Lillie's accomplishment in the WIHS was one of many for the 13-year-old rider from New York City, her biggest claim to fame occurred at Pony Finals. In 2007, Lillie won all three regular pony hunter divisions at Pony Finals and followed it up at the 2008 Pony Finals by winning five out of six possible championships.

"I am really happy that I won the WIHS Equitation Final, but I also love the ponies and I still do," Lillie says. "I would have to say the highlight of my career so far would be Pony Finals."

Lillie, who is in eighth grade, began riding when she was 6. "I tried every activity from violin and piano to gymnastics and ice hockey. I even performed in the Nutcracker at Lincoln Center. When I was six I found a brochure for Claremont Riding Academy in New York City and started riding there. Unfortunately it closed down a few years ago. I loved it there."

Sidelines: Who do you train with now?

LK: I train with Patricia Griffith, Andre Dignelli and Laena Romond at Heritage Farm. I love the whole Heritage team because everyone is doing whatever they can to help you win, while making it fun.

Sidelines: Congratulations on winning the WIHS Equitation Final. Did you expect to win?

LK: I did not expect to win but I knew my horse had it in him. I had a temperature the night before the show, and the next morning my fever was 103. My mom made me stay in bed for 16 hours. I wasn't positive I was even going to be able to show!

Sidelines: How did you end up riding Uno?

Lillie's Favorite Things:

Food: Chocolate

TV show: Hawaii Five-O

Color: Purple

Class in school: Math

Type of candy: Shockers

Number: 7

Type of horse: Westfalen

Place to travel to: Holland



Lillie and Uno winning the WIHS Equitation Finals

Photo by Diana De Rosa

LK: My usual ride turned up with an unfortunate injury before finals. I didn't get to ride Uno until the week before Penn National. I cannot thank the Turners enough.

Sidelines: How does it feel to be one of the youngest riders ever to win this final?

LK: It feels amazing. I can't even begin to explain it or put it into words.

Sidelines: What other wins do you consider highlights?

LK: This is only my second year in the equitation, but some other Big Eq wins include the ASPCA Maclay win this year at Devon and a tie in the Equitation Championship there.

Sidelines: What horses and ponies do you own?

LK: I own Ingénue, a small pony, and High Cotton, a large pony, and they are two of my favorite ponies. I also own a Large Junior Hunter named Madison and another named C Coast Z; Valedictorian, a Large Junior Hunter/Eq horse and Veronique, a Junior Jumper.

Sidelines: What are your riding goals?

LK: My goals are to win more finals and to eventually go to the Olympics.

Sidelines: What do you do in your spare time?

LK: I have very little spare time, but with the time I do have I like hanging out with friends and doing things that a normal kid would do.