

Laura Linback's Triumphant Life

By Lisa Engel

Laura Linback and her husband Troy work out of the family farm, Woodrun, in Mundelein, Illinois. They are fixtures at horse shows throughout the country and Laura is one of the most successful amateur riders in the country. Sidelines caught up with the dynamic family to find out about life in Illinois and what life is like after surviving a horrific car accident.

How did you get involved with riding?

My maiden name is Gorman and my family has always been involved with horses. My mother, Nancy Gorman, owns and rides some of the top hunter horses in the country. I started off in the pony hunters, then junior hunters and am fortunate to have a championship string of grand prix horses that I compete year round.

You are a formidable force in the grand prix ring -- what's your secret?

I was raised around horses, so I would say it is a combination of my work ethic and commitment to the sport. In all honesty though, it takes a team and my husband Troy's tireless efforts conditioning and caring for the horses really contributes to the overall success of Woodrun. Troy added, "Laura has a unique ability to ride a wide variety of horses, and often right into the winner's circle. She has a great knowledge of riding and a very strong competitive spirit. She is not a 'one horse wonder.' Her skill sets and unique ability set her apart from a lot of other riders. She is a true horsewoman."

What are some of your proudest riding accomplishments?

There are many, however, riding in the World Cup finals in Milan, Italy, winning the Hall of Fame Series three times and the National Horse Show Championship title five times are pretty cool. I was a Nation's Cup rider in Europe and South America, and I had two Amateur-Owner Horse of the Year titles with two different horses. I've had great rides on my horses. And, I know that when I won those awards, it was actually my team -- my family -- that won. That gives me my greatest sense of accomplishment.

You were involved in an awful car accident last winter. What happened?

It was awful. My husband Troy and I were returning to the show grounds and our camper, after celebrating my birthday over dinner with friends. A drunk driver crossed the highway and headed directly at us. The car in front of us dropped into the median and then suddenly, this car was seconds away from impact. Troy cut the car hard to the right and by doing so, took the majority of the hit. Thankfully our son Owen, who is usually with us, happened to have returned to Mundelein for a school project due that week. I suffered two broken ribs caused from the seat belt and Troy suffered a pulverized knee and broken bones in the ankle region. (Both Troy and Laura were wearing their seatbelts and the airbags deployed properly.) We were taken in separate ambulances so it was a couple of hours before we knew of each other's condition, which was awful. I didn't leave Troy's bedside as he underwent surgeries and remained in critical condition that week. But, within



Laura and Sampras at the \$200,000 HITS Grand Prix in Thermal, California

Photo by Todd Sutherland and Flying Horse Photography

a couple of weeks, we were back at the horse show; because that's what horsemen do...we keep working. Troy is still healing but works tirelessly by my side. I am so thankful that we survived that crash.

What's next for you?

Besides my life as an equestrian, I am also a dedicated wife and mother and I value keeping my family together even while on the road. We enjoy our time together whether we're at a show or at home at Woodrun. Our next show will be at Hott Horse Shows at Maffitt Lake Equestrian Center in Cumming, Iowa. There's an example of a horse show that is family friendly—Troy and I are at the rings while our son Owen is fishing in the pond. The Hott family really makes us feel at home and offers great horse shows. As a matter of fact, Troy and I are sponsoring the huge exhibitor party at Maffitt Lake Equestrian Center on August 12 and will be serving up a steak cookout. We believe in giving back to shows that give so much to its exhibitors.



The Linback family has a little fun

Photo courtesy of the Linback family