



DRESSAGE RIDING IS A PASSION FOR MILLBROOK TEEN

Horses are beautiful creatures, loved by so many. Emily Jackowski, of Millbrook, NY, competes in dressage riding, and considers these majestic animals to be companions...and teammates!

Dressage is a form of horse riding that is often performed in competition. Sometimes, people pursue it just for fun or to become a dressage master. Jackowski does it for both reasons. She's a successful horse rider

who also loves the sport. This year, she and her horse, Havanna, even had a chance to participate in a national dressage event for junior riders.

"It's a really interesting sport. It's not something that's easy to understand just by watching it," Jackowski, who's been active in dressage since age 9, said. "But once you know how it works, it's super interesting."

It can be quite relaxing to see dressage in action. The

horse seems to gracefully dance and delicately trot, often in time to background music. The goal is to make the moves look as effortless and seamless as possible. "It really is beautiful. It's like a partnership you create with the horse. It's essentially dancing," the young equestrian explained. "It's dancing with your horse instead of a human."



NATIONAL DRESSAGE RIDING COMPETITIONS

There's so much more to dressage than what meets the eye. It requires great skill by both rider and horse, and training for competitions can be very intense. Jackowski trains five to six days a week, usually two to three hours at a time.

Right now, she's training for Young Riders, which is a next up from her current Junior position. To rise up in the ranks, there are specific moves she has to practice, including tempi changes, an exercise in which flying changes of canter lead are put together. (THINK: Horse choreography!) And of course, doing a lot of lateral work and stretching is important, too. In addition to her equine associate, Havanna, Jackowski has two other horses who

are part of her dressage team.

"I try to keep my training varied, so I don't drill movements all the time. It's important to keep it interesting for the horse and make sure they're not overworking," she explained.

Jackowski's trainer is Wes Dunham, who has trained many horses and riders from training to competition levels. She's currently training at Grand Prix, which is the highest level of dressage. ICYDK, it's also an Olympic sport.

As a junior dressage rider, Jackowski participates in FEI divisions. In August, she participated in the FEI North American Youth Championships as one of only four riders selected to represent her region, which consisted of New

York and several New England states. She and Havanna competed as both an individual and team. During her individual competition, she ranked 7 out of 30.

During the same month, she competed in the prestigious U.S. Dressage Festival of Champions, held in Wayne, IL. Only the top 12 junior dressage riders in the country are invited to compete in the junior division for the national title. She and Havanna galloped into 6th place.

"It was great. It was my first time being there. Just taking in the whole environment was great. All of the top riders for the U.S. are there. You get to watch, not even just compete. It's quite amazing," she said.



ABOUT JACKOWSKI'S DRESSAGE HORSES

Jackowski's horses live in a local dressage barn, where, when they're not competing, they relax, play, and just enjoy their down time. Jackowski, who loves animals, stresses that it's important to treat the horses with love, care and respect.

"We're on equal terms. We're teammates," she said. "I treat them with respect, and some of the horses I ride have much more experience than I do. It's almost like your horse is your mentor in a way. Even though they can't speak, they can tell you things from how they're behaving

or how they're reacting. Being aware of that is very important for the sport."

Dressage has helped Jackowski in areas of her life outside of riding, as sports often do for young people. Motivation and care and respect for animals are just some of Jackowski's key take-aways from dressage.

"It's taught me a lot about discipline and being compassionate," she said. "It's taught me a lot about sticking with something. It's all about the time and energy you put in to make something happen. It's taught me a lot

about animals, people and feelings."

Jackowski has a deep connection with all of her horses. She recalled how sad she was about two years ago when one of her horses passed away.

"It's always very sad when something happens to them. Horses have a long lifespan, about 20-25 years. So, you expect to be with them for a long time. When they're young and something happens to them, it's especially sad," she said.

FUTURE PLANS

Jackowski plans on attending college and will probably major in business, she explained, adding that she'd also like to further her dressage career.

"I would want to go to a world championship, but the Olympics are awesome too," she enthusiastically said.

To learn more about dressage riding or Emily's story, visit her website at emilyjackowskiddressage.com.

Instagram @emilyjackowski_dressage

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