

LATE BLOOMERS

BY JOCELYN HASTIE



Jocelyn with her first foal, RJT Colorado Real+. Photo by Willie Johnson.

ALTHOUGH I LOVED ALL ANIMALS

as a child, I always lived in the city and never had an opportunity to be around horses until I was nearly 30. I discovered easy-gaited Spanish horses in 1991 in the Dominican Republic while visiting my father. We wanted to rent horses to ride in the mountains and on the beach, and the unanimous opinion was that the best horses on the island were Paso Finos. I was so impressed with the energy, attitude and comfortable ride that I began to research similar breeds in Canada. I loved the romance of the Spanish breeds, and my research convinced me that Peruvians



Colorado showing off his ribbons with a very happy and proud owner/breeder astride. Photo by Kathy Zazula.



Riding to another victory. Photo by Forrest Bliss.

were a better choice because of their wider availability in Alberta and the emphasis on a ground-covering gait. I purchased my first Peruvian, a gelding, in 1991 and followed that with the purchase of a mare in 1992.

The mare I purchased was Lila, and she was a dream come true. She was exceedingly feminine, beautiful and sweet. I loved her dearly, and truly felt that she should be bred to pass on her wonderful qualities. In 1993, I entered a couple of shows, and became increasingly interested in testing my skills in the show ring. That year, I also decided to breed Lila and in 1994, RJT Colorado Real+ was born. He was simply the most beautiful baby I had ever seen (not that I was biased – and he did eventually grow into his ears), and was tiny but strong. He stole my heart when he whinnied at me when we first met.

Colorado was not an easy horse. He was difficult to train – somewhat nervous in nature and easily spooked. He also did not have a huge desire to please when ridden, but on the ground, you could not ask for a sweeter, kinder horse. He loves people, and thinks every visitor to the ranch or spectator at the shows has come specifically because they heard he would be there!

In 2000, Colorado was loaned to the Texas Ladies Aside for the Equidance Competition at the Calgary Stampede. Tanner Rosia was a talented junior who was heavily involved in caring for the horses for the TLA. Tanner and



Colorado with Jocelyn, showing his versatility. Photo by Forrest Bliss.

Colorado hit it off, and since I had two geldings in the 4-6 age group, I chose to ride Tango RVP and asked Tanner to show Colorado for me at the B.C. Regional Show and at Nationals. I hauled Tango and Colorado fourteen hours to Cloverdale, B.C. and was quite excited by the chances I felt both geldings had. During the night, though, Tango injured his leg quite badly in the stall and he was out of the competition. Since Colorado and Tanner had become buddies and partners over the show season, I felt it best that I leave the two of them to compete while I watched longingly from the sidelines.

What a ride it was! Tanner did an excellent job although Colorado had a small lapse in focus and resisted slightly on one back. The rest of the ride was beautiful, but I was afraid that the error would cost them the title. However, the judge felt that the rest of the performance and Colorado's conformation and gait made him the winner. How we celebrated!

Later that year, Tango went to a new home in California, and Colorado became my show prospect. In 2001, Colorado and I competed with varying degrees of success, but failed in our bid to defend his title.

I purchased a stallion in 2002 and began to get serious about improving my riding. Enrique (Kique) Subauste

had trained the stallion and coached me, increasing my confidence and competitiveness in the show ring. Colorado benefited from my increased skill level and began to perform more consistently for me. Kique continued to coach me over the telephone, and became one of my mentors.

In August of 2002, I headed to Nationals, about two hours north of the farm, with Lunador and Colorado in the trailer, leaving my mother to keep the home fires burning. Late Saturday night, my mother knocked on my hotel room door to give me the devastating news that my beloved Lila had suffered a severe colic and died at the ranch that afternoon. I foolishly tried to compete on Sunday, but was unable to pull myself together well enough to ride the way we needed to. The disappointment I felt over my poor performance was nowhere near as heartbreaking as dealing with the loss of my lovely mare. Despite the poor performance, my stallion came away with the title of Canadian National High Point Versatility Horse with Colorado in the Reserve position.

In 2003, I continued to ride and show Colorado. He performed well for me, and we were awarded several Champion and Champion of Champion titles. At

POSITIVELY PASOS



Nationals in 2003, I was feeling fairly confident in Colorado's performance. I was nervous going into the Champion of Champions competition with Colorado as there were two other competitors, each of which were very good horses that had battled it out with us many times. Colorado was awarded the Champion of Champions title, and I cried happy tears taking him up to get his neck ribbon. 2003 was an incredible year since both my horses earned PHAC's annual High Point Pleasure awards in the stallion and gelding divisions.

In 2004, I sold the stallion and Colorado was the only horse I had to show that year and we got down to business! Colorado was awarded Champion and Champion of Champions Pleasure Gelding at the Wild Rose and British Columbia Regionals and successfully defended his Champion of Champions title at the Kneehills Regional, a smaller local show. We were feeling pretty good going to the 2004 Canadian Nationals. I wanted so much to Laureado at that show because it was in front of the hometown crowd, and was the Silver Anniversary of the Canadian Nationals.

Friday was a wonderful day for us, and we did very well in our versatility and Performance classes. Saturday was a different day, and we had definitely fallen out of favor with the judge, finishing at the bottom of nearly all our classes. I was dispirited, and

became pessimistic about our chances of defending our title. Based on their advice of friends, I went completely traditional and pulled out the pella and spurs for the class. The judge liked our performance well enough to award Colorado the Champion of Champions Pleasure Gelding title, making him Laureado. The tears flowed freely as we headed to the podium for his neck ribbon.

I trail ride nearly daily, and am privileged to be able to ride to work often as I live only four miles from work. The only times my horses see an arena is at the shows, and we all like it that way. I am blessed to live in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains and get out in the backcountry frequently.

Although I continue to work off the farm, my passion for horses is responsible for a significant lifestyle change for me as I am now in the process of setting up a training facility so that others that share this passion will have a place to explore their equine dreams. Kique Subauste will be joining me as our trainer and riding instructor.

It seems that both Colorado and myself are late bloomers. At eleven, he is still sound and not at all ring sour. He may be retired from Pleasure Gelding competition at Nationals, but we still have a few regional Laureados to work towards, as well as Performance division competitions. Although it sometimes takes a while, dreams really do come true! TPC