

Getting to Know...Tina Irwin

Getting to Know You is a series of articles by Dorothy McDonall on 2009 Listed Riders.

Collection's Dorothy McDonall, recently caught up with Canadian Grand Prix dressage rider, Tina Irwin who, with her horse Amicelli has been named to the Canadian Dressage Team Short List B for 2009.

Collections (CM): Looks like I've caught you on your way back from Florida. How was your season there?

TI: It was a great season in Wellington this winter. I love being able to compete on the Florida circuit. It is very competitive and keeps the bar high. I was honored to have been invited to represent Canada at the Dressage World Masters CDI 5*, where it was exciting to ride in the company of some of the best in the world. Amicelli and I also placed 4th in the Grand Prix and Grand Prix Freestyle at the Dressage Spring Classic CDI 3* in Wellington.

CM: Obviously there's a story behind how you got to where you are today. Where did it all begin for you?

TI: I have been riding my entire life, since I was old enough to walk! My mother, Ute Busse, who is also a Grand Prix Dressage rider, has coached me since I was a child and throughout my Junior and Young Rider career. We have a family farm where my mother runs her own Dressage training business and I was always in the barn doing anything involving horses.

CM: Did you have a favourite pony or horse as you were growing up?

TI: I had an amazing pony named Coco. She was a 13.1hh bay cross breed that had fantastic movement and would beat many imported warmbloods at the Dressage shows. My mother was looking for a pony that was super quiet and had a great temperament and found her in someone's back yard. When a train practically drove through Coco's field and she didn't bat an eye, my mother knew she would be perfect for me. We had no intention of her ever becoming a real Dressage pony, but she ended up having a lot of talent.

CM: Has it always been dressage for you, or did you also do hunter/jumpers?

TI: I have been a Dressage rider all the way! I went to some local fairs and had the odd jumping lesson, but my true passion stayed with Dressage.

CM: You're in business with your husband and business partner, Jaimey Irwin. How does that work for you? Do you find you work well together and can put the daily grind behind you at the end of the day?

TI: My husband Jaimey and I make a great team. We

are together 24/7, which works well because we both have the same aspirations and expectations of how our business should be run. There are times where we don't always see eye to eye, which is normal and healthy in any relationship. We like to have a balanced lifestyle and and enjoy doing other things as a couple as well.

CM: How did the two of you meet?

TI: Jaimey and I met through my sister Sarah who was on the Young Rider Dressage Team with Jaimey in 1999. Both our families met at the Championships in Chicago before Jaimey and I even met. I had to stay home and look after our horses, and when my sister came back from Chicago she told me that Jaimey had been asking about me. Of course we had noticed each other at horse shows previous to this, but had never really met officially until this point.

CM: What kind of support does Jaimey give as you climb the Grand Prix ladder? Do you find the fact that you're both in this together gives you additional strength to keep going when the going gets tough?

TI: Jaimey is a great husband and coach. He is very supportive of me and my aspirations and doesn't let me slack! I definitely think that we are each other's support system and feel that it is a strength in our relationship to share our passion and be there for one another in this tough business and sport.



Tina competing Amicelli at CDI Blainville last year.

CM: You and Jaimey are moving your business to Stouffville in May. What kind of challenges has this move posed so far? How do you feel about making this kind of change at this point in your career?

TI: We are very excited about our move to Stouffville and our first-class facility. A challenge that we face is packing up all of our belongings along with our whole barn and horses and moving it to a new location, as well as continuing to run our business, train our horses and students, and compete. We have a very short time frame once we return from Florida to do everything. We feel the timing to relocate is just right! As our business and careers grow, our demand rises and we therefore need a facility to accommodate that.

CM: What will the emphasis of your business be?

TI: The emphasis of our business is to train top quality horses and develop them to their best potential. Along with teaching Juniors, Young Riders and the serious adult amateur. We also offer the opportunity to buy or sell quality horses.

CM: Tell us about Amicelli ...

TI: Amicelli is a 13-year-old, 17.2hh Holsteiner chestnut gelding by Amigo xx from a Calypso 3 mare. He was imported as a four-year-old from the Holsteiner Elite Auction in Germany. I have been partnered with him since his importation and have trained him up to the Grand Prix level. I also competed him at the Young Rider level, representing Canada in Chicago at the NAYRC. We were the top placing Canadian pair and also won the Silver Team and Individual Medals at the Coupe de Americas in Blainville, QC that same year. He is owned by Wendy Beresford and Ute Busse. Amicelli is a real character and loves to be the centre of attention at all times. He likes drinking out of puddles when we go on hacks and gets jealous when I ride anyone else, especially past his paddock.

CM: Who is your coach? How long have you been working with them, and what do you like about their teaching methods?

TI: I have been riding and training with Holger Muenstermann of Germany for the past seven years. He comes to Canada and Florida to teach us on a regular basis. When he is not here Jaimey helps me. I like that Holger comes from an extensive Classical Dressage background and has trained with the best German trainers in the world. He passes all of his knowledge on to us and always tries to find a new approach and is very creative and dedicated in his teaching.

CM: What are your goals over the coming season?

TI: My goals are to be the best rider I can be, and ride clean accurate Grand Prix tests. My aim is the World Equestrian Games in Kentucky in 2010, as well as developing new horses and bringing them along, and helping my students reach their goals.

CM: Tell us about your sponsors ...

TI: I am very fortunate to have such great sponsors and support! Hurlley Corporation and the Horgan Family have been a fundamental part of our team; ZAP Productions, very talented and creative musicians who design our freestyle music; Schleese Saddlery always there when we need them and keep our horse's back's happy; the O'Sullivan Family, and Silvia Carleton. And of course the owner's of Amicelli, my parents Ute and Dieter Busse along with Wendy Beresford.

CM: There is a lot more emphasis on overall rider fitness in mind, body and spirit. What do you do to help build and maintain your fitness for the type of riding you do? i.e. do you do weight training, pilates, yoga, running, etc.?

TI: I stay fit by riding numerous horses all day and try to eat a healthy balanced diet! I keep my body in top shape by taking the time to see a chiropractor and massage therapist regularly. I also am very much into Chinese medicine and homeopathic remedies to stay healthy, and drink a lot of water and green tea!

CM: What do you consider the most difficult movement to train in dressage?

TI: The piaffe and passage are the most difficult movements to train, in my opinion. This requires a lot of time and patience with the proper building of muscles and strength for the horse to be able to move throughout his body properly ... and dance!

CM: They say that all work and no play make Jack/Jill a dull boy/girl. Given that horses are your work but also your passion, what interests do you have outside of your equestrian pursuits that keep you centred/balanced?

TI: I love to go shopping and visit with friends and family. I am very close with my family and enjoy spending time with them whenever time allows.

Tina Trivia:

Quote for life:

Don't limit yourself. Many people limit themselves to what they think they can do. You can go as far as you mind lets you. What you believe, you can achieve.

—Mary Kay Ash

Dressage hero: Isabelle Werth

Dog: Tula, German Shepherd mix found at the Humane Society; loyal and smart.

Favourite comfort food:

Chocolate; Nutella on my toast or German chocolate!

Favourite movie(s): *How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days* and *The Sound of Music*.

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CLINIC REPORT – CINDY ISHOY AT IRONHILL STABLE

A clinic with Cindy Ishoy held January 10 to 17th brought together sixteen horse/rider combinations.

The clinic was held at Ironhill Stable, a beautiful new dressage facility in Priddis Alberta owned by Ron and Irene Hill. Their generous donation of the riding hall, stabling and clinician accommodation greatly reduced the clinic costs.

The riders and auditors were not disappointed. Cindy is an excellent communicator, always giving clear and precise instruction.

She was adamant about following the training scale and setting riders "up to win".

The sessions began with twenty meter circles using the whole arena to establish a rhythmic trot with longitudinal suppleness and a steady connection. As a result the horses, balance improved and contact became more consistent. The auditors could now better understand Cindy's comment, "ride accurate figures and the pattern will do 70% of the work."

Riders and auditors appreciated Cindy sharing her vast experience as a rider and trainer. She maintained the same level of patience, energy and enthusiasm from day one through day six. Everyone felt they had received quality instruction and look forward to working with Cindy in the future.

Carrots and Cocktails, the event organizer would like to thank Equi Products for providing the riders gift bags and Ron and Irene Hill for their hospitality and generosity towards the Dressage community.



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CM: What book are you reading right now?

TI: I just finished reading *Alibi Man* by Tami Hoag — a Grand Prix Dressage rider and award-winning author. She writes murder mysteries that take place in the horse world.

CM: If you could have dinner with someone famous, who would it be and why?

TI: I would want to have dinner with Madonna! I love her music and think that she is amazing for being so successful for so many decades — I admire her for that. (She was also rumored to be riding in Wellington, FL and would hack around on the canals! It was my mission to find her, but I never did!)

CM: Are there any causes you feel particularly strongly about outside the equestrian world?

TI: I feel very strongly about supporting the Cure for Breast Cancer.

CM: If you had to spend a week on a desert island, all by yourself, and could take only three things with you, what would they be, and why?

TI: I would hire a helicopter and pick up some friends to bring back to the island. I think I would go crazy being alone for one whole week.

CM: Is there anything else you'd like our readers to know about you?

TI: I am serious about my riding and my competing, but I also like to have fun and enjoy other aspects of life.

CM: Thank you for helping our readers to get to know you a little better, Tina. All the best to you and Amicelli in 2009.