

Rebecca Howard:

From The Fork to the Island



Canadian 2010 World Equestrian Games team silver medalist Rebecca Howard has decided to take the leap across the pond and relocate to England in order to gain more experience and better herself as a top international eventer. Eventing USA wishes her the best of luck in her journey and looks forward to further updates.

HORSES HAVE CERTAINLY TAKEN ME TRAVELING, AND THE MORE I REACH, THE FARTHER I FIND MYSELF FROM MY BRITISH COLUMBIA HOME. During my time as a Young Rider, BC was really in its hay day of eventing. There were a number of Canadian Team riders migrating back from their time “away” and setting up shop close by. The result was great role models, quality instruction, and local competition. Their influence provided a solid foundation for a vibrant Young Rider program but also made it apparent that this was an international gig, and to play I would most certainly have to venture farther.

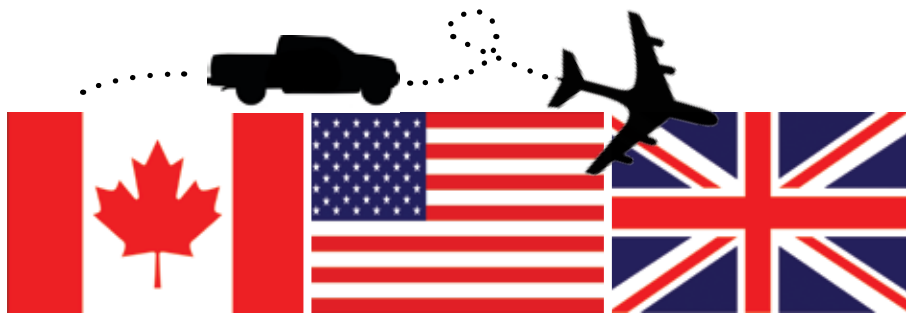
Eastern USA became the destination in 2001, with me settling into eventing’s Virginia-Florida-Carolinas corridor. The eventing community there became home and family for me as I learned the ropes, made the usual mistakes, gained experience, dealt with disappointment, achieved my first international and team milestones, and refined my skills. This of course is a process that must continue. Equestrian sport tends to reward maturity and depth more than it does youth. Eventing certainly is not for the impatient.

For me and so many of us, the struggle is to find balance between surviving and making a living and being able to focus on improving as a rider and competitor. This reality over the last ten years has had me galloping race horses, exercising hunt and polo horses, making trips to Argentina for sale horses, organizing Derbycross events, teaching, coaching Young Rider teams, and working at The Fork Stables as resident rider and trainer.

Making the Decision

The Fork was an awesome bustle of activity for five years. It was an unbelievable facility from which to work, and a great team of people and students made the whole thing tick. I accomplished a lot during my time there and felt like I improved more each season. Preparations for the World Equestrian Games, Pan American Games, and London Olympics all came during my time in North Carolina.

After one cycle of championship team events, the desire



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to continue and be competitive at that level is only stronger for me and is what brought on the next move.

While spending time in England has long been on my radar, I was fixated on going with more than one horse to make the most of my time there. I remember when things finally crystallized on the England idea; it was over beer with my teammate Kyle Carter. Kyle, who is not one prone to waver with his words, basically said I was an idiot if I did anything other than go. I was not in need of much convincing in the first place, so the decision to journey to the eventing mecca of the world was suddenly so easy. I would figure out the other pieces along the way.

I had already decided that if something went sideways and I did not make it to the Olympics, it was time to expand my horizons and relocate anyway. Of course the Olympic journey was the top of my priorities at the time; how convenient was it that the Games took me to the country that was to be my new home?

What it is Really About

The move for me is really about being able to immerse in the mecca of the sport and just get better. The balance between working, teaching, and organizing versus riding and competing began tipping in the wrong direction for me, so I decided to make a big change. Horse power is really what makes the whole thing tick. I still do not totally have the answer as to how I will fill the yard with more horses, but that challenge comes no matter what



ABOVE: Rebecca Howard packed and ready to cross “the pond.”

country I am in. For now, I will continue to work on that while being at the heart of international action.

It is hard not to feel behind the ball as I journey into the unfamiliar and start my client base from scratch once again. What is certain is that this game demands time and mileage to be good. One must enjoy the journey and focus on what is reasonably within his or her control. For now I have positioned myself where the action is and believe that I will become a better rider and horseman for it; I already have.

I will continue to make frequent trips back to North America to teach clinics and keep up with all my great friends and those who have helped and supported me so much already. My hope is to stay in England for at least two years and see where that leads... who knows! 🐾

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