

Stacy Lane Sanderson Creates Riders that have Serious Fun!

This husband and wife team have built their reputation on teaching kids safely, while having fun at the same time.

By Janet Forbes

For more than ten years, Stacy Lane and David Sanderson have been building a very flourishing business in teaching children how to ride hunter ponies and horses. Their farm in Ocala, Hunter Lane, has long been known as an outstanding barn to send your child to if you want them to learn how to ride correctly.

According to her husband David, "Stacy is so successful because she works hard and she has done her homework." He attributes Stacy's self-confidence and preparedness to their student's recent accomplishments. In turn, in addition to bookkeeping responsibilities and sales negotiations, David keeps the kids coming to Stacy in "assembly line fashion" at home during lessons and at the shows. The partnership has formed a solid local business through honest pony sales and training, giving lessons that emphasize safety, and letting kids have fun while learning responsibility. "We don't have the kind of kids who can afford three ponies. Most of their parents can't afford it or just don't want to. Every kid in this barn has to buy and sell his or her first pony. They are taught that you have to sell one before you buy a new one. They all understand that this is a business, too."

Stacy Lane has admitted to being a horse lover her entire life, despite growing up in a family with no animals. Her grandfather bought her first pony when she was eight years old. She claims that she spent more time on the ground than on the back of that pony. "But that little pony taught me dedication, respect and humility." Hunter Lane passes those important lessons on to the students that ride there. "I never rode with top trainers. I rode with the backyard people." At 18, Lane soon found her niche in Ocala by teaching youngsters how to ride from the first time they get in the saddle. "A lot of trainers don't like to work with the younger kids. I think they are the most innocent and fun ages to teach. They are in it because they love it."

Through word of mouth, more and more people started to send their kids to ride with Stacy. Soon, people around the country began to send them ponies to train and re-sell. It didn't take long for the business to take off. Today, Hunter Lane maintains 32 ponies and 35 clients between two barns. "It is not a requirement that you show to be in our barn. We do have clients that can afford to show every weekend and some that can only afford to do one show every couple of months. I also have kids that have been riding with me for years and they never show or buy a pony, but they are here every week for their lessons." That is one of the main reasons that the Sandersons limit their traveling to shows in Florida. They want to take care of the many students in Ocala that still come to Hunter Lane for their weekly lesson. Stacy also realizes that her kids can't miss school. "We don't have the kind of clientele that don't miss school because they fly in over the weekend on a pri-



"I may never make it to the Maclay Finals," says Stacy Lane Sanderson. "It's not even a goal of mine. My biggest goal is that I teach the kids safely, that they learn correct balance and equitation and that they have serious fun. We do things correctly but we have fun doing it. If we win, that is icing on the cake... if it happens it happens...these kids are not forced to ride. They do it because they LOVE to do it."

Photo by Janet Forbes

vate jet." The majority of them are straight A students who have a lot of homework plus have to squeeze more than 20 hours a week of riding in to their schedule.

With dozens of titles and champions, Hunter Lane has grown and established themselves as a barn full of serious, regional and national competitors. Yet Stacy still refuses to take any credit for the victories.

"We helped create these riders. These kids do it themselves day in and day out. It's all about being well educated and prepared. They all ride at least 3 or more ponies of different skill levels every day to develop a stronger leg and quicker reflexes. I don't let these kids go to Step 2 until they have mastered Step 1." Sometimes the young trainer is criticized for her conservative teaching techniques, but she knows that one fall can send a student back to square one. "Some kids are more resilient than others. They'll fall off and get right back on and finish the course. Other kids fall off and you can't get them back in the ring. You have to make sure the child is prepared to do what you ask them to do."

Hard Work Pays Off!

Hunter Lane students hit the 'A' show circuit hard in 2006. Stacy confesses that she never had a goal of showing on the 'A' circuit against some of the best riders and ponies in the nation. Taking none of the credit for herself, she adds, "It just happened that my kids ride well and are competitive at that level now." Ashton Alexander, a 9-year old that attends Shady Hill Elementary, rode her pony 'Imagination' to a fifth place finish in the nation in green pony. 7-year old Devin Seek, a second grader at Grace Episcopal won the 2006 Short Stirrup Circuit Champion at HITS on her pony, "Wood You Please". The team also took home three more Short Stirrup Circuit Championships at RMI, NFHJA and CFHJA. Devin also received the 2006 NFHJA Overall High Point Equitation Champion by defeating every rider in the NFHJA with the most points last year. (And she is only a second grader!) Molly Jank, a fourth grader at St. John's was the Zone 4 children's hunter pony champion on "Making Magic". (Zone 4 includes 6 states in the southeast United States.) She also claimed the title of the CFHJA circuit champion. The oldest rider to compete under Stacy's guidance was Jennifer Whitt. The 16 year old sophomore at Trinity Catholic also claimed a Zone 4 Champion Children's Hunter Horse title on "Duval Street" along with Hi-point horse and Circuit champion.

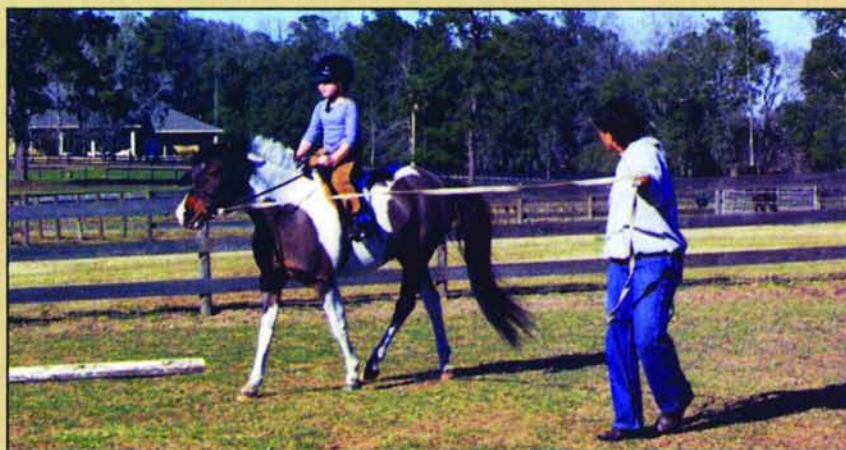


Ashton Alexander on her green pony, Imagination

Photo courtesy of Ashton Alexander

Words of Wisdom from Stacy Lane Sanderson

1. Work students within their boundaries and teach them to only exploit their best qualities.
2. Know their limits and teach them to master the basics. Have them practice what they are good at and don't let them try to be something they are not.
3. Students should be fully responsible for their own pony. Brush the mane and tail, curry it, and pick it's hooves before the saddle goes on.
4. Don't be afraid to admit that you don't know it all. Teach humility. It is an underrated characteristic.
5. When you have down time at the shows, listen to what other professional have to say, help them with their kids, set up jumps...do whatever it takes. But never stop learning.



Stacy works with Casey Forbes on the lunge. Having fun, and riding safely are primary goals for 'her' kids

Photo by Janet Forbes



Stacy and Devin Seek

Photo by Janet Forbes