



Tara McKenna Polkabila and Current Leader

Young Lamorinda Equestrian Shines in International Competition

By Lee Borrowman

Tara McKenna Polkabila, a 15 year old sophomore at Miramonte, and Current Leader, her 8-year-old Registered Thoroughbred, took 2nd Place at the Galway CIC* International Horse Trials in Temecula, California, at the end of March.

Polkabila, one of the youngest competitors, and competing in her first International CIC*, placed 2nd coming out of the Dressage phase. With a field of 30 competitors from around the world, Tara and Current Leader retained their placing through the Cross Country Phase and Stadium Jumping. Tara is looking forward to competing at the Twin Rivers CCI* International Horse Trials in May, which will be a qualifier for the 2007 North American Young Rider Championships. Over the last six months Polkabila and Current Leader have competed in 6 of the regional United States Equestrian Federation (USEF) Horse Trials and have consistently placed in the top 3 in their Preliminary Divisions.

Current Leader, familiarly called Katana by Polkabila, joined the family two years ago. "We spent the first year getting to know each other and figuring each other out," says Polkabila, who has been riding since age 5. "This year we started connecting more." Polkabila spends at least two hours a day at the stable.

Proud mom Jennifer Polkabila writes, "Eventing is the most complete combined competition discipline recognized by the Fédération

Equestre Internationale (FEI). It is an Olympic sport where man and animal are established team-mates, and one of the few where men and women compete on equal terms. It covers every aspect of horsemanship: the harmony between horse and rider that characterize Dressage; the contact with nature, stamina and extensive experience essential for the Cross Country; the precision, agility and technique involved in Jumping."

Polkabila says that there's a strong connection between her equestrian activities and her other hobby, dirt-bike racing. "I compete in Enduros, Flat Track races and Hare Scrambles," says Polkabila. "Like with horseback riding, you have to maintain control, watch your direction, and keep looking ahead to where you're going. Of course, when you tell a motorcycle to stop, it stops. A horse can blow you off."

In fact, she says, "My whole family is into dirt-bike racing. We all ride." Dad Michael Polkabila is also her chief mechanic and, along with her brother Maxfield, has Polkabila's back for chore duty when she's away competing at equestrian events. "The support of my family has just been so wonderful!"

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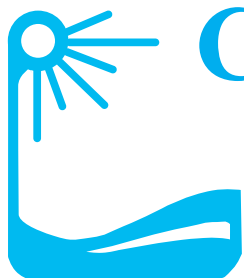


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