



Kristin Dickerson talks to Equine VIP

by Susan Ashbrook, owner Equine VIP

Kristin Dickerson, Oklahoma's Tulsa Channel 8 Morning News Anchor, joined other celebrities for this year's Reining Horse Sports Foundation (RHSF) annual "Celebrity Slide". The event helps the children from the Make-A-Wish Foundation of Oklahoma. Kristin came to the Sooner State from Las Cruces, New Mexico on an athletic scholarship to ride for the Oklahoma State University's Women's Equestrian Team where she earned an individual national championship.

As a morning news anchor, we imagine you have a disciplined schedule. Did your years of riding for the Oklahoma State University's Women's Equestrian Team give you some early lessons that help with your career now?

My time with OSU certainly helped prepare me for my early morning anchor shift. For the last three years, I've woken up around 2 O'clock in the morning to be at work by 3 and on television at 5 a.m. But technically I only get up a couple hours earlier than I did in college.

While at OSU, we had 6 a.m. workouts where we'd lift weights and run, then I'd go to class, and then head out to the barn to ride for a majority of the afternoon. After a full day, I'd head home to study for several hours, eat dinner, and go to bed.

OSU instilled in me a strong sense of discipline, work ethic, and pride in what I do. The team also helped me realize that when I put my heart into something, it will pay off in the end.

You earned an individual national championship when you rode on an athletic scholarship for Oklahoma State. How has riding changed since then?

A lot has changed since I was on the team from 2000-2004. When I rode on the team, OSU competed with the Intercollegiate Horse Show Association (some colleges have equestrian club

teams and this is where they compete) and National Collegiate Athletic Association, now they're strictly NCAA. I'm not an expert on the results of that change, but it seems like the competition is incredibly tougher.

Thanks to their coach, Larry Sanchez, I was able to walk-on to the team as a freshman and then earn a scholarship the following year. Now, the team spends more time recruiting girls from around the country; it's very similar to how colleges recruit for football or basketball.

To my surprise competition clothing has changed tremendously, I realized that while preparing for the Celebrity Slide. After a lesson with Jared, he asked what I planned to wear and I told him with excitement

that I had a great vest that I used to wear in college. He gave me a look that said "oh no," and told me I could borrow an outfit of Heather's (his wife). I still don't know why vests are out of style—I love vests!

You had to give up riding to devote yourself to your career. What did it feel like to sit on a horse again after a few years of giving up the sport?

It felt great! I was so honored and thrilled to get the opportunity to ride again, and to ride for a good cause.

I had a really hard time adjusting after my time on the OSU Equestrian team. My life revolved around the sport, it was all I did. The NRHA Derby was my last collegiate competition, and when the competition was over I didn't want to leave the barn—knowing that it would be the last time I'd be on a horse for at least several years.

When I first started my job, I had limited time and income and I didn't know how to keep up with the hobby. So when I was asked to participate in the fundraiser? back in the saddle at the biggest reining horse competition there is? I was overwhelmed and incredibly nervous!

I started my preparations for the competition with Tulsa trainer Sean Johnson, and it was a humbling experience. In the years since I'd ridden con-

sistently, I totally lost my seat. It seemed like my mind knew what my legs and my body were supposed to be doing, but they didn't seem to work! It took several weeks of riding with Sean until my balance came back and I was more comfortable in the saddle.

You were one of the celebrities riding at the Reining Horse Sports Foundation for the Make-A-Wish Foundation. You teamed up with top Reining trainer, Jared LeClair, to prepare for the competition. Was it important for you to work with the right trainer and match up with the right horse?

I couldn't have asked for a better match up. Going into this competition I had a lot of anxiety about getting on a horse again. When I found out that my trainer was one of the top five money earners in 2008, I was that much more nervous. But once I spent some time with Jared and his wife, Heather, my anxiety disappeared. My husband and I drove down to Pilot Point, Texas, to train with him for two weekends and they treated us like family (they even took us to a friend's family bar-be-que). I also learned that in college Jared rode for the University of Findlay, and earned a reining national championship.

