



Rachel Long Is Making a Splash

For this 14-year-old equestrian, horses, adventure and a little bit of competition just run in the family.

“All of the attention to detail we read about the top riders providing their mounts—that’s the hard work that Rachel is putting into the program.”

— Debbi Long

Before traveling from her home in Horseshoe Bend, Idaho, to the 2016 US Pony Finals in Lexington, Kentucky, Rachel Long had a different national competition in which she needed to participate first: the USA Canoe/Kayak Slalom Age Group National Championships in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

While many serious young riders find competitive showing all-encompassing, Long has cleverly figured out how to achieve top results in two very different sports.

“We had the ponies here with us in Oklahoma, so we rode in the morning; then, later in the morning, we’d go to the whitewater course, and then we’d paddle again in the afternoon,” she said.

Long and her family (grandmother Debbi, mom Anne, dad Kenneth and younger sisters Kayla, 13, and Isabel, 11) live on a farm with nine horses. Summers are spent in Idaho, while the family travels to Tucson, Arizona, for the winter. In addition to horses, the Long family owns and operates an adventure travel company in Chile that specializes in kayaking and rafting, as well as a rafting company in Boise, Idaho.

“Riding and kayaking are super similar, and it’s great cross-training—the bottom half of one thing and the top half of an-



GARY VOTH

Rachel Long was thrilled to top the 1.30m Cascade Open Jumper Classic with Canek, a horse she’s brought up the levels.

other thing—it’s all balance, and they both tie in together nicely,” said Long of her two sports.

Competitive kayaking is relatively new to Long, but she’s beginning to experience hard work and the success that comes with it on the river, as well as in the ring.

“We don’t have the means to purchase horses that are well along in their development; we have to make it, so that’s all of her hard work,” said Long’s

grandmother Debbi. “Rachel is right there to do the brunt of the hard work but reap the benefits of it, as well.”

After beginning her riding career at age 7 and being trained by her grandmother, an accomplished horsewoman, Long moved up the ranks from the pony hunters and is now taking the jumper ring by storm.

Her major accomplishments to date include competing in the 2013 USHJA Children’s



BARBARA DUDLEY

Rachel Long

and Adult Amateur Jumper West Regional Championships; qualifying for and competing in the 2014, 2015 and 2016 US Pony Finals; participating in the USHJA Emerging Athletes Program in 2013, 2014 and 2015; serving as a working student with top Chilean show jumper Christian Santos in Panguipulli, Chile; and recent success in the Junior Jumper and Open Jumper sections.

Her internship in Chile gave her a broader perspective on show jumping. "There are a lot of similarities, and there are some things that they do differently," Long noted. "It's really fun to see it all in a different language."

Long is fluent in Spanish, and home-

Rachel Long successfully divides her competitive time between show jumping and whitewater courses.



schooling allows her to take her school work with her and travel to Chile for several weeks in the winter to ride, train and compete with Santos. Her grandmother credited Long's self-discipline and motivation to homeschooling.

Long's father and two younger sisters also ride. In addition, they've been known to compete against and with one another.

"It's so fun," she said. "We always end up being competitive with each other, but in the end, we're always happy with how we ended up, and we're always supportive of each other."

Long and her sister Kayla rode away with the Zone 9/10 team silver medal in the Pony Jumpers at the 2015 US Pony Finals. Additionally, Long's dad competed alongside her in the Adult Amateur section of the 2013 USHJA Children's and Adult Amateur Jumper Championships, where he was the individual Adult Amateur gold medalist with Debbi Long as his team's chef d'equipe. In fact, she has acted

as chef d'equipe at several of the family's competitions.

"It's fun training with someone that you know, especially in the family," said Long of her grandmother, her father and her sisters. "We'll have a lesson and maybe you struggle with one thing, but we can always find something else in the house or in the barn or on the road that can tie into what we had trouble with in the lesson or what we had success with."

Long has also participated in three Emerging Athletes Program Regional Training Sessions, the first of these in 2013, when she was just 11 years old.

"I thought that it was super fun, and I

learned a lot," she said. "Each year, I learned something different that helped me with my showing and with my stable management and the whole all-around care of our horses. I think that the biggest thing I've taken from the EAP is in the stable management, because my sisters and I take care of all of our horses since we have them at our house. So we have nine horses right now, and we do all the work—turn out, clean, feed, all of it."

"One thing that I especially appreciate about the Emerging Athletes Program is that it does identify athletes that you might not see on the normal, big-circuit scene," said Long's grandmother Debbi. "I found that in the three EAP Regional Training Sessions that I went to and watched, those are the kids that are going to be bringing our young horses along and who will be the foundation of our industry, because they're passionate about all aspects of our horses and riding experience. So I'm thankful that the USHJA has a program to help identify and encourage these kids."

Bringing along horses and putting in the hard work to make them shine in the show ring is the younger Long's passion, and she now has her sights set on the North American Junior and Young Rider Championships.

"You don't get anywhere in this sport, or I don't think any sport, without putting in 150 percent of your effort," said Debbi. "With horses, it's a little bit extra because of all of the care that they require, being a live creature with feelings and emotions that can change from hot one day to cold the next."

"I think that's the biggest way that Rachel is able to move ahead as quickly as she has, because she pays attention to details that way. She's the first one up at the farm, she goes down and feeds, she knows if a horse isn't feeling well; all of the attention to detail we read about the top riders providing their mounts—that's the hard work that Rachel is putting into the program."

Long's most recent partner is a 9-year-old Holsteiner from Mexico named Canek (Indoctro—Comedia LS). Gelded as a 7-year-old, Canek was a bit of a handful when the Longs first got him. Through working with Canek on the ground and in the tack, Long developed a strong relationship with the gelding. Last summer, they bested a field of professionals to win the 1.30m Cascade Open Jumper Classic during the Cascade Farms Swiftwater Invitational in Seattle, Washington.

"It was super awesome," said Long of her win. "I hadn't done a lot with Canek yet. We actually had just won our first 1.30m class at the same show, as well. It was just really nice to have a big success with a new horse that we've really been working on, and it really showed how much our work had paid off."

Although she's still young and unsure of what her future holds, Long knows that horses and adventure will always be a part of her life, just as they've been for her family.

"She works really hard, and we're all very proud of her and all of the girls," Debbi said. "We look at this adventure as a way for them to grow good character and good determination, and learn how to work hard for things; and we figured those will be aspects that will help them in their entire lives with whatever avenues they choose in the future."