

Written by by Kim F. Miller
Thursday, 31 August 2017 22:32

Jenny Karazissis & Big Shot

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Big Shot has lived up to his name since he joined the Karazissis family's Far West Farm program this past January. He came through Buffy and Rick Oas' Pollyrich Farm as a sales prospect, but star hunter rider Jenny Karazissis couldn't bear to let his "beauty, style, good brain and overall quality" go to another barn. Clients, the Morris family, were easily persuaded to buy "Dude" for their daughter Dulcie Lou to campaign as a Junior Hunter next year. This year, Jenny and the 6 year old Holsteiner (Lordanos X Corrado I) have dominated the 3'3" Hunter Division and were headed to the Platinum Performance/USHJA Green Incentive Championship in Kentucky in mid-August.



He came to Far West a "little babyish looking," reports Jenny. "He's probably 17 hands and was all legs, so we needed to put some weight and muscle tone on him." Along with Timothy hay three times a day and a daily SmartPak of supplements, Big Shot gets a daily dose of OceanFeed, an organic "gut enhancer" made of several types of seaweed. "Rick and Buffy swear by it and we liked it so much that we are trying it on some of our other horses," Jenny reports. For Big Shot, OceanFeed helps him add and maintain weight and "seems to help with everything." That includes his naturally good temperament and beautiful bay coat. "He's not a hot horse, he's curious and cautious in a good way," Jenny reports. Having a happy tummy helps him stay that way.

The Far West Farm program emphasizes preventative care. Though he's too young for joint issues, Big Shot gets alternating maintenance doses of Legend and Adequan. When a heavy travel schedule looms, he gets Gastrogard to protect against travel stress-induced ulcers.

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For fitness, Big Shot does well with flat-work intensive schooling sessions at home and minimal jumping between shows. He also gets regular sessions on a Functional Electric Stimulation machine administered by veterinarian Alison Baileys, DVM. Dr. Bailey is a client of Orange County trainer Mary Morrison, for whom Jenny catch-rides frequently, and her FES treatments are used on many horses in Mary's Ivy Gate Farm. Jenny was intrigued by the results and now vouches for the effects herself since Big Shot began getting FES treatments—even though it involved a little trickery from her husband and training partner Kost Karazissis.

“Kost didn't tell me the first time Big Shot had the FES treatment. I think he wanted to test its effects by seeing if I noticed.” She did. “There are things I'd normally work on with Big Shot in the warm-up ring and, that day, it was just kind of miraculous. He felt great!” Jenny is open-minded to various therapeutic treatments, but with many of them, she admits, “You do it because it can't hurt rather than knowing for sure that it's helping.” That was absolutely not the case with FES. Pre-ride treatments have helped his bilateral symmetry so “he feels the same on both sides, making him easier to ride,” she explains. While Jenny has yet to test it out on a lot of other horses, the effects on Big Shot “blew my mind.”

Jenny's fitness and nutrition routine is pretty simple. Riding multiple horses at home and shows everyday keeps her plenty fit, but one of these days she knows “I really should start doing some yoga or stretching regularly.” Flexibility is not a strong point, but naturally fit habits are. “I take the stairs instead of the elevator.”

Jenny's tall, thin frame makes her one of the country's most elegant hunter riders. “I'm really fortunate to have a fast metabolism so I don't have to worry about my weight.” Before people get too jealous of that, Jenny notes that her quick metabolism can catch her off guard at the worst moments. “Sometimes it hits me that I'm famished all of the sudden, and I have to find a power bar, some cashews or even a peanut butter sandwich now! Fortunately, I can eat something while I'm walking into the ring and it doesn't bother me.”

A daily chocolate fix is balanced by a daily apple and other healthy preferences: salads, salmon, veggies, etc. “I love soda but I can't remember the last time I had one.” Along with water, diluted Gatorades and Vitamin Waters are go-tos to help stay hydrated.

One thing she'd love to see at horse shows is a sport-specific physical therapy service to address riders' unique aches and pains. In the meantime, predominantly healthy habits are likely to keep her in the winners circle for years to come.