

Young show jumper Lauren Hester returns to the States after advancing her Olympic quest in Europe.

To further her dreams of one day representing the United States in the Olympics, American Lauren Hester had relocated from Rancho Santa Fe, to the tiny town of Baarlo in the Netherlands. Beginning in April of 2013, Lauren and her horses were housed with Stal Hendrix, where she would be working with Emile Hendrix.

A major career move that isn't easy for any young equestrian, it required courage, commitment and hard work, but it has been a triumphant and successful year and a half. Hester currently has four horses actively competing at the Grand Prix level, plus a young horse that is starting to compete at the International shows.



Her 2014 show season started with a bang, and has only gained momentum. From Spain in March (Oliva Tour), to Belgium (Opplabeek) in May, and back to the Netherlands (Eindhoven, Arnhem, Asten, Geesteren, and Koningbosch) in June and July, she has posted victories.

Unlike many of her peers, Lauren has always played a big role in training her own horses, feeling that it is more rewarding to grow with them. She currently owns and manages Hester Equestrian, building a solid string of horses for her long-term goal, while also developing young horses. Over the last five years, she has sold a handful of talented mounts to riders in various disciplines from show jumping to hunters to dressage. When asked if she is always looking for horses to develop and sell, she says unequivocally, "All horses are for sale."

Hester Equestrian also owns six babies, ranging from yearlings to coming 3-year-olds, who are

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Written by Jackie McFarland, EquestriSol
Friday, 28 November 2014 00:00

growing up in the fields of Europe. Working with well-known breeder Paul Hendrix, Emile's brother, Lauren is gaining invaluable knowledge from more than one Hendrix.

Europe Versus U.S.A.

Lauren says cost is the major difference between developing horses in Europe and the United States. Entry fees are much higher in the States and, because the top-level shows are spread from coast to coast, travel can be one intimidating expense. The day-to-day expenses are also much lower in Europe, as are training fees. From her base in Baarlo, the Netherlands, there were four quality shows within 45 minutes, making it possible to go for the day.

Citing a subject that seems to be on many equestrian minds these days, Lauren would like to see Americans put more time and money into young horses. Although she realizes and understands why they find it more economical, and probably easier, to buy horses from Europe, she also observes how advanced the breeding system is there. While there are few breeding programs in the U.S., there are many in Europe. "In Europe," she states, "It's not a hobby; it's their life."

Asked to describe the process from birth to breaking at Stal Hendrix, she says that when the horses are 3-and-a-half, they break them and ride them for about a month, and turn them out again. At 4 years of age they begin showing at the small shows, and have another big break, and at age 5 they start long-term training, moving into their show horse careers.

Lauren recently returned to Rancho Santa Fe with the string she's been successful on in Europe - Abigail, Warinde B, Wender and Daister L, along with a few new mounts. She also brought back a lovely equitation horse to sell, Constantine, a new 6-year-old mare, Dalmerette, and a 5-year-old gelding, Lorstakov. With a clearer vision, she seeks to support young horse programs, and is pleased to see some shows have lightened the fees for young horses. She will also campaign her Grand Prix mounts at selected shows. Once again working with Joie Gatlin and Morley Abey, Lauren is assisting with sales and purchases. The horses are at home, and she plans to stay on this side of the ocean for a few show seasons at least. After a year-and-a-half in the Netherlands, Lauren returns home much richer in knowledge and experience, and many miles closer to her dream.

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Lauren Hester is sponsored by Thermotex Personal Therapy Systems and CWD, and she welcomes new supporters. Current information and results can be found on her website, www.hesterequestrian.com