



SANTO DOMINGO
Nomination OHTA Hall of
Fame 2018

September 2018

Thoroughbred, 1998

All horses are special but there are some which are very very special. Let me tell you the story about Santo Domingo (a.k.a Domingo) and his three (possibly four) careers.

His first career was as a thoroughbred race horse (One Four Three). Given his pedigree (Mr. Prospector, Northern Dancer, and way back – Man O'War) this career made sense. He was retired after 7 starts at Woodbine. Kelly Polland purchased him off the track and sold him later that winter to her friend, Stephanie St. Pierre, of Foxcroft Equestrian Centre.

It goes without saying – Eventing became his second career.

You are probably questioning how Domingo qualifies as a Hall of Fame induction. He will be 21 in January so there is a long career to talk about which ends with me – a 60 something physically challenged equestrian. I have been riding at Foxcroft for about 10 years and have seen him in action for close to half his life. So, allow me to grace these pages with a story about a very very special horse.

Competitive Career

Domingo went Pre-training as a 4-year old, moved up to Training as a 5-year old and began at Prelim as a 6-year old. During 2005 through 2009 he competed at Prelim and Intermediate with placings at most Ontario events as well as Stuart HT in New York, Radnor, Pine Top, Midsouth, Southern Pines, Bromont CIC** and Wits End CIC**. He was Ontario Prelim Reserve Champ in 2005 and 2007, placed 4th at Intermediate Champs at Will O'Wind in 2006 and won the Prelim Championship in 2009.



Nurturing Junior Riders

By the 2010 show season, Stephanie was competing with a couple of other horses so Domingo began his journey of encouraging, nurturing and seasoning 3 Junior OHTA Eventing riders – Patrick, Nicholas and Olivia.

Patrick, in two show seasons, with only Pre-training prior experience (2010 Ontario Pre-training Champion), qualified and competed at Prelim Champs and Midsouth CCI*.



In Patrick's own words - *Domingo is such an honest and safe horse. We did 4 Training events and then moved on to Prelim full of confidence. In our first few shows, he jumped me around courses that were a stretch or maybe even beyond my abilities at the time. Domingo was always safe, honest and did the best he could to get me around the courses. He gave me a lot of confidence when I was facing challenging situations, mostly on cross. At Prelim the tables look a lot bigger and wider. I knew that he could easily jump any of them. When it came to tricky questions like steering or coffins I always felt that I just had to set him up well for the first part of the combinations then just point him to the subsequent jumps and he would pick his way through. So, when I would walk courses, I would think to myself, Domingo can do this, I just have to show him the line and keep him in a good canter. The other thing was that he was never malicious when we ran into trouble. I always felt safe on him (remarkably I never fell off of him) which had a lot to do with him taking care of me on course.*

Nurturing Junior Riders (continued)

Nicholas, in one show season, with 8 OHTA shows evenly split between Pre-training and Training (pinned 1st at 50% of the events) - placed 6th at Training Champs.

In Nicholas's own words – *Santo Domingo was the hardest working and most honest horse around. The two of us grew up together and he was always a friend to me. I rode Domingo for the first time as a child, when he was 5 and I was 6, taking him for trail rides and trotting him around the fields while he took care I never bounced off (I never did!). He carried me around many competitions and patiently showed me the ropes of Eventing at Pre-training and Training. Domingo is an incredibly intelligent and talented horse.*

Olivia, in one show season, who had only previously competed at Pre-entry in Combined Training schooling shows, to rank second on the Pre-training leader board and placed 4th at Pre-training champs.

In Olivia's own words – *I have never trusted another horse like I trust Domingo. I can ride him bareback with a hackamore on a hack or in the XC field. I had this sense, part way through cross, all he wanted me to do was show him where to go and that he would take care of the rest and get the job done. He is so young at heart – it is like he stopped aging at 15!*



Nurturing a Senior Rider

In my own words – *Domingo's third career as my personal unofficial therapeutic horse.*

I started leasing Domingo in September 2015 when he was 17 years young. Unfortunately, I had to stop jumping as that was the time my hips started severely deteriorating. I need both my hips replaced and Domingo has given me one of the greatest gifts in the world – the opportunity to continue riding while I await surgery.



We only flat. I see him every day. I trust him to take care of me. I have this sense (can't explain it) he knows I have physical issues and listens and behaves to protect me. I have confidence I will not fall off. He never shows frustration when my aids are less than clear or my balance is off. He never pins his ears, bucks, spooks, or takes off. I can count on him to be consistent and calm. He takes everything old, new or different in stride. He has taught me to relax (which is critical for pain management) and he patiently stands still for me when I mount and dismount at the mounting block.

I have only come off Domingo once. We were trotting, my girth was loose and the saddle slid around his right side. He stopped in his tracks with an expression of – what just happened! He did not move, he just stood there and waited as I brushed myself off (laughing), grabbed the reins and steered him to the mounting block.

For his fourth career I hope Domingo and I compete in Dressage (maybe Para Dressage) after my hips are replaced in early summer of 2019. He has had the taste and rose to the challenge at the two 2016 Palgrave shows we competed in (scored 67.115% and 66.538% Training Test).

Domingo is a quality horse in the truest sense of the word – brave and talented, as well as reliable, safe, intelligent, trustworthy, gentle and kind. He senses the value of the human horse partnership. And to top it off – he truly is handsome. He has touched so many people, riders and non-riders, in a good way (most recently me). He is, by all accounts, a very very special horse.