

## A DREAM TURNED TO REALITY

Since I was a young girl in the Tipperary Pony club I found I was no different to most other competitive kids. I have been in competitions all over Ireland, winning some, losing others but always enjoyed the challenges. I'm sure however that the pinnacle of my equestrian life would have been wearing the Tri-colour and representing Ireland.

As I grew up and life took its twists and turns the opportunity for that beloved "dream" of mine never really had a chance of being fulfilled. However, all was not lost when the chance came in the shape of the Young Breeders World Championships, which took place at Kildalton College on Friday and Saturday last.

This little story, however, began for me well over a year ago. A similar competition, but on a national level took place last year. I took part in this competition, which has been brought about to encourage young people to develop their confidence and skills in assessing and showing performance horses. The competition targets the technical side of breeding, like assessment of conformation, paces, jumping and the ability to show a potential champion at his or her best. A place on the Irish squad was decided over a period of very intense training days. After attending all of these days and nights spent praying, I found out that I had made it, my marks had been of a high standard and I had made the cut.

Success at last, goal achieved I can rest on my laurels now - I think not! My other team members and I had a world championship to win. I found out about a week before the finals, so praying was replaced by nights spent with the books open and videos to be watched. I have never been one to take even small competitions lightly, be it tidiest stable at pony club camp or an all Ireland final, so as you can imagine this small case of a world championship was on the top of my list of priorities. And not only mine, as this was a team event. I was lucky enough to have Aine Geohan and David Bourke on my team and these two along with our whipper person Iris Brazil could not have been of a higher standard. Everybody was so supportive and encouraging, and as a result we all worked very well as a team. We also did our best to support our junior team of Miriam Bourke, PJ Hegarty, Conor Higgins and their whipper Amy Mc Carthy.

When D-Day came I felt well prepared but more hopeful than confident about results. I must say that the exceptional calibre of the international competitors only gave our team a hunger and a desire to go out there to do our best. The competition began in great spirits with the home team there to meet and greet our international rivals. With a total of sixteen teams from countries as far away as Canada, we did our best to give them the warmest of Irish welcomes. It was a special moment for me when I finally got to put on the Irish colours. I had national pride in my blood now. The different disciplines over the two days came & went and we all did our very best and most definitely left nothing behind us. Nail biting time came and the results were out. As a team we were awarded a coveted third place and I can safely say that the green white and gold was worn with pride by us all. Credit also to the junior team who were 5<sup>th</sup> in their category. All eight competitors that represented Ireland in both the Junior and Senior sections are members of Pony Club's around Ireland. It is through Pony Club that we have all learned our skills and with the help of our Young Breeder trainers we improved and developed them.

I wish to thank Philip Scott, Wendy Conlon and Declan McArdle for making us the best Irish team we could be and also to encourage any other keen young breeders out there to get involved in the Young Breeders National Competition 2010. There are so many people that I want to thank but are far too numerous to mention. Lastly, I want to say how proud I am to have represented my country with such wonderful people and again thank you to everybody who has helped me to achieve my dream.

Written By; Jean Meagher  
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