

Area 1 News

Optimum Minutes

Edited by Tamara Caruso, Designed by Liz Solarek

Happy Holidays!

If you're like me you can hardly believe the year is coming to a close already. It seems I just get used to writing the current year on documents and checks, and then it's time to start over again. And don't get me started on the feeling of another year fleeting by and realizing it's time to make a list of resolutions. Sigh.

This time of year is always bittersweet. There's the enthusiasm of the holiday season that I still haven't outgrown. But the thought of shoveling snow and chipping ice from frozen water buckets doesn't give me the warm and fuzzies.

We are coming off of our holiday highs and starting to settle into our routines for the winter. And although that seems daunting for us in the Northeast, many riders are lucky enough to be able to ride in an indoor to continue our training programs. I am fortunate to have that privilege, but there are many days I need to be pried off my sofa and away from the plethora of mindless tv (the Kardashians and Jersey Shore certainly are a great psychological study in the human condition—that's what I tell myself, anyway) and a dose of motivation to get bundled in 100 layers and mount up.

Although it seems like our first event is years away, our feature article this month is advice on what to do (or not to do) if you are dating or married to an eventer. (Although chances are, if you married them, you knew what you were getting into.) But even if your significant other has been around the sport for a while, there are some nice reminders here, to keep the peace.

Finally, as part of preparing for the 2011 season, please remember to rsvp for the annual meeting on January 8. This is a great time to meet fellow Area 1 members, enjoy some good company and food, and be a part of shaping this great sport we all love. We look forward to seeing you there!

Stay Warm,

Tamara & Liz





Katie Murphy riding First Glance. Image Courtesy of Hoof Pix® / ©Paige Vrooman

The First Six Months

Advice to all those dating or wed to an eventer.

Article by Roger Demers

When I first met Katie Murphy I had no idea what eventing was, nor had I ever been near a horse. She periodically came into Blue Seal where I worked part-time during graduate school to pick up grain and pet supplies. There was something different about Katie that motivated me to ask her out. Fortunately she agreed and two weeks later we had our first date.

The only thing I knew about horses was how much a bag of grain weighed. As we spent more time together I asked about eventing—the most important thing I learned was **to not call it “horse racing”**. My only association with equestrian competitions was the Kentucky Derby, and I figured all horse competitions were called racing. Not true!

I understood that eventing was made up of three different disciplines, often over the course of three days—a triathlon for us non-horsey folks. In an attempt to impress my new girlfriend, I studied YouTube videos of Rolex, the USEA website and various photographer sites. Then, I attended my first event.

The following are some guidelines to eventing gleaned from my first six months in the eventing world. May it be of benefit to an eventer’s boyfriend/girlfriend, who do not yet know what they’ve gotten themselves into.

After dressage, we set out to walk cross-country. Those fences looked NOTHING like the ones on YouTube! They were big. They were solid. And they were everywhere. To think, this was only Preliminary and not the four-stars I had watched. At fence one, I let a profanity slip and confirmed with Katie that she would be jumping this. She told me to pipe down and walk faster, and then “Just wait until you see the slide.”

For those of us who have never ridden XC, it is important to not do the following things while walking the course with the rider:

- **Ask how any horse could jump that**
- **Swear**
- **Proclaim appreciation to God that you are not jumping that fence**
- **Ask if you can jump the smaller one next to it instead.**

The weekends are very long, tiring and you never stop working. You'd think as the boyfriend I'd garner attention at some point. But no, the horse gets it all. She warned me that no part of a competition weekend is about me: the horse comes first, then the rider and boyfriend/girlfriend are somewhere at the same level of importance as the dogs. I was not expecting it to be true, but it was—the whole weekend, it was as if she wasn't my girlfriend!

Another tip: Everyone had a dog. Get one and you'll fit right in.

Also, bring a camera. Know how to use it.

The eventing community is great, someone is always laughing and they help each other out. Like the time Katie's horse, Fitty, spooked, knocked me into the air and took off, galloping through stabling. A complete stranger caught him while I lay on the ground in disbelief. Thankfully, I could return to Katie as though nothing had happened. (Thanks stranger!) Once you start meeting people and getting to know other riders and their teams, events turn into big social gatherings. At first I didn't know anyone, but I now look forward to seeing many of the same friends. If I'm lucky, they bring a husband, a boyfriend—or even a dog.

Over the course of the weekend, you will experience a vast range of emotions. You'll see riders elated as they leave the dressage ring, while others refuse to make eye contact. Cross country brings excitement, angst and an awareness of the tact and skill necessary to negotiate those horrifying fences. Katie tells me eventers compete for the rush of cross country, but given the port-o-potty traffic the morning of, I wonder if adrenaline is the only rush these competitors are feeling. The final day of show jumping offers the opportunity to move-up in the standings, clinch the win or just be done already. I've witnessed many reactions from the sidelines and in stabling. People scream, joke, re-cap every stride of their ride or cry. **Lastly, if your rider ever has a problem while competing, do not say a word! Let them talk first. And never, ever offer advice.** These riders train for months – MONTHS! – all to compete for 15 minutes. Those 15 minutes can make for a very long drive home.

Rising before the sun, hours in the truck across state borders, the constant smell of manure, seeing your girlfriend cleaning her horse's sheath, these are some of the things which make dating an eventer challenging. But, as this season drew to a close, and saddles were replaced by blankets, I found myself missing the weekends away, the cool evenings in the gooseneck and the canine camaraderie.

Roger is pursuing his masters in Fluid Mechanics at UNH. When he's not grooming, he enjoys competing in downhill-mountain biking. Follow his adventures on Facebook.

We hope to see everyone at the Area 1 Annual Meeting on January 8th!

Join us for the annual meeting at the Clarion Hotel and Conference Center in West Springfield, MA. The meeting will be held from noon to 4 and include a buffet lunch, Area 1 Awards Presentation, speakers from the Area 1 Council with a keynote address from FEI Judge Marilyn Payne.

All are welcome, please visit area1usea.org to learn more.



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