

# Behind the scenes Double H Farm and G&C Farm The Winning Combination

Young Show Jumping talents excel with support from North America's top Farms,  
by Lauren Fisher

In the sport of show jumping, winning is synonymous with talented riders, top horses and good owners, and some of the best young riders competing in the United States this season have all of that. Twenty-five-year-old Chicago native Quentin Judge, 21-year-old Colombia native Mark Bluman, and 19-year-old Venezuelan rider Luis Larrazabal are each moving up the ranks this year.

## Making a name

Quentin Judge rides for Double H Farm, which has locations in Ridgefield, CT, and Wellington, FL. Mark Bluman and Luis Larrazabal both show out of G&C Farm, based in Wellington, FL. With great mounts, tons of talent, and the backing of two of the country's biggest farms and most generous supporters of the sport, these young riders are on their way to making their show jumping dreams come

sponsors at many North American competitions and have a shared investment in improving the sport and bringing along top riders. Both Double H Farm and G&C Farm have had top international riders under their wing and both farms are currently home to horses ridden and trained by Olympian Rodrigo Pessoa of Brazil. In 2012, they are proud to support several promising young riders in the sport.

## Jumping Into the Spotlight

Riding for Double H Farm, Quentin Judge is starting to make a name for himself as an international grand prix competitor, and he has progressed quickly. Just one year ago, Judge was riding in his first Grand Prix; this winter, he jumped HH Carotino to a clear round in his first USEF Olympic Selection Trials in Florida. Judge

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true. Double H Farm, owned by current CEO of Canadian Pacific Rail, Hunter Harrison, and G&C Farm, owned by Gustavo and Carolina Mirabal, are two farms that are quickly becoming household names in the sport of show jumping worldwide. The Harrison and Mirabal families are both generous

grew up in Chicago with a love of horses that began at a young age. His parents knew nothing about horses, but supported their son's interests. He started taking lessons at a small barn in the city at the age of 13 and moved on to ride at several barns in the Chicago suburbs. Judge has worked with



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many top U.S. trainers, including Alex Jayne, Missy Clark, Jack Stedding, Linda Andrisani, and Olympians Joe Fargis and Margie Engle. At the age of 19, he moved to Europe to work for Dutch show jumper Jan Tops for over two years. “Working for Jan, I started going to serious international shows and trying to learn as much as I could,” Judge recalled. “That was a really good experience on all levels for me. I learned about riding, sportsmanship, horse management, and how to run a business. It was a lot of jobs, but they were all really good experiences and I learned a lot from every place I went,” Judge acknowledged. “I got a really well-rounded education. I think you can't be afraid to really put in

as much hard work as there needs to be and be humble and understand that you can learn from everyone. I have had so much help from so many different people.”

## Taking off

After nine years and many great experiences, Judge went to work for Double H Farm when he was 22. Double H Farm began as a private show stable for Cayce Harrison when she was riding as a junior. Now married, Harrison and Judge operate the farm's sales and breeding program together. Harrison still rides an amateur, and Judge shows as a professional. Working for some of the best show jumpers in the world, Judge's dreams of being a top Grand Prix

rider were ignited, and now riding for Double H Farm, he has the opportunity to achieve that dream. "The last couple of seasons things have really started to take off," Judge admitted. "I have been able to show more and more. Last year was my first full season jumping grand prix. Riding HH Calvano, I got to jump the grand prix classes in Florida for the first time and over the summer we were sixth in the grand prix in Valkenswaard, which was really special because it was back at Jan Tops' stable. To go back there after having worked so hard and to do well was really special for me. To start having success and moving up in to the bigger classes has been really fulfilling for me."

#### Happy athletes

In an Olympic year, Judge has thought often about getting to the top of the sport. "I think anyone that is working as hard as we do and aiming towards the top goals would want to go to the Olympics and the World Equestrian Games and the World Cup Finals; all of those things," Judge noted. "I think it just comes with time and experience. I have put a lot of miles on in the last two years, but I have realistic expectations of when and where I might have a good shot to do some big things and ride on teams. I definitely have every hope in the world to do as much international showing and practicing as I can." No matter where he goes from here, Judge is focused, "almost to a fault," he acknowledges, on keeping his horses happy. "You have to have good horses, obviously, to jump the highest levels," he declared. "There are plenty of great riders that are not on the best horses that don't get the chance to really show what they can do, so I think you have to be really lucky to have the opportunity to ride the great horses. I think that the most important thing is to try to be open-minded, put the horse first and just do the best you can and keep the horse happy. Hopefully they will return what you are doing with jumping good rounds."

#### Young Talents Mark Bluman and Luis Larrazabal

G&C Farm has taken on several talented young riders this year in their quest to improve the sport of show jumping in North America and field a team of top international riders. Mark Bluman and Luis Larrazabal are now the

farm's primary riders working with Helio and Rodrigo Pessoa. Bluman and Larrazabal have been friends for almost eight years after meeting at a children's show jumping championship in Ecuador. Best friends and co-workers, the duo has been competing

successfully during his child and junior career. He won the FEI Children's Final in California in 2005 and the same year won the National Children's Championship in Colombia. In 2008, Bluman won the Junior National Championship. In December of 2009, Bluman

grand prix year. Other notable competition for Bluman includes the honor of riding for his country on two separate occasions in the CSIO 4\* Nations Cup classes in Wellington, FL. Most recently, he won a \$10,000 Welcome Stake in Vermont.

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successfully throughout North America this summer with G&C Farm's talented string of horses. Mark Bluman, of Medellin, Colombia, first moved to the United States two and a half years ago. He grew up riding on a family farm with two older brothers and began competing when he was eight years old. Bluman was very

decided to make his dreams come true and moved to the United States. He began as a working student for Todd Minikus and then trained with Pablo Barrios. Bluman first started showing at the grand prix level in 2010 and has had many top finishes, including two significant second place finishes during his first

#### Development

A huge development in Bluman's career, he now has the opportunity to train with the legendary Rodrigo Pessoa and Rodrigo's uncle, Helio Pessoa. Under their guidance, Bluman is showing several top horses for G&C Farm and Gustavo Mirabal. It is the opportunity of a lifetime for a young rider. "Gustavo is such a great supporter," Bluman acknowledged. "He loves horses and it is nice that he is giving us the opportunity to train with one of the best riders in the world with Rodrigo. Gustavo is making such an effort to buy good horses for us. He is always there to help and always wanting to win. It is nice to have that support. It makes you improve your riding a lot. I have known Rodrigo since I was a kid and he has always been kind of a hero for me," Bluman said. "I have liked a lot of riders, but Rodrigo is my hero because he has won everything. He has been at the top level of the sport for such a long time. He is a very good rider and a very good person. As a coach, Helio is amazing too," Bluman explained. "He is a good teacher and he tells you what he thinks, but at the same time, he wants you to do what you feel you have to do. They are both just good sportsmen and they know a lot about horses and riding."

#### Olympic aspirations

Like most riders at this level of the sport, Bluman has Olympic aspirations and hopes to someday compete worldwide. "My dream is to go to the Olympics. That is one of my goals," Bluman affirmed. "It is hard to make that dream come true, but my goal is to be one of the best in the world and stay there for a while. I want to go do all of the shows in Europe and ride against the best riders in the



Photo: Erin Gilmore

Mark Bluman and Luis Larrazabal are joined by their mentor Rodrigo Pessoa in the middle.

world." Show jumping talent seems to run in the family, as Bluman's cousins also ride and show. His cousin, Daniel Bluman, recently represented Colombia in the

Children's World Competition in Venezuela. Larrazabal has also represented Venezuela in several Nations Cup and championship classes in Chile, Panama and

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London Olympic Games. Daniel's success has been a strong motivator in Bluman's advancement. He admires his cousin's determination and it is Daniel's wise words of advice that he tries to follow every day. "I have received a lot of advice over the years," Bluman stated, "But I think the best piece of advice I have received came from Daniel. He told me that I just have to work hard to get what I want. I think that when you work hard, you can do anything. I try to learn every day and I am sure that at the end of the day, I am going to make my dreams come true," he reflected.

#### Jump Starting a Jumping Career

Luis Larrazabal, 19, was born in Caracas, Venezuela. He started riding horses on the family farm as a three-year-old and began competing at the age of seven. In 2005, Larrazabal won an Individual Bronze and a Team Bronze at the FEI Children's International Jumping Finals in California. A year later, he won Gold at the FEI

pursue a career in show jumping. He began training with Norman Dello Joio and then rode with Pablo Barrios for two years. Larrazabal's best piece of advice came from his time training with Barrios. "I remember one time when I was a kid and I had a bad class, a really bad horse show. He told me that there are a lot of ups and downs in this sport and you always have to keep your head up and try to go forward," he remembered.

#### Great support

Larrazabal has always had great support from his parents as well. They are the ones who first got him into riding when he was a child and have helped him through everything. "Basically, I can say that I am here right now and doing what I am doing because of them," he acknowledged. "My parents have done a lot of for me and they have

when I was a little kid. Then this year, he called and talked to me about being my sponsor and trying to take us to the top. It is the biggest thing that has happened to me in this sport. Having Gustavo's support is amazing. He is a super sponsor and he is positive in every way, helping us with everything. We are now riding with Rodrigo Pessoa, who was my idol from when I was a kid. Rodrigo is one of the best riders in the world and what I like about riding with him and Helio is that everything is by the book," Larrazabal continued. "Nothing is too different or complicated. Everything is classic, and the most important thing is that your horses should always be happy."

#### Hopes for the future

Larrazabal also has Olympic aspirations and goals of riding on the Nation's Cup team for Venezuela in Florida this winter. He also hopes to represent Venezuela at the Bolivarian Games in Peru this coming year. "I love this sport. I think that the sport is so unique," he said. "Trying to get a connection with another living being, with an animal, is really difficult. It is difficult to build a relationship with the horse and day by day you learn a lot of new things. I love animals and this is what I want to do with my life." Judge, Bluman and Larrazabal are three of the top young riders to watch this year. All three will compete at the FTI Consulting Winter Equestrian Festival in Wellington, FL, this winter and hope to continue pursuing their dreams with another successful season in 2013. <<



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