

Kathryn Robinson

Waving the Flag Across the Pond

by Jessica Lefroy

Kathryn Robinson may be an unfamiliar face in North America, but the British-born eventer is one of Canada's most promising talents. With a Canadian mother and English father who lived in Canada for 10 years prior to Kathryn's birth, the 29-year-old holds dual citizenship and competes as a Canadian. Together with her fiancé, Italian eventer Giovanni Ugolotti, they run Cranford Stud Eventing in Gloucestershire, England, from where the pair train and compete across Europe.

Coming from a family with no horse background was not a deterrent; Kathryn began riding at the age of eight at a local riding school and quickly found a pony to lease through the Woodland Pytchley Pony Club. "My best friend and I kept our ponies with a lovely lady named Mrs. Painter," she remembers. "Mrs. Painter was involved in showing, and my best friend's pony won everything, which is where my drive to win started, as I was always trying to beat her! We also did a lot of hunting, which gave me a lot of riding experience over different ground and in many different situations. The Painters made it great fun, but also a great education of horses and how to care for them."

Kathryn took a brief hiatus from horses to focus on school at the age of 16. At 21, she returned to the industry as a working student for Samantha Albert, a Canadian-born Olympian who represents Jamaica. Never having worked in a professional eventing yard, Kathryn was not only mentored in the training and maintenance of upper-level horses, but also discovered that it was possible to make it a career. "I realized then that I could do something I loved and earn money from it, even if it was going to be very hard work. I knew I was not the sort to sit in an office, and I don't mind the long hours."

The day-to-day operations of Cranford Stud Eventing benefit from Kathryn and Giovanni (a member of the Italian Army Equestrian Team for five years) having significant competitive experience under their belts. They each bring different skills to the table. "We have two heads looking at a situation and solving the problem. We can see different things," explains Kathryn. "We often will ride each other's horse and give advice on what we felt. Our yard is a real team effort and it is great to know that you have someone who has your back and will always be honest with you. Giovanni is calm and relaxed and takes everything as it comes, whereas I am more of a worrier and



Kathryn Robinson and Let It Be, her 13-year-old German-bred gelding, looking good at Les Etoiles de Pau in Pau, France. The pair are on the 2014 Canadian Eventing Short List.

always running around organizing something, so we even each other out."

While it has occasionally been a struggle for Kathryn to gain the attention of selection committees in Canada, in 2011 she was chosen to take part in the London Olympics test event, where she jumped triple clear. Even with an ocean between the countries, she feels a strong sense of community with the Canadian team. She credits her mother for helping foster a relationship with the eventing community on this side of the Atlantic. "I am very lucky to have such a wonderful mum; she helps with all the office work through Team Canada. Many of the people in the office in Canada know me and my mum, as we ring a lot and ask so many questions," she laughs.

"I don't feel that isolated from the Canadian scene, as many Canadians come here to event and I get to meet them. It was hard in the beginning to get noticed, but team Canada makes a great effort to keep in contact and Clayton [Fredericks, Canadian Eventing Team technical advisor] comes over as much as he can to give training. They do a great job of being here if we need their support. Now it's up to me to work hard and provide the results." 🐾