

#IRL

# GOAL-GETTER

Genevieve set her eye on para-equestrian greatness and is working hard to achieve it.

BY GENEVIEVE ROHNER

**m**y name is Genevieve Rohner and I'm 16 years old. I live in Park City, Utah.

I'm a triplet, and we were born premature at 28 weeks. I started riding hippotherapy at age 4 with one of my triplet brothers, Cole. Cole had a stroke, and we both have cerebral palsy and autism.

Cole didn't like riding, but I wanted to learn fast! My coach, Megan McQueeney, had me ride all the barn horses.

Soon I learned about para-equestrian for riders with physical disabilities. Para means "parallel," similar to able-bodied. We use aids for our physical challenges. I was classified officially as a grade 4 para at age 9, and became the youngest one in the U.S.

When I was 14, I got internationally classified as FEI grade 4 (in para dressage, international FEI grades range from grade 1 for the most severely impaired to grade 5 for the least impaired).

Once I was FEI classified, I competed in my first international-level competition and became the youngest in the world to do so, although there are now a few other riders who are a little younger than me. But in grade 4, I am still the youngest in the U.S. and the world.

## HORSES

It can be hard to find the right horse and coach at the right time. My parents aren't horse people, but were national athletes, and understand competition, mental focus, training, coaching and sport organizations.

I earned my first scores in the 70s (percentage) on my horse Donut. Now I have Kaspar, a chestnut Oldenburg. His name is German for "treasure."

I've been lucky to ride Paralympic/Grand Prix horses in my first three international shows, including Paralympian Kate Shoemaker's horse, Solitaer 40, which was exciting!

Patty Mayer also coached me on her Grand Prix horse, Cato, and we were named to the U.S. Equestrian Federation's Developing Para list. (USEF is the national governing body for most equestrian sports.)

## BIG DREAMS

My mom works hard to help me, but always tells me I have to want it the most. I do! Money can be challenging, too. We live in Utah, so I was able to start working at age 14. I've learned a lot about people and being professional, and I can buy things I need with my own money.

My goal is to become a Team USA Paralympic Equestrian. I wanted to try for the 2024 Paralympics, but my horse situation wasn't right.

In 2023, my mom got cancer. All our family's plans had to wait. She's better now, but it made me look at what's most important in my life.

## ACHIEVEMENTS

I've had great opportunities and luck so far and learned a lot from goals I've set. I'm a USEF 10-year athlete, working to earn my place in the U.S. Para ranks.

I competed in my first nationally recognized shows at 10, and qualified for the California Junior Championships, California Dressage Society Regionals, and the USDF



LEXI ROHNER

Genevieve and Donut



DEBORAH HICKEY

This goes here

preiod instaed of !.  
Too many, lol

Region 7 Championships, finishing 5th and 6th of 14 riders.

At 12, I earned two USEF Emerging Para list spots with two horses, won my first open national championships, and was reserve overall of five emerging athletes competing in the 2020 Para Dressage Championships.

I was the youngest and the only Para when I trained on one horse in Utah and competed another in California.

In 2023, The U.S. Para-Equestrian Association also nominated me for a USEF National Youth Sportsman's Award. I was honored to be named reserve overall winner.

In 2022, Solitaer 40 and I were named to a Team USA show team. In 2023, I trained in California and helped exercise horses at Ride On therapeutic horsemanship center in Pasadena, Calif. Living away from home was a great experience.

Thousand Oaks, CA

I'm also involved with U.S. Pony Clubs, and highly recommend it for learning lots of horsemanship skills.

I also have six years of USEF athletic lettering. Most schools don't have horse programs, but you can earn your letters through USEF!

I'm excited that I was recently named the U.S. Para Equestrian Association representative to the USEF National Youth Advisory Board. We're a group of young riders talking about how to improve our sport. If any readers have ideas and want to share, message me on Instagram (@gr\_paraequestrian)!

## SUPPORT FOR GOALS

Sports teaches you self-discipline and whether you truly want something. You have to want it, because it's hard work.

When I do better in school, I do better in riding and life. Sisters in Sports Foundation for disabled female athletes and Metropolitan Equestrian Team encourage and support me on how to be in front of people, tell my story, and pursue my goals.

Support is super important. It feels great when riders I look up to do positive things, and are honest about mistakes and learning. I've been lucky to meet some of them. It helps me understand possibilities and my place in our sport. I hope to do that for others too.

It's important to always have hope. Every day I try to think about my goals and do something to move closer to them. I work out, sleep enough, and eat well so I have energy for riding. For me, it's not just a sport, it's the way I live my life. And I love it! ✨