

# Kent School

## Combining Passion for Riding With an Exemplary Education for Students through 12th Grade

Who runs the riding program at Kent School in Kent, Connecticut? Although it seems to be a well-kept secret, it shouldn't be. Michael Page, winner of the Medal Finals (and 3rd in the Maclay) as well as numerous Olympic and Pan American medals, has been head trainer at Kent School since 1994.

By Ann Jamieson



**Michael** teaches a classical approach to riding, stressing the basics of forward, straight, balanced, and calm. "It is not possible to create competent riders without the basics. Without straightness and forwardness and the ability to ride with a balanced seat and an independent leg, the rider will not progress. The great horsemen have mastered these fundamentals. There are no secrets, just hard work."

In handouts that Michael gives to riders in the Kent program, he states many of the basic tenets of his teaching. These include:

"It's not how much you know; it's how much the horse understands of what you know."

"Wait with your body, ride with your leg."

"Never forget that riding forward is the soul of the art of riding, and that the necessary impulsion must come from the hindquarters (from Luis Seeger)."

"No one can teach riding as well as a horse. Listen."

"You must understand the box but you must be able to think out of it."

Michael stresses attitude, putting the horse first, perseverance, and the will to win. Michael feels that, "If you go to someone for instruction, only go if you respect him enough to give 110% of what he asks. Every time. All the time."

Students in the program say that Michael expects a lot, but is always positive and supportive. Program Coordinator Adrienne Wilbur says Michael is "very passionate about teaching, very welcoming to the kids. It's a happy, positive atmosphere." Adrienne (Dee Dee) is grateful to have the opportunity to ride with Michael herself. "I'm so lucky to be educated by him."

The staff of the riding program includes trainer Linda Smith, and contact person Tina Cloutier. Both have spent years at Kent working to create an effective and balanced program.

The Kent program offers students the opportunity to

develop and grow their passion and interest in riding in a co-educational setting. Riders of all levels are welcome, from beginners to the most advanced. The program offers expertise in equitation, hunters, jumpers and combined training. Students can bring their own horses, or work with what Michael terms Kent's "equine professors." Many of Kent's school horses have competed at the top levels in their disciplines, and they offer a schoolmaster experience for riders.

The training is conducted in Kent's superb facilities, which include two indoor and three outdoor rings, a Grand Prix field, a grass hunter field, and a cross-country course suitable for beginner-novice through training level eventers.

Students at Kent learn to be not only riders, but horsemen. Veterinary care, nutritional needs and conditioning are all a part of the program. Kent strives to produce all around horse people who are knowledgeable, caring, competent, and exemplify good sportsmanship.

At Kent School, riders can combine the best of the school's program with the best of their training programs from home. Michael is happy to work in partnership with students' home trainers to create a program that builds on their experience and will best develop their riding skills.

Students have plenty of opportunity to show. Kent riders attend Ocala during their three week spring break, and compete at HITS and Old Salem, as well as a few horse trials. Jumper shows (through Level IV) and combined tests on campus give them a chance to compete at home. There are plenty of activities promoted by the school and the riding program for everyone to get their fill of competition.

Michael says that Kent School is very supportive of athletics, and whether it's swimming, crew, or riding, athletes have the school behind them and can be assured of extra help with their academics if they need it.

One surprising fact about Michael is that he never has had a horse of his own. His father supported him by arranging for him to ride with the top instructors (including Jack LeGoff and Reiner Klimke). Michael always wanted to be the best rider he could be, and riding as many as nine horses a day proved the best education, and allowed him wonderful opportunities, such as horses that were capable of competing and placing in the Olympics. He has had the ride on many top horses, and at Kent he is able to ride some wonderful

### About Michael Page

- As a junior, AHSA Medal Finals winner and 3rd in the Maclay
- French Cavalry School, Saumur, France
- Two Silver Olympic Medals and one Bronze Olympic Medal in Eventing
- Four Gold Pan American Games Medals, one Silver and one Bronze
- Badminton, England, finished 10th
- Coached Canadian 3-Day Team at the Montreal Olympics
- Chef D'Equipe for the U.S. 3 Day Team for two Olympic Games, two Pan American Games and two World Championships
- Inducted into United States Eventing Association Hall of Fame
- Judged USEF/ASPCA National Equitation Finals (seven times), Intercollegiate National Finals (five times), and NCAA Varsity National Equitation Finals



Grand Prix horses, so not having his own horse has never felt like a deprivation to him.

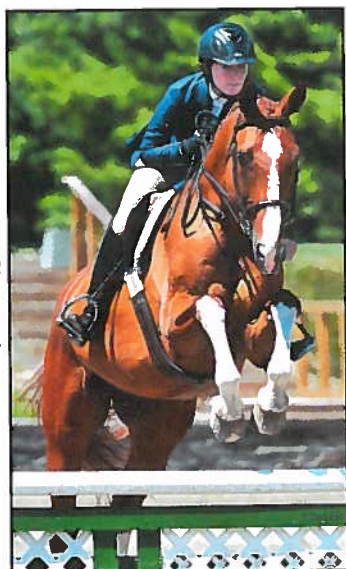
Michael started "just teaching a few lessons a week" at Kent 18 years ago and has been there ever since. He loves to see an individual student "achieving what they didn't think they could. With a horse capable of doing it, it can sometimes take them to really great places!"

The bottom line is always riding better, and Michael looks for "a passion for riding and learning to ride well" as the most important quality in a student. "It's not always talent; often those who work hardest surpass those with talent who don't put that much into it. But that's just life in general, isn't it?"

Kent School is not just about riding; education always comes first. The school is known throughout the world for its excellent, and rigorous, academics. Courses offered go far beyond a traditional high school and include Greek Oratory, Meteorology, and Russian Literature. Programs can be independently designed to meet individual needs.

For those looking to combine a world-class horsemanship education with the best in academics, it's time to look into Kent School. Ω

ESI Photography



Kyle Olsen '10 on *Colorado*, one of Kent's exceptional school horses



Michael working with Camellia Ford, '13, in a lesson at Kent

Photo on previous page: Michael with Julia Glynn '13, also in a lesson



Adam Lake '14 on *Cruise*, another talented school horse