

Bloomberg Enters The Business Of Making Dreams Comes True

BY EMILY STAKEM
PHOTO COURTESY OF SYDNEY COLLIER

A few years ago, international show jumper Georgina Bloomberg and international para-dressage rider Sydney Collier met at a fundraiser for the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Olympic Games, and then their paths kept crossing. They soon became good friends.

Fast forward to earlier this year, when Collier approached Bloomberg with the idea of a sponsorship. Even though Bloomberg had never sponsored a rider before, she didn't have to think twice. She now owns a horse for Collier—Fherrigamo, a 7-year-old Oldenburg (Fhitzgerald—Dhewpoint, Di Caprio)—and she will cover the gelding's expenses as Collier makes a bid for the 2020 Paralympic Games in Tokyo.

"I have a great deal of respect for her riding and being able to see her compete," said Bloomberg. "It was just something that was such a no-brainer—to be able to do something so incredible for somebody else and give them an opportunity to pursue their dreams. I feel like I've spent so much time and money on my own career, and it was just the most rewarding thing to be able to do that for somebody else. [It's] 10 times more rewarding than anything I could accomplish with my horses, not just this year, but in a lifetime.

"I think that what she's doing is much harder than what I'm doing," added Bloomberg, 35, of North Salem, New York.

Collier wants to spread knowledge of para-equestrian sports to the greater equestrian community through her own journey, and she hopes that Bloomberg's help will amplify the message.



International show jumper Georgina Bloomberg (left) has started sponsoring Paralympian Sydney Collier.

"It's like a blessing beyond words because it opened up a world of opportunity for me, and also it's a huge step forward for the sport of para-dressage—having a show jumper actually supporting a person competing in para-dressage," said Collier, 20.

Diagnosed with Wyburn-Mason Syndrome when she was 7, Collier went through various experimental treatments until a massive stroke left her paralyzed on her left side. Rehabilitation forced her to take a back seat in her life, but Collier was determined to eventually ride again. After relearning to walk, Collier made a beeline for a horse.

"I had been eventing straight up until I was 11, and after my stroke I was like, 'OK, maybe eventing is a little bit too dangerous after you've had a stroke,' so I was like, 'Maybe let's tone it back to just show jumping,'" said Collier, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

It wasn't until Collier attended the 2010 Alltech FEI World Equestrian

Games in Kentucky and saw para-equestrian dressage that she considered making the switch. She represented the United States at the 2016 Paralympics.

"I saw the incredible athletes riding these horses, and no matter what their disability was or what their physical body was doing, they were still on the horse, and they were still doing it," said Collier. "I really had, like, kind of a movie moment where it was like an epiphany, and I realized I can still do this."

Classified as a Grade I rider, Collier competes in a walk test and admitted that finding the right horse wasn't simple.

"You need a horse with a crazy good walk," said Collier. "It sounds really easy, but it's really difficult [to find a horse] with a really good walk that likes to walk consistently for five minutes in a dressage test."

After months of searching, Collier found and purchased "Fritz." Bloomberg then bought the gelding from Collier to help alleviate the financial pressures of owning him. She hopes the sponsorship will allow Collier to compete in more shows and chase her goals without having to worry about money.

"If she doesn't make the team for Tokyo or never competes internationally, I would still turn back time and still do this the exact same," said Bloomberg. "For me, it's genuinely about the journey, not the destination."

Collier and Fritz are just picking up steam, and Collier is excited to see what the future brings.

"It's so neat that I can cheer Georgina on, and she can cheer me on, and I feel like the luckiest girl in the world," said Collier. ●