

Last week I got the chance to talk to eventing champion Bridget Kelly to discuss what it's like being a young rider in New Mexico!

Bridget, a freshman, has been mainly eventing since 2018. Though she was too modest to tell me in her interview, she won the American Eventing Championships in Montana this year at the Junior Beginner Novice level! With her Connemara x Quarter Horse mare Windover Tarragon, affectionately known as Chai, she hopes to compete at the FEI Pony level this coming season.

Eventing has been Bridget's passion since she started riding, but as she learned at the Championships this summer, the key to being good at eventing is to be able to ride a really good dressage test. "All I've ever wanted was to event... [but] you have to be good at dressage to be great at eventing."

As any competitive young rider knows, there is a lot to balance and manage during competition season. Being in New Mexico has presented lots of challenges for Bridget. While she is lucky to keep her horses at home, it can be difficult to find good coaches in her area. She manages this by doing online lessons and by regularly sending her trainer videos of her riding. She and her dad mainly haul to Arizona, Texas, and Colorado for competitions, and drove nine hours to Phoenix for her first TEAM clinic.

On top of her riding, Bridget is in school full-time. She says her teachers have been very accommodating of her busy show schedule, largely because she has proven that she can stay on top of her school work while being on the road. After school, Bridget wants to continue riding and competing, whether she becomes a professional trainer, or pursues her dream of becoming a veterinarian.

In the future, Bridget hopes to graduate through the FEI Pony, Junior, and Young Rider levels, hoping to compete at championships such as NAYC and the Festival of Champions. She also may one day want to participate in D4K's Winter Intensive Training program. Whatever she decides in the future, Bridget seems to be a talented young rider who likes variety in her life, and keeps future doors open.

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