

TO MISS, WITH LOVE:

# *Clementine Goutal*

**Inspires the next generation**

BY HEATHER BUCHANAN

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IF THE PRESSURES OF GROWING UP IN THIS DAY AND AGE AREN'T ENOUGH, IMAGINE TRYING TO BALANCE A PASSION FOR SPORTS WITH ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS, CONSTANT TRAVEL, AND INTENSE PRESSURE TO BE PERFECT IN ALL ASPECTS OF YOUR LIFE.



For the students at Upper Echelon Academy in Wellington, Florida, they have not only a strong supporter in founder Clementine Goutal, but someone who has walked the walk in the same riding boots. She balanced riding and school first at Chapin then at The Professional Children's School in NYC and finally at Brown University. She acknowledges the benefits of having her older sister Brianne Goutal as a trail blazer in her family. "Her talent and success engendered passion with my parents of the sport," she explains, "They at the same time never let riding take precedence over academics. They didn't just set a high bar, they found ways to help us and came to the shows and really cared about us being successful and happy and well-rounded."

UEA is run by Clementine Goutal along with Heather Youngblood and Kate Bomgaars and operates both a Primary School classroom program for pre-K children up to 5th grade as well as individual tutoring. For junior riders who are competing in Wellington UEA closely coordinates with their home school to keep them not only up to date, but also excelling.

"Sometimes when you're in a classroom you may not understand a detail, and the class moves forward," says Goutal. "When it's one on one you focus on what you're struggling with, and your weaknesses can become your strengths. When the home school sees the student come back after one on one tutoring in the material, and that student feels confident and eager to participate, we have earned their trust."

Olivia Broder a sophomore who attends Friends Academy on Long Island says, "My favorite thing

about the academy is definitely the nurturing learning environment and the people. UEA by far has the most kind and knowledgeable tutors as well as staff. They also ensure that students interact with one another so that we still get to participate in the social aspect of school. The biggest challenge in balancing academics and riding is time management. UEA's flexible schedule allows me to be thorough with my training at home and competitive at the show but still get a great education."

This flexibility expands beyond trainers and teachers. Goutal says, "We never want to have a cookie cutter approach because everyone learns differently. This might mean finding a native language speaker in French or German for a foreign student, or supporting an interest in other subjects." They also encourage civic and philanthropic participation for the students through the UEA Social Impact Board. Goutal comments, "We want to get our kids passionate about giving back and help them find tangible ways to create change." Goutal herself is both active in The Brooke and the EQUUS Foundation which support ethical treatment of horses, and is also connected to the environment and the ocean. She says, "I'm a fervent advocate for the reduction of plastic consumption and waste, and I am enamored of marine life. I learned to dive when I was young but didn't get certified until 2009. On the trip I did the official course, I realized how incredibly therapeutic the majestic ocean is. I fell in love with marine life, especially (but not limited to!) whales, and started reading more about the damage we are doing. I can

be really annoying about plastics and I am constantly nagging my friends to forego straws, which is something so small with major impacts. They're surprisingly very understanding and many of them have given up those nasty little things!"

Even though it is a world of privilege, Goutal insists that no one gets an easy A in her Academy. All tests have an outside proctor, and the students have to do their own work. "These are smart and connected families, and the student has the opportunity to go to some of the best universities in the U.S.," says Goutal. "That's a luxury to have access to the best education so we want to make sure they are prepared."

UEA hosts special events such as an evening with Brianne Goutal, Georgina Blomberg and Audrey Coulter to speak about riding at the top level while going to a really good school and share their personal experiences and advice. With a vast network of alumnae, the Academy can also help with evaluating colleges, connecting students to those currently enrolled or recent graduates to give a first-hand recounting of their experience.

“AND IN A WORLD WHERE A YOUNG PERSON MAY BE AWAY FROM HOME, IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT GRADES AND TEST SCORES. WE TRY AND FOCUS ON GENUINE EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT,”





says Goutal, "They have exposure to life lessons about everything from losing, to competition, to sportsmanship to being responsible for an animal. I don't think character shaping ever stops."

To this end the tutors are also mentors. "You have someone to look out for you," explains Goutal. "We want the students to feel comfortable and be honest about mistakes and ask for advice. We're educators and we're older than them and we've done the same things and balanced our interests. We know the pressures of trying to be perfect or growing up too fast so we like to keep an open dialogue."

This support also includes a professional psychologist Dr. Jennifer Speisman. "She is focusing on sport psychology but has treated a myriad of different situations. A rider herself, she understands the pressure of wanting to be the best junior rider and being a straight A student and getting into an ivy league school. Anytime we see someone struggling we can recommend her."

The students have a compassionate champion in Clementine who has faced her own life challenges including losing her newlywed husband. For Clementine she says,

“ I RIDE BECAUSE IT IS MY PASSION. I'M NOT A PROFESSIONAL. I DON'T HAVE GOALS THAT ARE AWARDS RELATED. MY GOALS ARE TO FIND AS MUCH

## ENJOYMENT AND NOT RESULTS.

I experienced a terrible tragedy two years ago, and horses saved my life in every way. I didn't want to do anything. I realized I had these two horses that needed me to get up and ride them. Now I have the most magnanimous appreciation for the horses in my life and their ability to make a bad day a little less bad."

Goutal considers herself blessed with amazing friends and family, including being a beloved Aunt herself. She is always learning, tending towards reading non-fiction but recently was impacted by *The Fountainhead*. She is studying for the GMAT for business school and expanding her horizons, but her lasting impact on her students' lives continues.

Olivia Broder comments, "I personally have the privilege and opportunity to have Clementine as one of my tutors. She is one of the most organized people I know. I admire everything that Clementine does for the Academy and how much time, effort, and dedication she puts in. Through any difficult academic or personal time, the Academy has always been there for me to help me in any way possible and make sure I stay on top of my academics. They do not only care about their students' academics but also the well-being of the kids." That earns an A for sure.

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