

# Samantha Audet

I started riding lessons when I was 12. My love of horses started long before that though. My Godmother started bringing me out to ride horses of friends when I was quite young. Also my collection of toy horses that started to also accumulate at somewhere around 7 years is pretty phenomenal. I must have been about 12 or 13 when I convinced my parents I should go into riding. Both of my best friends were riding, and after much cajoling they caved. At about 14, I started riding a school horse named Tex. At the age of 18 I bought Tex from the then owner of Misty River Ranch, Sandra Thornhill, who after warning me of the cost of owning my beloved 1200-pound animal, sold him to me. At this point we started to seriously pursue our career as a team together.

Tex is an 18 year old, 16.3 hand chestnut thoroughbred, who has had many an occupation. Manitoba bred and born, Tex has had the joy of racing, (but alas, only winning three races) eventing, living as a bomb proof lazy school horse, and now, is my dressage pony. Now, you might be thinking that it was an easy path to being the dressage pony he is today, but it's taken a lot of love (and food) to get him to the happy state he is now.



When I bought Tex, he lived very happily and lazily as a school horse that did the most minimal amount of effort, and made his riders work for an ounce of work. He is affectionately known by my coach as a calorie saver. I was a shock to him when we started working hard, and I actually wanted him to participate in our discussions (and by participate I mean, I wanted him to do as I told him) I at the time had thought that out calling was a nice hunter career. Did he ever show me he thought of that. I might as well have asked him to fly to the moon. He had always been known as difficult to jump, but I always assumed it would get easier the more we did it. It did not. He did not like it, and with time I did not enjoy it either. Sarah (the current owner of Misty River Ranch, and my coach) suggested that perhaps we try a different track that we did not have to jump. Here is where our dressage career starts.

We have been riding in dressage shows, for about a year now. Our training has been a very interesting path of ups and downs, like anything I suppose. It seems we will have a large hurdle (like being on the bit, or smooth canter transitions without much fuss) which we will "talk" about, and sooner or later he will decide that yes he wants to participate the way I want him to, and then he will be good about that hurdle forever. Once he gets something, he gets it. He is a very smart horse that way. He is usually very willing to work. My riding schedule is a Mon, Wed(lesson), Friday, Saturday Schedule, from anywhere between 30-60 minutes of riding. I try to leave a day in between for him to just relax. If we are coming up to a show I will usually ride for shorter periods of time 5 or 6 days a week instead. It really depends on how good he is, and how successful I am at communicating what I want in the ride. On average I will put in, 4-5 hours on the horse, in a month about 20 hours. Before I ride I try to stretch for about 20 minutes before and after a ride, and make sure my muscles are in good shape, because it is hard to be able to help my horse if I am not also in good condition. Then when I get on, I do about 10-20 minutes of stretching in the walk and trot for the horse, then we will start whatever I think we should work on that week. I keep a riding journal with our progress and goals in it as well. It makes it nice and easy to keep track of everything.

Last year in the 07 DW show season (our first with DW) we only did two shows. They were so much fun! We did very well for our first show doing training 1 and 2, and dressage equi(four firsts, one second), and won the championship for our division. In the second show, we also did well we also did training 1 and 2, and dressage equi(four firsts, one second). This year, we have had one show, we were humbled a bit with an embarrassing Dressage Equi class (a fourth!), but came out on top in the end with another championship for that division as well doing training three and four(three firsts, and one second). We plan on doing all the shows this season.

Our goal for this year is very clear to me. We started this season doing Training 3 and 4, we plan on doing the first level test 1 at the next show, and hopefully fully enter into level one by the end of this season. If everything goes as planned Tex and I hope to be part of the Winnipeg dressage team that goes to Alberta in September for the Western Regional Dressage Championships in Red Deer. I also want to create a freestyle first level test for myself, which would be a lot fun as well. Our training is going very well together, and I hope it continues this well, who knows how far we can go? When anyone who used to know Tex as a Misty River school horse sees Tex, they barely even recognize him. He is fatter than he was (you could count 10 ribs at least), he doesn't have the vices he has had (cribbing), and he has developed more muscle than any of us expected since our serious training began. It feels like the sky is the limit at this point in time, but I have no idea how it will go. Hopefully Tex's health with keep up, and we will be able to compete together for the rest of this show season without a hitch.

Because of Tex's older age, I know I would not be able to go as far as I would like with just him. I myself, in my life time want to go as far as a grand prix test one day. Who knows? Maybe Olympics?? hehe. Not terribly likely, but nothing stops me from dreaming. When I started riding Tex I never would have dreamt that I'd actually own him, so if that happened, what else can?

