



Ned Horneffer: 2004 Jonathan Kiser Scholar

By Laurel Scott Duncan

Two years ago, Edward “Ned” Horneffer and Houdini were the force to reckon with in Maryland’s junior field master’s chases. Arch-rivals Willie White and JJ Hansel had been sidelined by injury. “And Remy Winants was my main competition,” says Horneffer, 14, a Reisterstown resident. “But I ended up going to Nationals at Morven Park, and won down there, too, so that was a really successful year.”

Last spring, White and JJ Hansel returned to action. Make no mistake: Horneffer grew up with White and considers the former foxchasing scholarship winner a close friend. “We both go to Gilman School, and were really the only ones who rode or did anything in the country,” says Horneffer. But JJ Hansel proved faster than Houdini, so Horneffer settled for seconds at Green Spring Valley, Elkridge-Harford and the Grand National.

The Thrill, and Surprise, of Victory

Imagine Horneffer’s surprise when, on June 2, he won the Jonathan Kiser Memorial Scholarship. “My mom did a very good job of keeping that a surprise,” he says. “I was told that I was going down there to hang out with Willie, who we thought might win the award. It was just going to be a fun dinner. I couldn’t possibly have dreamed that I would win the Kiser Scholarship. I didn’t win a single race last year, and I didn’t even go in the Pony Hunt Cup.”

Created in memory of the late jump jockey Jonathan Kiser, a national champion who got his start in Maryland, the scholarship honors a junior rider whose sportsmanship and talent “between the flags” are deserving of cultivation.

Horneffer certainly “gets it honest,” as the saying goes. Great-grandfather Stuart S. Janney Jr. was a four-time winner of the grueling Maryland Hunt Cup, while uncle Jack Fisher, the 1994 Hunt Cup winner, is a noted steeplechase trainer with facilities near the Horneffer home.

Almost Born in the Saddle

An avid Green Spring Valley foxhunter like his parents Peter and Barbara, as well as older sister Katie, the younger Horneffer has been riding since he was two. He rose through the local pony club and competed at the national level in the tetrathlon. “That’s where you run, swim, shoot and ride,” he says. “I probably did that for about four or five years, and it was a lot of fun.”

Along the way, Horneffer has been mentored by some of the best. “My uncle Jack has been doing stuff with me,” he says. “He helped me mostly on my form, like keeping my back straight and other very basic things. He’s also been nice enough to let me use his gallops. And Joe (Gillet) Davies really took an interest in me and has been helping me with my riding a lot. He’s actually bought a couple of racehorses and I’ve been going down and helping him at the races all fall.”

Of Horneffer, Davies says, “Ned is a star. He has a great attitude and a strong work ethic.”

An Early Start in Racing

Horneffer’s racing career began at age six, in the pony flat races. But he really hit his stride with Houdini in the field master’s format. This closely mimics the movements of foxhunters in the field. After the final fence, the field master releases his or her charges, resulting in a riotous run for the wire.

“My friend Willie White hosted [field master’s chases] at the Pony Hunt Cup four years ago. That’s where I started that,” Horneffer says, who has participated on his pony Perfect Storm as well as with Houdini. “I always wish they wouldn’t lead us over the jumps and we could race over them, but...”



Ned Horneffer, right, battles his friend and nemesis Willie White to the wire at the Elkridge Harford races last year. (Cappy Jackson photo)

Houdini Worked Magic

Horneffer can’t imagine a better first racehorse than his 15.2-hand Quarter Horse/Thoroughbred gelding Houdini, now 10. Recently Horneffer, now 6’ and 145 pounds, has outgrown this trusty partner, so Houdini has been loaned to another rider. “But he’s been around the countryside for awhile,” Horneffer says. “I think he’s been hunting his entire life, and just been loving it.”

Of course, a good field hunter does not always make a good point-to-pointer. Initially, Horneffer had trouble getting Houdini used to the starts. “He didn’t really understand what was going on, so his first year, I just kind of took him around, and with every race, I saw a great improvement: better starts and faster finishes,” he says. But this last spring, Houdini got a little too keen. “I didn’t go in the last race, because he’d gotten too into it; and I didn’t want to hurt him or do anything to compromise his hunting,” Horneffer says.

Last year’s Grand National race was one of Horneffer’s favorites. “I’ve always liked the field master’s chase at the Grand National a lot,” he says. “It’s always a beautiful day, and it’s a really fun course they have there. Also, everybody shows up there - a lot

The boy came to me, and he couldn’t ride at all! Just amazed me. Heels up, loopy reins. Hopeless! But, he wanted to learn. Wonderful attitude, very willing. And we were hard on him too! He must be a good athlete, because by the end of the week he started to get the idea and was going good. I think he stayed another week... I saw him out hunting, and he looked a little sloppy, so I yelled at him and he straightened right up. Wonderful kid, we enjoyed having him. —Tom Voss recollecting 2004 Kiser Scholar Ned Horneffer

The 2005 Kiser Scholarship Recipient will receive a week’s training with Hall of Fame Trainer Tom Voss at Atlanta Hall Farm in Monkton and tuition to attend the NAPPA Steeplechase Camp.

of my friends from the city come out, and it's just a really festive day altogether."

Extra Credit for the Scholar

Under the terms of the scholarship, Horneffer was entitled to a week working with top trainer Tom Voss at his Monkton facility. He took advantage of this last July, and the eventful week turned into two.

But first he went to trainer J.B. Secor to hone his galloping style. Galloping a field hunter is a little different than galloping a racehorse, and Horneffer wanted to be prepared. "He invited me to take a crash course before [going to] Tom Voss. It wasn't easy. But it was a lot of fun to learn," he says.

Then it was on to Atlanta Hall and Voss's discerning eye. "I really had a lot of fun there. I learned so much. Like how to stop a horse," Horneffer says. "Mr. Voss has this great indoor track, and he put me on Perry Bolton's horse, The Editor's Son, and told me to gallop around the indoor. And it was just basically, 'Figure it out for yourself, he's not going anywhere!'"

The tricks that are second nature to Voss employees Cyril Murphy, Mark Griffiths and Celeste Prouty became valuable pointers for Horneffer. "And I got on Charlie Whiskey and Teb's Bend," he says. "I learned to stand on him. I think [Mr. Voss] was trying to make him into a hunter or something, because I went out to the field and stood while everybody galloped around."

One of the most important lessons came from Voss himself. "It had rained a lot one morning, and he told us not to go on the inside of his outdoor track because it was muddy," Horneffer says. "And I did, and there were footprints in it. He was driving

around and he saw those, and that pretty much taught me to listen to what he said VERY carefully!"

Hunt Cup in His Future?

Horneffer is a natural athlete with interests other than horses. As accomplished at tennis as he is at riding, he has recently taken up squash, too. "We actually have a great squash team at Gilman. I'm the number two seed on the junior varsity," he says. "My dad wanted to get me into sports that I could pretty much do my whole life."

But nothing gets his heart pounding like steeplechasing. "It's so much fun. There's so much going on, and so much that goes into it," he says. "You can't collide with anyone over the jumps; you have to keep your distance - things like that."

"I'm thinking of going away to boarding school next year, but I'd definitely like to continue my riding after that," he adds. "And if I could make it back in the spring, I could do even more. I don't have another horse now, but there are people I could call."

Given his size, Horneffer admits that his options are limited. But he's still the perfect candidate for amateur timber races in his family's great tradition. "It's always been a goal of mine to ride in the Maryland Hunt Cup," he says. And what more appropriate dream could there possibly be for a Kiser Scholar?

"He definitely needs more quality supervised time in the saddle before Hunt Cup discussions get too far," says mentor Joe Davies. "But with dedication and the right horse, he has a great shot at the Hunt Cup or anything else he chooses." ■

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