

Cosequin Presents OTTB Showcase: A Pair of High Fliers

by [Jen Roytz](#)
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Natalie hopes to compete on General in the Mini Grand Prix in a few weeks

High school senior Natalie Cowan is a bonafide track star. Known for her accomplishments in the high jump, she holds school records in both indoor and outdoor events, was runner-up for best high jumper last year in South Jersey, and this year she's striving to qualify for nationals.

While Natalie's on-track accomplishments will hopefully land her a college scholarship, the feats she has accomplished with her off-the-track Thoroughbred are equally impressive.

"I specialize in the high jump, but I also compete regularly in hurdles and sprinting events," said Natalie. "Whether you are jumping on four legs or your own two, there are similarities, like strides, leads, and distances. I've actually jumped the same height in high jump as I have on -G."

"-G" stands for -General, or -General Forrest, as he was known on the track. The handsome chestnut gelding changed hands several times both in and out of the sales ring but didn't actually make his first start until May of his 3-year-old year at Charles Town in West Virginia.

"From what I can tell from G's paperwork, he wasn't on the track for very long, with only a handful of starts, one win, and less than \$10,000 in earnings," said Natalie.

General ran his entire career in West Virginia for owner Nancy Terhune and won the final start of his 3-year-old year. Nancy, an equestrian and longtime supporter of responsible racehorse retirement, decided the gelding would be best served in a career other than racing and offered him via the CANTER website.

Nancy explained in one post on CANTER's blog that the chestnut gelding was sore and void of all confidence when she got him as a 2-year-old. She gave him a year of turnout and

rehabilitation before she felt he was ready to race. That continuous approach probably made the difference in General's life down the road.

According to blog entries on the CANTER website, General was adopted by a family with two young girls, both of whom used him for lessons and shows focusing on low level hunter classes. The CANTER blogs detail how much time it took for General to gain confidence over fences, but once he did, he evolved into the perfect Pony Club mount.

Eventually the family put him up for sale, and as luck would have it, his current owner, Natalie, came across his photos on the Internet.

"I saw his ad online and immediately went to look at him because he was from a small farm in my town that was close by," said Natalie. "We went to visit him a few times, and I fell in love with his amazing jumping abilities."

Having ridden since the age of six, Natalie decided General was the right horse for her, but before she could pick him up, Hurricane Sandy hit and delayed his departure to his new home by a week.



With help from a local farm, General finally put on the weight he lost following the storm

The hurricane took a toll on General, and when he arrived to Natalie, he weighed significantly less than when she had first seen him.

"I figured he needed some groceries and he'd be fine, but it turned out to be a year before he was healthy again," explained Natalie. "During that time we probably tried every feed at my local feed store and G had ten acres of planted pasture all to himself, but he just wasn't gaining weight."

Natalie set out to do some research, and her quest for information led her to a local Thoroughbred farm owned by the Sleeter family. The Sleeters have been involved with East Coast racing for decades and were happy to help the teenager and her troubled horse.

“They gave me the tools and advice I needed to help get G back on his feet,” Natalie said. “I found out that G had gastrointestinal ulcers and a very delicate digestive system. I started G on the treatment provided to me by the Sletters and spent hours formulating a special diet tailored to his needs.”

Within a week, General was on the road to health, and within six months he looked like a completely different horse. During the time he was recovering, Natalie was working at a local barn to earn money she could later use for lessons and shows.



Catching snowflakes: Natalie and General goof off together

Since General has regained his health, the pair have been making quick progress. They’ve worked on their jumping and dressage, schooled cross country, and are currently schooling Level 5 jumper courses (a height classification from the U. S. Equestrian Federation in which fences can be up to 4 feet in height and up to 4 feet, 6 inches wide). At their next show in several weeks, Natalie hopes to compete on General in the Mini Grand Prix.

With college on the horizon, Natalie is already working on figuring out how she will balance horses and collegiate athletics. While she hopes to earn a varsity spot on her college’s track and field team, she ideally would also like to keep riding and competing with General.

“My ultimate goal is to compete in a recognized event with him before I go off to college, then take him to college with me and pursue a spot on the college’s riding team,” said Natalie. “G and I get along because our jumping is like no other. Our personalities are similar and we aren’t afraid to correct each other when something goes wrong. Challenges are always welcomed, and we take life with one goofy and one serious stride at a time.”

THE DEETS:

Name: General Forrest (a.k.a. “General” or “G”)

Born: March 1, 2003

Color: Chestnut

Sire: Forestry

Dam: Hansea

Sale History: Sold at KEENOV in 2003 as a weanling for \$40,000; RNAed at KEESEP in 2004 as a yearling for \$27,000; RNAed at FTMMAY as a 2YO for \$11,000

Race Record: 6-1-0-1

Race Earnings: \$8,400

If you have or know of a retired Thoroughbred with an interesting story to tell, we'd love to hear about it! Just email Jen Roytz (Jenlroytz@gmail.com) with the horse's Jockey Club name, background story, and a few photos.

Jen Roytz is a freelance writer and marketing and public relations consultant for various entities, both equine and non-equine. She can also still be found on the back of an OTTB most days.

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