

ABOUT THE COVERS

2024 turned out to be an extraordinary year for the Schnebel sisters. They set their sights and focus on the elite Champion of Champions League long before setting their New Year's resolutions, working hard to achieve their goals and priding their parents and coaches.

As little girls growing up, they dreamed of winning the prestigious title of Champion of Champions and representing South Africa in the 'Green & Gold'.

By the time they matured as equestrians, coaches paired them with horses that complimented their weaknesses and challenged their horsemanship skills. Winning was never the mainstream goal, it was an addictive additive after spending hours perfecting their seat, their skill, their horsemanship and their ringmanship.



Marion



Megan

Patience, persistence and perseverance were key points to their development and success. Hours were spent in the saddle on a variety of horses, the lesson horses being the most valuable of them all.

We asked Marion how it felt to always be in competition with her sister, she responded: "healthy competition always keeps athletes on their toes. We have always been very close and never saw each other as competitors but rather used our sisterhood to stimulate, challenge and encourage one another".

Megan was asked to share their training regime with us: "Once we had set our goals, Enid provided us with a training programme to improve our performance. We were given a fitness program to enhance both our track and aerobic abilities. We were expected to commit to daily training of a minimum of 5 days a week, this was mostly on lesson horses. We were taught how to focus, visualise and covered some basic skills on sport psychology together with breathing techniques and centring exercises.

We had to eat, sleep and execute life like we were already champions. We were taught emotional control, physical control and learned to apply our full selves to every lesson. She kicked us off our pedestals and taught us all about work ethic and commitment, it was tough, but I would do it again in a heartbeat!".

We asked Marion what her biggest challenge was, she replied: "teaming up with a new partner, Show Me Day Star. Trusting her to execute complex patterns not knowing her every move and mood quite as well as I would have liked, was daunting! She delivered day after day and never put a foot wrong. In hindsight, she was incredible!"



Marion



Megan told us about her partner Ventana Star Dance: "Miss complexity herself! She is probably one of the best schooled horses. She feels my every move, my slightest weight shift and I am sure she can even read my mind. She is a little ball of fire, disciplined and smart, one wrong cue and I could end up looking like a clown. She has taught me a lot on how to ride light and quiet."

Marion shared her victory lap with us: "There are no words to describe it! A million thoughts running through my mind and tears of joy from completing my equitation career with a dream come true. I felt so much love towards my family for always supporting me. Also, very grateful towards Enid, Surika and Thinus for pushing and supporting me right to the very end. A feeling of happiness that I had never felt before."

I felt fulfilled, racking down that straight on my final victory pass, on my favourite horse with the sash draped around her neck. A moment I will treasure forever!

We asked Megan to share her final test moments with us: "Enid's favourite words were - do it again, again and again - She is difficult to please and sets high standards for us, now I can truly comprehend why!"

I had butterflies while entering the arena, just enough to keep me focused. I was talking myself through my pattern and feeling how I would execute every segment and every cue. Remember to push, not pull, move intentionally, plan & deliver.

Somewhere between entering the gate & the first segment, I felt it all fall into place, I stopped overthinking and just executed. Star Dance was brilliant, she responded to every little cue perfectly! I was so excited, every segment got better and better, it felt like it was over in a heartbeat.



We have a little stable thing, if we deliver a brilliant test, we are allowed to nod a small salute just before exiting the arena, my heart nearly popped out of my chest when Enid gave me the 'nod'. It was one of my best performances ever, now I relive that moment over & over again."

About their coach

Enid Norton is a formidable presence in the equestrian world, particularly renowned for her expertise in saddle seat equitation. Her profound impact on the sport is evident not only through her own accomplishments but also through the numerous riders she has coached to prestigious titles, including Protea and Champion of Champions honours.

In 2024, her prowess was on full display as she coached the Schnebel sisters to victory in both the three-gaited and five-gaited Champion of Champions titles, further more in the three-gaited division her riders placed second, third and fifth.