

Homemade Horse

Shannon Jett was a busy mom with a one-year old and a two-year old child when she decided to get her current show horse, Irresistible Magic A.D.++++// or "Stella". Many of us would take our hats off to a young mom who committed herself to owning and showing a horse, but Shannon bought an unbroke, opinionated, seven-year old mare! When she brought home her Arabian/Trakehner cross in 2014, more than a few people told Shannon she might be crazy. As she says now, ignorance is bliss; she didn't fully fathom the challenge she had taken on. However, Shannon says she wouldn't change a thing.

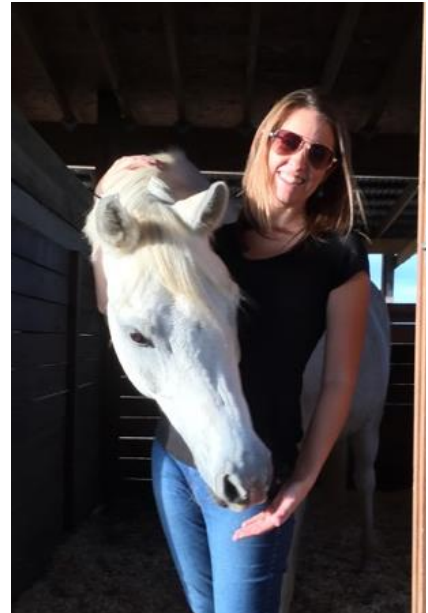
Shannon did have some experience working with young horses, having worked as a rider and instructor at Talaria Farms in her twenties. She found that, with her kids always back of mind, she was more cautious with a green horse now. Compounding that, Stella was a tough horse: an alpha mare who had reached maturity with very little training or boundaries. Progress was slow, and not always easy. There were hard days, many frustrating rides, and plenty of struggles. Through it all, Shannon maintained the attitude that there was always tomorrow, and that there was no timeline.

Shannon discovered that with relaxed expectations, she actually enjoyed the process a lot, and found riding more fun than she had in the past. Because she was doing all the training, when Stella did learn something new, Shannon found so much joy and pride in her horse and their teamwork.

Shannon kept Stella at home, and the pair only had a grass field to school in, and trails to explore. Shannon credits this also with helping bring more fun into her training process, as well as making her horse more fit and versatile.

With her good conformation, Stella was well suited to a variety of disciplines, and Shannon has tried quite a few already. Stella's first Arabian Horse Association (AHA) show experience was in Sport Horse in Hand and Sport Horse Under Saddle, where she excelled, earning 2017 Reserve National Champion Sport Horse Under Saddle AOTR. Next, Shannon made the transition to Hunter Under Saddle, and then started her lightly over fences with the goal to compete in the Hunter Over Fences division. At this point, the team hit a roadblock: flying lead changes.

In the hunter ring, a horse must have a flying lead change, and Stella just couldn't grasp the concept. Stella was a very balanced mare and didn't find any discomfort in counter cantering; she just didn't understand the logic of changing leads! Shannon found this was a roadblock she couldn't navigate alone, so she enlisted the help of Dawn Hersey, at Three Bears Farm. Dawn refused to take over the ride on Stella; she insisted that she could teach *Shannon* how to teach *Stella* lead changes. It took a year and a half of carefully picking away at it, making incremental progress, to "explain" to Stella what was expected. With a lot of coaching from Dawn, and a lot



of dedication from Shannon, the lead changes got better, and Stella and Shannon added Hunter Over Fences wins to their list of accomplishments. In 2019, Stella was National Champion Green Working Hunter Over Fences!



With the versatility typical of our Arabian crosses, Stella's next adventure was dressage. Shannon had never ridden dressage before and had no trainer, so she turned to books and YouTube! In 2019, Shannon and Stella entered their first AHA dressage show at Training Level, and won both their classes. She won her division in Region 13 and was in the top 10 in Arabian and Half-Arabian Nationals as well.

Shannon has some advice for riders thinking of taking on their horse's training: do it! "It is so rewarding, and the wins are so much sweeter on a horse you made yourself. In those good rides, you feel all the hard work you put into it. Find help when you need it from knowledgeable professionals and from friends who support you on your journey. You will be a better rider, and have a better relationship with your horse."

Shannon Jett lives in Rome, GA with her husband, two children, and four Arabian or part-Arabian horses and has been a GAHA member since 2015.



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