

Frisco & Olivia

I have been an avid equestrian since I was five years old. I've gone through my share of ponies and horses, and I created a bond with each one of them. It wasn't until I met Frisco, however, that I found my soulmate. In the summer before eighth grade, I started browsing the horse world in search of a horse big enough to fit my 6'4" self and brave enough to take me to the 3'6" equitation and Junior hunters. My trainer at the time, Melissa Jones Sarle, was close friends with a woman named Ali Shackelford and she had informed her of a horse that she thought might work for me. Melissa, myself, and my mom went to Hidden Hill, which is where Ali was located. She began talking about Frisco and how he was her pride and joy—18 hands tall and completely willing to do anything you asked of him. He was only 6 years old when I was introduced to him and had already accomplished so much. As soon as he was brought into the barn aisle, I was attached. He had the cutest expression on his face and had big puppy dog eyes. He was a dark shade of chestnut and his coat was so shiny. I got on and was taken to the indoor ring to see what such a huge horse would ride like. It was cool because he had a pelham on and I had never ridden in one, so I was able to learn how. I fit him perfectly. His big, fat stomach took up my leg and he had enough neck for my upper body and arms. His ears stayed to the side the whole time, listening to every single command that I issued. He had such a great, lopey rhythm and I literally made it around the ring in less than 15 strides. I jumped a simple crossrail to start out with and ended up jumping closer to 3'6" and he jumped it the same way. When it was over, I didn't want to leave. He was so patient with me and had already taught me so much. I don't tend to show emotion very outwardly but on the car ride home, I could not stop talking about how cool Frisco was. My mom knew she had no chance. I tried another horse named Ace at different barn who I ended up falling off of, fracturing my skull. I was not allowed to be on a horse for 3 months, and it absolutely tore me apart. I was so stressed about starting high school and getting better but I never forgot Frisco. When I finally was allowed to go back to the barn, Melissa told me to go to the first stall because she was letting me ride her new horse. I rounded the corner and on the stall was a poster saying "Congrats

Olivia and Frisco” and Frisco was standing in the stall with his head poking out, practically smiling at me. I was in shock. How could my mom have vetted him and not given anything up? I had never felt happier. As I gradually started getting back in shape for riding, I started getting used to Frisco’s ride. We bonded so quickly and I never wanted to leave the barn. Frisco and I started off in Pre-Children’s for a show, moved up to Children’s 14&U for a while, and then eventually moved up to the 3’6 eq. I have won countless blue ribbons with him and qualified for several national medal finals, such as the T.H.I.S. Children’s Medal Finals, the USEF Pessoa Hunt Seat Medal finals, and the EJ Haun Memorial Medal Finals. He made my equitation years so thrilling. It never failed—every medal that I competed in, I was in the top four. When he walked into the ring, he knew it was show time. He listened to only me and zoned out everything else. I competed against so many well-known and talented equitation riders and held my own. My equitation grew so much and it was because of him. He taught me how to hold the counter canter, how to stay with him over the jumps, and how to relax my wrists and elbows. I ended up Champion in the 15-17 equitation for NCHJA year-round, which was fantastic. I moved Frisco to Southern Pines to ride with Don Sheehan after my third year of owning him. As soon as I got there, Don knew Frisco had the potential to do something other than eq. We decided to try the Older Large Juniors out. Frisco is an eq horse and his jump and movement developed tremendously with Don helping us. We lost the pelham and eventually showed in just a snaffle. We traveled to Blowing Rock where I was Reserve Champion both weeks and got to compete in the Challenge of Champions, where I placed 5th in front of professional trainers and nice hunter horses. Frisco was perfect. He always is. He is the bravest, kindest, smartest horse I’ve ever known. He doesn’t blink an eye at any jump—he’ll jump the Liverpool and a huge Swedish oxer. I started competing in the national hunter derbies, and placed towards the top of the pack. He absolutely loves jumping logs and other natural elements. Frisco adores his job. He always will. I just received a ribbon from USEF saying that he placed 4th in points for the derby, which made my jaw drop. He went from faking the hunters, to winning the equitation, and then being competitive in the hunters and derbies. I’m currently a sophomore at UNC-Wilmington and Frisco is being leased out to a girl that is trying to earn an NCAA scholarship. He has taken her to the 3’6 level just like he took me. I miss him every single day. If I

could have him at Wilmington, I would. I know that when we are reunited, it'll feel like no time has passed. Frisco is my world, heart, and soul. He has taught me how to be responsible, patient, trusting, determined, and so much more. I brought him along in his green years and he proved to be such an amazing horse. I've owned Frisco for 6 years now and I wouldn't change it for the world. He makes my heart full. He makes me feel like the luckiest girl in the world. He is my other half. He understands me like no other and always knows how to cheer me up. As soon as his lease is up, I'll be waiting with five boxes of oat and honey bars and way too many peppermints. He is my forever horse. I can not thank Ali enough for bringing such a wonderful horse into my life. I love him more than I ever thought I could love anything and I'm so excited to see what we accomplish in the future.





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