

Amateurs Like Us: Breanne Palmerini Makes It Work At The Barn And In Front Of The Television Camera

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Breanne Palmerini and Dread Pirate Robby. Photo courtesy of Breanne Palmerini

People think horse shows involve getting up early, but Breanne Palmerini knows the true meaning of starting before dawn. When she was a morning anchor and early morning reporter for a television station in Tulsa, she had to get up at 2 a.m. to get to work, then ride afterward.

A “horse crazy little girl from a Jersey City family who did *not* understand where I got this strange obsession,” Palmerini said. She got her first horse for Christmas when she was 11 and the family had just moved to Missouri. “My parents are not horsey people but said, ‘Whatever, she loves it, we’ll support it.’”

Palmerini is now living in Detroit working at WXYZ-TV doing “crazy hours and wacky schedules” in a Sunday night anchor position as well as the night shift Monday through Thursday, reporting for the station’s 10 and 11 p.m. shows. She moved to Michigan with Dread Pirate Robby, her 10-year-old off-the-track Thoroughbred, whose face she hugs in the profile

picture of her news personality Facebook page.



“Having an OTTB is such a cool feeling,” she said of having taken “Robby” from right off the track to where he is now as a competition horse. Together they’ve progressed up the levels of eventing to training level.

Robby is Palmerini’s first horse in her adult life, and it took her some time to get back into horse ownership. Like many juniors, she had to sell her childhood horse before going to college. “I still rode occasionally but not competitively. In college, I went to the University of Missouri and got credit hours for riding at the neighboring Stephens College,” she said.

As driven to ride as she is to succeed in her career as a journalist, Palmerini moved several times to TV stations in Illinois and Iowa, but she still found ways to ride. She landed in Tulsa for seven years, where her work with KJRH news won her an Emmy for a piece on bullying. In her Tulsa years, she also trained with Meighan Ferguson of Airborne Stables. There she could indulge her passion for eventing, and after sometimes “eating dirt” on other people’s horses, she was able to afford her own. In 2013, she bought Robby off the track.

Racing as Captnrobby's Appeal, the grey gelding ran 14 times from 2009 to 2012, earning \$16,672. His last race was November of 2012, according to Equibase, and by March of 2013 he was Palmerini’s new event prospect. By that fall Robby and Palmerini were finishing in the ribbons at his first novice event.



Breanne Palmerini and Dread Pirate Robby competing. Photo by Terrie Hatcher

Palmerini is still in contact with Robby's old owner and his racing trainer and gives updates on his successes.

Their first year showing, Robby, aka Dread Pirate Robby, and Breanne were high point novice champions in the Oklahoma Combined Training Association, and she won the area's adult rider scholarship. They moved up to training level in 2014, and Palmerini has goals of continuing to move up. Of eventing's three phases, "stadium is where we have a tough time," she said.

Moving from Oklahoma to Detroit in 2015, with a commute to the barn that can be an hour or more, and going through a divorce slowed down Palmerini and Robby's show schedule for a time, but it hasn't slowed Palmerini's goals. Her last show was at the Texas Rose Horse Park in March 2015, before she left Tulsa. She's shooting for a full season at training level this year—starting off with a novice event to get their feet wet—then preliminary in 2017.



Breanne Palmerini has had to take some time off from competing but hopes to be back out on course this spring with Dread Pirate Robby. Photo by Terrie Hatcher

In the end, the move to the Motor City was a win-win as Detroit is a "great place for television news," and "the eventing scene is great here," Palmerini said.

Palmerini now boards Robby at Steppin' Up Farm close to Ann Arbor and takes lessons with Brittany Weber, a U.S. Pony Club H-A grad and advanced competitor. Palmerini was able to use her adult rider scholarship in Michigan and take a clinic with Ellen Doughty-Hume, who competed at the Rolex Kentucky CCI**** in 2015.

Though she hasn't been able get out to her new barn—which she found through the *Chronicle's* message boards—as often as she'd like, "They understand having a working life." And she added, with a full work-life and a long commute to the barn, "It's important to have a barn where you can trust people.

"My job is crazy," she said, "my schedule is crazy," but having Robby is "what makes it worth it—even when not competing and riding at the upper levels, which I have a dream of doing."

Palmerini added, "We do it, and we make it work."