

Rodney Jenkins

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Rodney Jenkins, has been inducted into both the National Show Hunter Hall of Fame and the Show Jumping Hall of Fame in 1999.

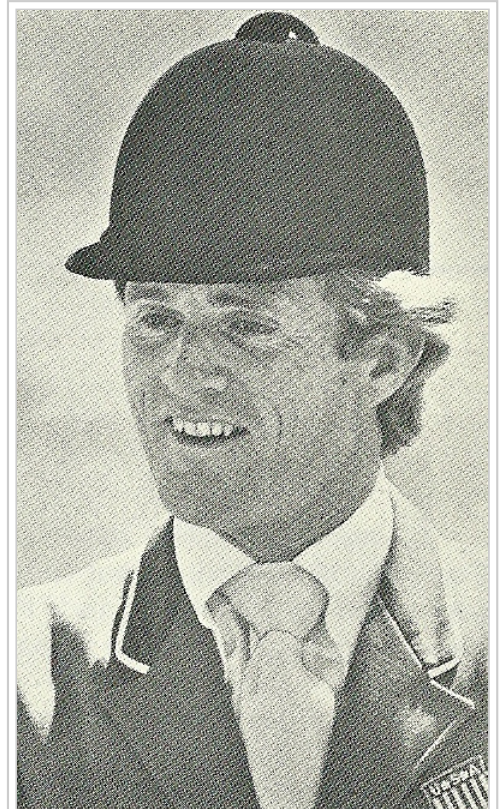
He rode competitively from the early 1960s to the late 1980s, and after retiring from the show ring became a TB racehorse trainer.

[1][2]

Jenkins was given the nickname "the red rider" because of his red hair.^[3]

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Rodney Jenkins: first professional to represent the USET (United States Equestrian Team).

Personal

Jenkins was born on July 3, 1944 in Middleburg, Virginia while his parents were living at Crompton Smith's Featherbed Farm.

His father was the huntsman for a private pack in Orange, Va., and then huntsman for the (now-defunct) Rapidan Hunt,^{[4][5]} before purchasing Hill Top Stables.

Early life

Jenkins graduated from high school in 1961 and was hired to ride in horse shows up and down the East Coast, including Florida winter circuit when it was just beginning.^[6]

After three years, Jenkins returned to his family's farm in Orange, Virginia, working in the family business, Hill Top Stables (HTS), which trained foxhunters and show horses.

From the early 1960s to the late 1980s, Jenkins competed in both the show hunter and show jumper divisions.

Professional career

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Jenkins dominated the top horse shows. In 1967, he won four out of the six hunter-jumper champions at The Garden to set a record. In the American Horse shows Association (AHSA) "Horse of the Year" awards that year, Jenkins rode winners in five of the six divisions in which he competed. At the venerable Sedgefield Horse Show in 1968, Jenkins won 13 classes in a single day. On the Detroit Circuit in 1968 (Detroit & Motor City) Jenkins won 90 of the 92 classes in which he competed.

During the 1971 Pennsylvania National Horse Show, Jenkins rode the champion in the First Year Green Hunter Division, the Second Year Green Hunter Division, the Green Conformation Hunter Division, the Working Hunter Division, was Reserve Champion in the Open Jumper Division and was leading Open Jumper rider. Moreover, at a typical horse show it was not unusual for Jenkins to ride 40-50 horses and jump thousands of fences. At the Devon Horse Show in 1968, he jumped approximately 3200 fences.

The horse he is most famous for riding was the ex-race horse Idle Dice ("Ike" or "Oakie"). Of Jenkins's over 70 grand prix wins, 30 were won on Ike. They are the only combination to win the prestigious President's Cup twice and they won it in consecutive years (1970-1971). They also won the American Gold Cup three years in a row (1973-1975). Jenkins sold the first \$1 million grand prix jumper, The Natural, who won the 1985 American Gold Cup with Jenkins and The World Cup in 1987 with Katherine Burdsall.

International career

Jenkins' first big international win was The Presidents Cup in 1970. He confronted future World Champion, West German Hartwig Steenken and his great mare Simona in the jump-off. Steenken went first and delivered what many spectators thought was an unbeatable clear round. Jenkins went last with Idle Dice and beat Simona's time by an incredible five seconds!

Jenkins' professional status prevented him from riding in the Pan American or Olympic Games. However, in the early 1970s professionals were allowed to ride in international team classes. In 1973 Jenkins was selected to represent the USET at the fall indoor circuit (Harrisburg, Washington, New York and Toronto) with Idle Dice and Balbuco. Bert de Nemethy, the USET coach said "...adding Idle Dice to a show jumping string is like adding Secretariat to a racing stable..".

Of the 38 international classes held on the fall indoor circuit between 1973-1975, Jenkins and his mounts won 24; furthermore, in 1975 of the 16 international classes on the Fall Indoor Circuit, Jenkins won 12 classes with his mounts, Idle Dice and Number One Spy. Over the next decade, Jenkins competed on 14 Nations Cup Teams and 10 of those teams were winners.

Jenkins was 8th with Idle Dice in the Mens World Jumping Championships held at Hickstead in 1974. In 1980 he was 6th in the World Cup with Third Man. In 1987, he was 24th with Playback in the World Cup in Paris that was won by his former mount, The Natural ridden by Katherine Burdsall.

Pan American Games

After the 1980 Olympics, the International Olympic Committee asked its member federations to determine if the "amateurs-only" rule was negatively affecting their sport and if necessary to change the rule. In late 1986, the FEI responded and gave professionals a chance to apply for "competitor" status to compete in the Olympics and the Pan American Games. Jenkins applied and was approved while the final selection trials for the Pan American Games were in progress.

The 1987 Pan American Games were held in Indianapolis. In the individual competition, Jenkins rode the somewhat inexperienced Czar and finished a close second to Ian Millar aboard the legendary Big Ben. The US show jumping team won the silver medal with the Canadian Team taking the gold. Regarding his Pan American medals, Jenkins said: "All the money I've won with horses, these two pieces of silver mean as much as all the money."

Professional Accomplishments and Awards

Jenkins is credited with over 70 wins (approximately 300 seconds). Although some current grand prix riders have more wins, few can match the quality of the classes he won, his consistency or his longevity.

He has won a record five American Gold Cups, four of them in consecutive years (1972-1975), winning his last Gold Cup with The Natural in 1985. Harry Gill, the other key member of this team, was inducted into the SJHOF in 2002. It took Jenkins several tries to win his first Gold Cup, placing second with Idle Dice in 1970 (in Cleveland) and 1971 (in Tampa). Balbuco gave him his first win in 1972 with Brendan second and Idle Dice third. In the 1974 and 1975 Gold Cups (held at JFK stadium) Jenkins was the winner with Idle Dice and placed second with Number One Spy.

Jenkins has two wins in the American Invitational and won The Presidents Cup four times (1970,1971,1976,1983). He has multiple wins at Oak Brook, Cleveland, Ox Ridge, Upperville, Detroit, Florida, The Hampton Classic and won the Grand Prix of New York three times. This does not count the other horses he rode in the big classes where he often rode the winner as well as horses that were second, third or fourth.

He was the leading open jumper rider at the Devon Horse Show six consecutive years (1969-1975). At the Garden, the Leading Open Jumper Rider Trophy was initially offered in 1969, Jenkins retired it in 1971. Jenkins won it again in 1974 and was Leading International Rider at The Garden in 1975 and 1981. He has also been the leading open jumper rider and leading international rider on numerous occasions at Harrisburg, Washington and Toronto.

In 1987, at the age of 43, Jenkins had one of his best years. At one point in the year, between the end of May and early July, Jenkins won five grands prix in a row with three different horses. He ended the year as the AGA Rider of The Year and one of his mounts, Playback, was on top of the AHSA/Insilco Open Jumper standings with over \$100,000 in prize money.

At year's end AHSA members voted Jenkins Horseman of the Year for the first time. Additionally, Jenkins was named the first Chronicle Horseman of the Year partly because of his 1987 achievements and partly in recognition of his lifetime achievements. He was inducted into the Show Jumping Hall of Fame in 1999, 12 years after his partner Idle Dice who was the first horse inducted. He is also a member of the National Show Hunter Hall of Fame. The one award he is missing is the USEF Lifetime Achievement Award .

Selected Owners and Mounts

Owners

Jenkins rode for such owners as General George S. Patton's niece and sarsaparilla heiress, Theodora Ayer Randolph (Mrs. A.C. Randolph) of Middleburg, Va.; Patrick Butler, co-founder of Hazelden and Butler Brothers mining and construction; Peggy Steinman, of Steinman Enterprises, Lancaster, Pa and Harry Gill of Gill Quarries, Collegetown, Pa. with whom he had a two and a half decade partnership.

Show Hunters

The notable show hunters Jenkins rode includes: Let's Dance, Bronze Star, Golden Autumn, Army Wife, Sky Ghost, Not Always, Dunraven, Country Combo, Riot Free, Touch The Sun, Quiet Flite, Lord Sutler, Another March, San Felipe, Public Affair, Automation, There'll Be Times, Rapid Rise, Market Rise, Super Flash, Spindletop Showdown, George Weber and Clouseau.

Show Jumpers

Jenkins rode the following famous show jumpers: Blue Plumb, Sure Thing, Gustavus, Nanticoke, Blow Up, Gang War, In My Cap, That's Right, Southside, Katmandu, H.O. Sloopy, Balbuco, Main Spring, Brendan, Number One Spy, Viscount, Mr. Demeanor, The Natural, Aerobic, Box Car Willie, Playback, Gusty Monroe, Third Man, Second Balcony, Sugar Ray, Coastline, Heisman, Czar and the legendary Idle Dice. WHAT ABOUT "ICY PAWS" ? AND ANTAR?

Racing career

In 1989 Jenkins announced his decision to retire from the show ring. Since then he has focused on training race horses. At first he trained steeplechasers but currently his public stable, run out of Laurel Park, has only flat horses. He has about 40 horses in training at Barn 9 and another 30 horses-youngsters and lay-ups, at Montpelier under the care of his son Patrick.

For Further Reading

- From Show Ring To Race Track: Rodney Jenkins and Michael Matz Weigh In (<http://www.chronofhorse.com/article/show-ring-race-track-rodney-jenkins-and-michael-matz-weigh>)
- George reviews historic hunters (<http://www.chronofhorse.com/George-reviews-historic-hunters>)
- Ref Ride: Profile of Rodney Jenkins (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AVcpqiiDRr8>) on YouTube
- Rodney Jenkins 1980 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kLXB1C0IUzE>) on YouTube
- Show Jumping Hall of Fame (<http://showjumpinghalloffame.net/>)
- National Show Hunter Hall of Fame (<http://nationalshowhunterhalloffame.com/>)
- Equestrian Life: Rodney Jenkins (http://www.equestrianlife.com/mw/Rodney_Jenkins)

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