

Dana Wetherell

Hey guys, and welcome back to the right podcast. I'm Michaela and I'm Nicole. And this week we are sitting down with Dana weather and Dana is actually Nicole's best friend. So I'll actually let Nicole talk a little bit more about Dana because Dana was a lot of fun to talk to, but, and I want to be her best friend.

So Nicole is pretty lucky to have her as a best friend. She seems awesome. Yeah. So Dana has a really interesting story, which is why I thought she would be perfect for this podcast. She's a non-pro rider. She competes, um, she does the NRA chain now, but she grew up competing on the AQH circuit. We did the all-around events together.

That's how we became friends. And I actually moved in with her and her husband when West, um, when I was 18, I moved to Oklahoma. You know, to go to Oklahoma state, um, for university. And they took me in under their wing because I had nowhere to go. Um, my family had sold my horses back home. I really didn't want to go home and not have any horses to show or to ride.

And they just, they were like, Hey, just come move in with us. You can ride whatever we have in the barn, you know, and Wes was a huge mentor to me, but, um, the thing that makes Dana's story really interesting is that she got sick a few years after I moved in. I want to say like maybe a year or two, um, And she got so sick to the point to where she couldn't walk to the bathroom.

She couldn't wash her own hair. I mean, she couldn't, you know, she, she absolutely could not, you know, cook or clean or do anything that she would have normally done in her, you know, in her life. And so. That was a really huge deal. And they, you know, the doctors told her that she was never going to ride again.

They said that it was going to be a miracle. If she could, you know, lift anything other than five pounds, she would need assistance walking for the rest of her life. And mind you, she was, um, In her late thirties when she got this diagnosis. So that's not that old I'm, you know, I'm in my thirties right now.

And I couldn't imagine my whole life changing because of something like that. Cause I like to think that I'm still pretty young and healthy. Um, So, yeah, she's just, I think it's a really inspiring story for people who might be struggling with medical issues or, you know, their own auto-immune disease, which is what Dana has.

Um, and you know, I think, uh, I think she has a lot of great advice for how to battle. Um, disease and, um, be able to do the things you love. And then we also we'll touch a little bit on her recent NRHH career and she's having so much fun learning that, that, yeah. Yeah. I think this is the ultimate episode to go out for Thanksgiving week because she's so thankful to have her health and she really emphasizes, you know, Somebody always has it worse than you have it.

So you should appreciate what you do have. So, I mean, Thanksgiving week is the best time to launch this episode because it's heartwarming and it makes you thankful for what you have, because I'm not sick by any means, but you know, listening to Dana talk, I was able to appreciate what I do have and appreciate the health that I have.

Yeah. Yeah. You're so right. I didn't even think about the fact that. You know, Thanksgiving is this week. Um, and you're so right. It's the perfect Thanksgiving episode, because it really makes you realize how thankful you should be for your health and for your support team. Because Dana is the first one to admit that she could have never gotten healthy without the support of her friends and family who, you know, whether it was finding her, her doctor in California or like me, where I was having to carry her into hospitals because she couldn't walk.

Um, you know, it was. Uh, you're you're right. It's a huge thankful it's it's a huge Thanksgiving episode for sure. You're you really figure out you're thankful for yeah. And kind of spinning off of the Thanksgiving, our sister podcast, the ask any podcast that is hosted on horse and rider. And beyond the saddle podcast, which is also a part of the equine network, teamed up to do a give thanks episode for their podcast.

And they reached out to quite a few people and everybody just gives little snippets of what they are thankful for. So we encourage you guys to go and listen to that episode so you can hear what everybody is thankful for. There's everything from thinking somebody's first pony to thinking their husband, to thinking.

Horse trainers. I know one of my friends, my best friend actually shared her. Thanks for a trainer of hers that had passed away. And anytime she talks about her trainer, I, I can cry because she had such a special relationship. So it's just that time of year where you just want to give thanks to everybody who makes it possible to do what you do with your horses.

And especially in 2020, because 2020 has been rough. So being able to have horses in 2020. Brings a lot of light to a lot of us. I know myself for sure. Yeah. And you should, like Mikayla said, the ask Annie podcast is hosted on our website, so you should be able to find it on horse and rider.com or you can search for it wherever you guys listen to podcasts.

Um, but yeah, it's, it's a great episode. And I think Annie and Katie have done something like that in the past where they've taken little snippets of people leaving them messages and it was really cool. So I have no doubt that this one's just as cool. And yeah, it's just really nice to hear how appreciative people are.

And like you said, 2020 has been a really rough year for a lot of people. You know, myself included. My mom is a nurse and she lives out of state and I probably won't get to see her for the holidays because she is working nonstop in the hospital and, you know, it's just not safe for people to travel and, you know, she just doesn't feel safe traveling right now.

So, um, you know, I don't get to see my family this year and it's. You know, it's not, it's not fun, but yeah, it just reminds you that you gotta be thankful for everybody that you have with you. Yeah. So happy Thanksgiving week, everybody. And. With that we only have one more episode of this season following this episode of the ride podcast.

So we will be taking a break for the holidays and we will be resuming in February. So we have one more episode following this with Dr. Barb crab, which is a very fun and informative episode that Nicole and I are very excited to share with you guys. Yeah. And, um, like Mikayla said, we're going to take off a little time to enjoy our holidays, catch up on some stuff.

Um, we have a lot of cool things coming through, uh, horse and rider, whether it's the website, uh, the magazine, you know, we're, we're kicking off the 20, 21 edit calendars. So I'm really excited to bring you guys that, um, Mikayla and I have been timestamped. Thing videos like crazy to get out some new horse and rider on demand content.

So there's some of that to look forward to. And of course, we're, we're gonna take this time to establish even more guests to bring onto this show and bring you guys, you know, the episodes that you want. Only here. So as always, please send us, um, comments, or if you have somebody that you have that, you know, that has a really inspiring story, you know, send us an email at horse and rider, aim media.com because we love talking to everybody.

It doesn't, you know, it doesn't have to be a professional or, you know, any of that, we just, we love hearing people, stories of people who are living their best horse life. Yeah. And if you have thoughts on the podcast itself, we have a link to a survey in our podcast notes. So be sure to go take our surveys so we can format our podcast to fit what you guys want to listen to.

We'll go, let's go over some, um, current events really quick. I know you have quite a bit that you could probably talk about because you just got back from your Texas trip. Yeah, that was a whirlwind of a week. Um, competition-wise I did not do hot, but it was so much fun to be involved in a lot of inaugural events and just, you know, bucket list events for me as a barrel racer.

So I went to the WC RAs women's rodeo world championship. First that was held at the will Rogers Colosseum in Fort worth. And it was just a lot of fun to be around all of those girls that I looked up to for all of these years. So I made it through, um, in the leaderboard, which is a nomination format. And then they also had a way to get into the event by paying an entry fee.

So like I said, I didn't do great, but just being there amongst all of those people that I looked up to for years was a lot of fun. And then. My really good friend, Randy Prindle. She actually won a lot of money through the event and made it to at and T stadium where they were the, um, They were the intermission event during the PBR world finals.

So that was really cool to watch her on TV. Yeah, super cool. I was fan girling over one of my own friends. Um, and then from there we went to Waco, Texas, where we did the WP RA finals. And once again, I was competing against all of those girls who I have looked up to for all of those years. It was just one of those events that I probably wouldn't have gone to had I not already been in Texas, just because it's.

Something that I know I'm qualified to be at all of these events, but sometimes I get there and I get so nervous that I forget how to ride. And I, I just don't ride my horse the way that

she needs to be written. And actually I borrowed a friend's horse for the WPR finals and jump riding a horse at a huge event.

Um, Probably not the wisest decision to make as a barrel racer, but, um, it was a lot of fun to ride my friend's horse and just to spend some time with her, um, riding and doing all of these things together as barrel racers, because she was excited to watch her horse compete against all of those.

Professional level horses. And then the last event that I went to was probably the most Epic event, which is the Calgary gathering. And I ran at three and 4:00 AM in the morning. On Monday morning when the barrel race started at 12:00 PM on Sunday, um, they had over 1100, 1200 barrel racers that ran. So they started at 12:00 PM.

Like I said, And they didn't get done running barrel racers until 7:45 AM on Monday and they didn't take any breaks like, and it ran really smooth. They didn't have any tractor problems, no accidents. Like everything went as smooth as possible. And that's how long the barrel race took. And then I ran unsaddled my horse.

Let them have a break for a moment loaded up in the trailer and headed back home. I was. So tired, but it was, it's definitely a memory that a lot of barrel racers are excited to have, because it's not often that you're in a barrel race that large, that's like a one day show and then to run, be able to be like, Oh yeah, ha ha.

I ran at 2:00 AM. I ran at 6:00 AM and they had a lot of money that you could win too. And once again, I did not have a good week in Texas, but just being able to have all of these memories is, is a lot of fun. Well, and what Mikayla is not saying is, uh, you know, she's still very young and has a lot of barrel racing career left in her and her horse is still fairly, I don't want to say new because Didi is obviously a very experienced barrel horse, but she hasn't been racing for that long.

So you guys have plenty of time to go back again and redeem them. Oh, it is really cool. I was really excited to hear about McKayla's adventures because I don't come from the rodeo world. I don't come from the barrel racing world. I don't know a lot about it. My specialty lays in the performance arena with the raining, the cow horse, the all around stuff.

Um, and so it was really cool to hear about these events that Mikayla was in. And I'm quite jealous with the amount of money that you guys can win, because I'm over here just excited that I made back some of my money to pay an entry fee. Yeah, that's, what's really cool about the barrel racing and some of the rodeo events is that you pay your entry fee and.

Most of the time. They're not that large. I mean, you can pay larger entry fees, but you can pay a fairly small entry fee and win a ton of money. The barrel racing industry is so awesome in that. And then, I mean, Going to Texas. And I know Nicole and I have had this conversation a lot, how it's funny that barrel racers are like, Oh, well, I'm going to Texas.

So I'm going to hit, you know, seven barrel races in a week because I have that opportunity. Whereas the performance horse industry is more, you plan your schedule, you go to those events and you compete. But that's kind of what I love about the barrel racing is that. You

know, you can kind of fly by the seat of your pants and have fun and win a lot of money and, yeah, it's awesome.

But yeah. Um, it's really cool that you were able to, to add something like that to your resume, but, um, let's jump into this interview because I really think that you guys are going to love it. And we could probably talk about ourselves all day, but I know that you guys are really here to listen to Dana's story.

So let's go on into that now.

Hey guys. Uh, we're back with another episode. And today we are here at Dana L, who is a world champion rider. Um, but she recently switched over to the raining, but. Um, the story that we really want to tell is that Dana came back from a auto-immune disease that her doctors had said that she would never ride again.

And not only did she come back to ride, she won a world championship. Now she's competing in the raining and she's, she kind of changed her motto in life. Um, you know, to do the things that you really want to do because life is too short. So thank you so much for coming on here and talking with us, Dana and excited to be here.

Thanks for having me. I should also mention, and it's probably no surprise to a lot of the people that listen to this podcast, because I talk about West, whether your husband a lot and how he is like a mentor to me and like a father figure. So it's, I think it's probably easy to say that Dana is one of my best friends.

Um, but we wanted to bring her on because we do love to share the stories of just people living their best horse life. And I truly think that you are one of those people that are living their best horse life right now. I think right now I definitely, definitely am. So let's quickly go back a little bit.

You grew up shopping, you did the Appaloosa stuff, and then you transitioned to the quarter horse stuff, which is how we met is because we had both been riding at the same barn, but. Um, I, when I was 18, when I was in day and I kinda took me in, I always joke and say that I was a stray because I didn't have anywhere to go.

I didn't have any horses at home. And they just kind of took me in and I never left. But that was around the time that you started getting really sick. Can you kind of explain it's been so long, but can you explain kind of what happened? It kind of came out of nowhere. Yeah. That was 2010. But it actually probably started 2009.

I was, um, on the all around circuit, pretty hard. I think you went to a lot of those shows with me. And I remember being out at sun circuit, which was in January then, and I just was, I had no energy. I didn't feel good. I just, I didn't feel like I could ride very well. Um, had trouble running in the showmanship and just kind of chalked it up to long hours at the horse show and being on the road.

And didn't really think anything of it. So I came home from that show. It was February like early February and it was just kind of a downward spiral. Um, my back hurt all my muscles

hurt. I just had no energy and again, not listening to my body, just kind of chalked it up to doing too much and too many shows and kind of just kept pushing on and trying to ride until, uh, my body said a time out girl.

And then in April, but it would've been the end of March, the end of March. I got really sick, um, to the point where I really couldn't get out of bed. I was so fatigued. And of course the first person I called for medical advice was our veterinarian. Because who else would you call when you, when you're sick and can't get out of bed?

So my veterinarian's wife and I were really good friends and she came by to see me one night. And by this time I had these great, big, huge black circles under my eyes. And really couldn't, I wasn't eating, I didn't do much of anything. And she opened the door and she wasn't mean she's like, what is wrong with you?

I'm like, I don't know why. I think I threw my back out. Um, I'm just really sore, really tired. I must have the flu and her husband, who's the vet. He came by the next day and he set up. You need to go to the emergency room immediately. And I have a client who is the head of the ER, you don't one of the hospitals here in town.

So we went in there and they were pretty much convinced that I had just ran a marathon because my muscle enzymes were so high. Like my muscles were just breaking down at a, like a crazy rate. And I try to tell them I definitely did not run a marathon. I don't run at all. Um, my husband tried to tell him that I don't run.

So they did a bunch of tests. Didn't really give me any answers, but they admitted me to the hospital. And by that time, um, well, by that time I couldn't get out of bed on my own. Um, I had to have help. Um, it was really scary cause nobody knew what was going on and it kind of hit. I say suddenly it was a couple of months progression, but when it really.

What's disabling. It was within a couple of days period. So in the hospital, they ran tests for like five or six days, no answers. Um, they sent me to a rheumatologist and she is the one who diagnosed me with dermatomyositis, which is actually where your body just attacks your, your muscle tissue. So basically my body had just eaten all of my muscle and I was just left at like, With fat, fat and bone.

So I was about probably 90 pounds at that point. Yeah. I. I the, the first time it really hit me that you got really sick was when, um, a customer had left their horse tied up at the barn and needed to have, you know, he was too hot to wear a blanket yet. So you were by yourself because Wes was going to get, Hey, I was in school about an hour and a half away.

And I just remember you calling me or texting me and saying like, I had to go put this blanket on this horse and I could barely get myself off the couch and go do it. And you know, that was really crazy because you've always been, you know, sometimes I've known Dana since I was 12, 11, 12, like since I was a kid.

And you were always so active and I mean, you do everything, you know, your husband has a training program, so you're helping clean installs water, sweep, the IOA, you know, all the

things that horse trainers wives have to do on top of their busy show schedule. And then all of a sudden you're too weak to get off the couch and go blanket a horse.

Yeah. When it, when it really hit, I couldn't. The hardest thing was lifting my arms up. I couldn't dry my hair with a hairdryer or really brushed my hair washing. It was difficult. Anything that involved raising my arms like above anywhere above my shoulders was extremely difficult. And by the time I did get out of the hospital, I was in a wheelchair.

I couldn't walk. And I remember, um, Being back at home. And if I wanted to like use my computer, I'd have to wait for Wes to come set it on my lap and then he would take it off my lap because I wasn't strong enough to move it. And that's how I remember you would come down and study, sit in the chair beside me and basically hand me things or take things away for me or help me get up or down or.

I mean, I was abandoned in the bathroom once couldn't get back to the couch. It was scary. So how long of a time period where you feeling like this in total? I, yes. Um, from when I was pretty much a wheelchair bound would have been, I remember it was April 1st, April 1st until Oh, late summer. Um, I went to the rheumatologist after she diagnosed me, they put me on a bunch of steroids, um, and a cancer, like a chemo drug and those drugs, um, definitely helped my auto-immune disease, um, to the point that I could get up and around a little bit.

I wasn't, um, in a wheelchair all the time. I mean, I could get at this point, I just wanted to be functional and be able to take care of myself. And by taking care of myself, I meant like, get myself dressed, um, take a shower on my own. You know, she told me that I would never have good balance. And if I wanted to like walk out and get the mail, I would need assistance.

Um, not to do anything like that by myself. And I would never have enough core strength to sit on a horse. And she told me at that time, um, probably the maximum amount of weight I'd ever be able to lift as five pounds. So she was, um, really big on just making lifestyle choices to adjust, to inability, to do things, basically, you know, she's like, you're, you're just going to have to figure out how to live by only lifting this much weight, you know, walking in short periods of time.

I'm just not overextending myself basically. And you know, when you get that kind of news at first, it was. Okay, but you mean I might get a little bit better and that's all that was really, all I cared about was I could take care of myself and not have to wait on someone to help me get up and down. So I was thinking that was a win, you know, Kevin from, I never had my blood taken until I was in the ER that day I was 38.

I mean, I never went to the doctor for anything. I broke my collarbone once in grade school. I didn't go to the doctor for a week. I mean, I just did not go to the doctor. I don't like doctors that petrified of them. So I was what I would say completely 100% healthy to 100% rehabilitated. So once she put me on all of these, um, drugs, I did get some strength back.

I was able to. You know, walk around the house. I, at that point could go out to the barn and sit in a chair for awhile. And I was pretty happy. I was like, this is, this is a huge

accomplishment. I've I really I'm going to live basically, I guess would have been my only goal at that point. I'm going to live, I'm going to be able to do a few things.

Things could be worse. And that's always, I guess, kind of in my attitude about stuff, you know, there's always someone in a worst position. So I shouldn't really complain about being knocked down a little bit. Well, my drugs, um, that I was taking started having really bad effects on my stomach. And I got to where I couldn't eat everything.

I ate, made me sick and we'd go back to appointments at the rheumatologists. Many of those Nicole took me to, and she always just said, it's not the drugs. It's not the drugs. It's something else going on. You're allergic to something I'm giving you or. So this went on for a couple of more months and I ended up weighing probably 80 pounds.

By the time I went to a colonoscopy and he basically confirmed that I had all SIRS and he decided that it was caused from all the medications. So the day I was talking to him, this would have been November. He said, you need to decide if you want to deal with your disease and take these drugs. Or if you want to not take the drugs and, you know, be able to eat.

And I looked at him and I'm like, okay, well, those two options pretty much both end in death. Cause I mean, my bones were sticking out of my back. I was so skinny and couldn't, I mean, couldn't eat. So then I was basically weak, just from complete lack of nutrition. And when he said that, I was just like, Whoa, this is.

This is not good. I need, my, my reality right now is, um, there's just not a good end to this. And this is a lot more serious than I thought, because you can't stay on steroids and chemo, drugs, you know, for life, it's just not sustaining. And I basically came to the conclusion at that point that doctors only treat symptoms.

They don't try to cure you. And I had another really good friend that I showed horses with. Um, her name is Jill Newcomb. She still does the trail and all around. And she lives right outside of San Diego. And she had a doctor, a holistic doctor, and she was like, you need to come to San Diego and I'm going to take you to my holistic doctor.

And I was like, Joel, I can't not get on a plane. You know, I can't do any of this by myself. And we ended up, I flew to San Diego. I was in a wheelchair. She met me there at the airport. Um, picked me up, basically took total care on me for a week. And I went to see her doctor for four days straight. And he told me that there's no reason that your body should attack itself.

And he was going to get to the roots of what was actually wrong with me. So that first day I was there, I threw all of my drugs in the trashcan. I never took another one. And besides a very rare Advil, I haven't taken a. A drug or a prescription drugs since 2010, um, he changed my diet, um, changed my lifestyle to try to avoid as much stress as possible.

And from there it was just, uh, an upward climb within, I would say by January or February, I was back on a horse. Not I'm not doing a whole lot more than walking, but at least I was on a horse. Um, I was walking around on my own. I can get dressed on my own. Um, so that was

a long answer to your question, Mikayla, but it was probably 10 months of not being able to do much at all before I found the holistic doctor and really made a change.

I have absolute chills hearing your story because that's amazing. And like, I believe. So wholeheartedly in holistic doctors and you know, the right ones and how they can really get to the bottom of things. I personally have had a few problems and a holistic doctor, so it got to the bottom of it. So did he ever tell you exactly what it was that was causing all of the problems?

Yes. He decided, um, going through, you know, his, his muscle testing that I actually had mano. And my body couldn't find off the motto cause it was weak at the time because of stress. And my adrenal glands were, you know, my adrenals are very low, so the motto actually got into my muscles and that's where my body started unpacking it.

So he did, you know, his holistic, I guess, medicine for, to treat the mano, to treat my adrenal system. Um, reduce stress in my life. Um, he took me off gluten, dairy, sugar as soda. Um, I could still have red wine, so I figured I could survive. Um, I haven't had any, I haven't had a soda since December, 2010 now.

In the last year or two, I've gotten a lot more lax on the gluten because it's not as big a deal, um, to my body now as it used to be, but I still try to eat as healthy as possible. Now we know on the road, it's, it's very difficult and sometimes I. Do you not feel as good, but it's been, I mean, the last 10 years of going to see him, it hasn't always been a, you know, a smooth ride.

I've had, um, relapses where I haven't felt as well. Um, most of it is, I don't want to say self-induced, but really self-induced if I start worrying about, Oh, I don't think I feel very good or I'm not feeling, I feel weak. I almost can talk myself into. Oh, my God, there's something wrong where I have to really step back and reassess what's going on.

Um, I take a deep breath, not stress about stuff, which is very hard owning your own business. Um, I've learned to listen to my body. If I feel tired, I, I stay in the house and rest and I don't feel guilty about it. Um, I used to, I used to would never do that, but I really don't push myself, um, physically anymore.

If I don't feel good one day, I just accept it as part of. Who I am and, and slow down for a little bit. Well, like you said earlier, you had to make lifestyle changes to fit your current life style, but you were also able to adjust those lifestyle choices by seeing the right doctor and, you know, doing the things that you needed to do to get healthy and.

Um, I remember the first time you saddled a horse and that was a huge win because that was after they had told you you're never going to ride again. Well, then she got on a horse and then they said, you're never going to lift more than five pounds. Well, then she threw a saddle over a horse and it was like, no, I'm going to do these things.

But you had to find the right support system to get you there. Oh, absolutely. I can't. I've done it without, without so many people a year. My husband, mainly for being understanding of. Of a situation. And sometimes he would, you know, be out in the Barney

and be so used to everything I do. He'd be like, Oh, go saddle this horse and this horse and that horse.

And I'd be like, why are you being mean to me? You know, I can't do that. Why, why? And he's like, He forget that I couldn't do it. It wasn't that he was trying to make me feel bad for not being able to, but then I got to where I just, you know, started brushing all the horses I go through and I brush them all.

So then they were ready to be saddled. And there was some days that brushing them was difficult, but I just tried to, you know, push myself that way every day, do a little bit more. And. Even now some days it's hard to saddle. I mean, some days it's really easy and other days my show saddle, especially it's heavy.

I'm glad my horse is only 14, three. I bet you're really loving those Rainer Heights. Now they do love them and it's, you know, sometimes hard to keep in perspective that my body only allows me to do so much, even though I'm getting a lot out of it. I still have things. You know, that aren't as easy. I joke with my husband all the time that the thing that's made me the healthiest is having the reigners.

Cause I went on, uh, I got back in the show pen in 2012. So it had been almost two years after I was originally diagnosed. And I, you are in 2011, you were 11. You showed faith, the world show. And I showed Baba. I did. And the showmanship, it was the following year. I did the pleasure. And then I didn't show again.

I had a horse that I won the world on in 2014, and then I quit showing I was really burned out. So I didn't do anything with the horses from 2014 until, um, October of 2018. That's when I bought my Rainer and we were actually looking for a brainer for my husband. Cause he said he wanted to have a Rainer and do something different.

And we went shopping for him. I was like, well, I think I want a Rainer. And he's like, I thought you were done with horses. You haven't wanted a horse in years, are you sure? And I was like, yes, I happened to find. I mean the horse I have now that I've been showing, I just love him, but we found him. It was, uh, October 30th of 2018.

Not that I remember the date. Exactly, but I had to have him. And it was probably the thing maybe of self-healing that everyone, everyone like emotionally, you have to have something to live for and something that you have goals for and something that really sets you on fire. And that you're passionate about.

And I think for me that was always horses, but I kind of lost it there for awhile. And when I rode Joey that one day, it just totally rekindled that, Oh my gosh, I miss this so much. I want to have a horse again. I just want to have fun. I didn't care if I showed, if I did anything, I just wanted to have that particular horse and just enjoy him.

And from that point on, I think my attitude was better, um, which made my health better. I've gotten stronger. I've been, you know, goal-driven, again, there's things I want to do. So it makes me want to get out of bed and eat right. And do everything possible. So I'll be strong

enough to ride and show him. And when I first got him, I was always, I had tried to go to the gym and work out.

Which I think was kind of a double-edged sword. I did get a little bit stronger, but I also lost a lot of, um, flexibility and movement. Like my range of motion was very much, um, Like stapes stipend. When I lift weights, like my, my muscles shortened a lot. So I was very inflexible. It was very hard to like squat or, you know, do lunges things that were easy for other people I really, really struggled with.

And when I got Joey, I could not squat down and put on like polo raps or like gear. I would have to. Like sit on a stool or actually get almost down on the ground and then fight myself back up. And after I got him, I just, every day would try to squat like a little bit on one leg or a little bit more than I did the day before.

And I'd always have to use my hands on the ground to get up. And I didn't really set a goal to. Hey, I'm just going to reach down and put my polar apps on it and stand up and not even think about it. But after about three months of having him, I was doing that and one day Westwater and he goes, do you realize you just put on your polo raps?

I'm like, Oh yeah, I do that all the time now. But it was just something that having Joey gave me a different way to use my muscles and use my body without really thinking about it. And it really it's really improved my, my range of motion greatly. Well, I'm pretty sure that horses are just the best medicine out there.

Anyway, even though you said that you gave them up for a little while, getting back into them, it's just like, I know going out and riding a horse can just turn a bad day into a good day. So I'm sure dealing with what you're dealing with. It was just the ultimate mood booster. So you said about your goals.

What are your upcoming goals? How are you working towards them, you know, while trying to stay healthy and stay within a new lifestyle, you know, I haven't set any specific core school, like, Oh my gosh, I want to win this or win that. I mean, mainly the goals I've set with Joey. Number one was just to Mark a 70 after I showed him a couple times.

I mean, the reigning is so difficult. And there are so many things that go, that go bad. I spent, I mean, my first five or six shows, I don't know. I scored a 65 66 67 because I would miss a lead change or I change earlier. I tried out of a rollback or I'd back or I'd back in the middle. I didn't know. You can back worn four steps.

They give you the zebra for that stuff. I mean, just a huge learning curve. With a new event and I just really wanted to ride him and have fun. I did not care. I really didn't care my score. You know, of course I wanted to do well because I'm competitive and you don't want to be embarrassing. But at the same time, I was just having fun.

And if I zeroed, I was in just the good, a mood is as the day or Mark my first 70, you know, I was just having a good time. And now, um, I do have Joey qualified for the worker of the year. That's at the fraternity. I will do that in November. Um, again, my goal is just to have, have a good ride. I didn't buy him for, to be the greatest reigning horse on the planet.

I bought him to be my greatest reining horse. Um, I went every day. I get to go out and just spend time with him and write in. I have just as much fun riding here at home as I do with the shows. So going into the raining a little bit, Um, you were in the rookie, the top five for the rookie shootout at the NRBC.

And that was a Yellowstone sponsored event. And you got a really sweet belt buckle. And that was you. When we talked during the event, you said it was one of the coolest things you ever got to participate in. It was, um, it was for many reasons. Um, I've kind of set that up as like, everyone's like, are you going to try for this dude out?

And I'm like, there's no way I can make the shootout. I'm like, Joey is a nice little horse, but there's some rookies on some extremely nice horses. That'll Mark 70 threes and 74 is all day long. And I would call Joey is solid 71 horse if I stay out of the penalty box. So I knew that. There is a ton of nice horses out there.

So for me to think I'm going to go out there and Mark a 74 on Joey is totally unrealistic. I have to go out and, you know, show the horse I have and be happy with our accomplishments. In that I'm said I'm meeting the goals that we set for ourselves, you know, cleanly changes, good pattern placement. You know, just enjoying it.

So the first day at Tulsa, there was, I believe, 86, four in the rookie class. He and I had our best run that we've ever had. And I was like bawling at the end of it. And poor Adam who's coaching me. He's like, Mike, what are you crying for? You are good. And I was like, I know I wanted to quit halfway through before something went bad.

Cause we were doing so good. I didn't want to do my last stop because. I mean everything I struggled with, uh, Joey gets really nervous in the middle of the arena. Not so much in the turns. And when you go to turn, he gets extremely lazy, but then when you go to circle, he gets extremely worried in the middle.

So he wants to change leads early or charge through the center. You know, we've, we've had to work on that a lot. He had some, really some really bad habits when I got him. So when I got through the middle and everything, and I got him turned, I was like, my gosh, this is awesome. So that run, I worked at 71 and a half, which was my highest run ever.

And I was so excited and I ended up, I was second that day. So the second day we showed, I think we had two days in between. And then we had a show again, there was 132. In the class that day and they only took the top five composite. So I'm like, Oh my gosh. Imagine having two, two runs. And then you make the top five.

I mean, that's just unheard of, and I try not to think about it, but it was in the back of my head. I was like, that'd be so cool if I could do that. So we just went out there with the goal of, have the same run you had the day before. And I think the second day I marked as 70 and a half. It wasn't as good a run, but still, um, I ended up maybe fourth or fifth day.

So for the composite, we made the top five for this shootout, which I could not believe I did. And then, um, that was in the baby, the big pin before the finals.

Uh, for someone who's shown their whole life, I got a little nervous and I thought I was running with the wind. And when I watched the video, I was just kinda like loping around and we had shovel, uh, I think we hung, hung a high lead, uh, and we did something else. We had trouble with one of our roll backs.

He almost froze up. So not as not a clean run by no means, but it was just fun to be out there. And it was. Very cool to see everything that paramount had given to the rookies because we really are. I mean, we're the beginners and they gave away so many things. I got, um, a back on track sheet, a buckle and as a beautiful buckle, a leather halter, I mean just a whole bunch of random things that I can take away from that and be like, Hey, look, what I got, which has always, I mean, it's fun.

You don't set out to win, win random prizes, but it is fun when you do. I think they even gave a life-size horse to the winner, which I was like, God's cool. But what do you do with the life horse? How do you get it home? Like, you'd have to like find a slot on a trailer just to get it back to your house. Oh, they did.

It was one of those great, big, huge plastic courses. And I had vowed that if I wanted, it was going to sit in my office. It's one of those prizes. That's like the most random thing, but also. Something you don't have definitely something you would never win. So shortly. Yeah. After the NRBC, you went to a horse show in Ardmore and you won again.

So I think it's safe to say that. Your journey to the show pen. Might've been a little rough at the beginning with your 60 fives and sixes. And, but now you're consistently putting down these really great scores for the rookie division. Yes. At Ardmore. Um, we had another really great first day, second day, we had some problems.

We won't talk about that, but it is getting, you know, You know, from years of doing patterns, I always feel like the pattern part, you know, I can remember the pattern. I know where the center is. I can usually find the center pretty easily. I don't think about that stuff. It's just staying out of his way on the other stuff.

And right now it's more of a mental game with Joey because he is, he's a very odd horse. And the fact that he does get extremely dull in his spins, like I have to kick him so hard, which. Adam laughs because he's like, you physically can't kick him that hard. And Joey knows that I can't kick him that hard.

So he takes advantage of it. But then he's so touchy, feely in his circles. So it's a hard balance to know how sharp is spur or cause I'm going to sacrifice one place or the other. So trying to find that balance with them, you know, some days it works and we can just Mark that zero and other days, it blows up in our face, but it's definitely getting more consistent and I.

Would love to have another 71 and a half at the fraternity. That would be awesome. It's coming up up soon. Um, but outside of Joey, I joke with Dana and West, because they have become, uh, Rainer collectors in like, they went from like zero horses three years ago to like, 10 is that the number now? I think we only have seven and a half, seven and a half.

I'm so, well you sold one, so you have to count for sure. But yes, I have Joey and then, um, my husband bought a horse for himself to show and then last a winter. I bought a Derby horse for myself that I'll start showing next year. Um, his name is Johnny. He's a very cool horse. I'm excited to show him because he is.

The same horse in the pen is outside of the pen. And I call him my little check collector because every show he goes to, he wins money. I mean, the judges love him. He's um, he's just very consistent and does his job and brings home a check every show. So I'm excited to start showing him, um, I'm not sure if I'll show Joey next year or not.

I might just keep him at home to ride around and enjoy here. I mean, he's. He's done so much for me. He doesn't need to get hauled down the road. Um, and then we bought a three-year-old, that'll be showing at the fraternity and my husband bought a two year old and we bought a yearling. I, I kind of say we have one of every age, cause you need, you need to have variety.

They are addictive. Well, and you didn't mention Randy by name, but you bought him at the fraternity last year and he was actually on the. Cover of horse and rider with Dana. You were our, um, spring cover. Yeah. I tried to steal him from my husband and I still do. He is. So we as horse, I think we've ever had in the barn and he's very cute and he's turning out to be a really fun horse.

I think, um, my husband will show him and send derbies, um, next year and he's, he's going to be a lot of fun to watch cause he's only going to be five. So he has a long future. Well, he definitely made a pretty little company. When Nicole got back with all the photos that she was taking, I was like, Oh my gosh, these are so amazing between Dana and the horse and the shadows and everything.

I was like, this is an amazing cover. We did those, um, relatively fast and Randy had just arrived at the house. So we had no idea how he would act. He literally was gilded. Right before the fraternity. So I'm like, so he's basically a stud and we're out here in them wide open and he loved it. He was such a great boy.

He really, it is. And like, um, I just remember, I wasn't actually at your house for horse and rider. I happened to be laying over to visit with you guys because I lived at your house and I'm like close with you guys, obviously. And I just wanted to spend time with you. And I was like, well, you know what? We really need to spring cover.

And, um, let's see what we have. And so Dana and I literally just pulled out Randy and got them ready and threw some clothing on Dana. And we were just like, It could go great. Or it could go really bad. Um, and Wes was like a little, I don't really want to do just yet. Cause he just like, literally just got it.

Like what'd you want me to hold a photo shoot with him? He's like, what is going on? Taking pictures? Don't worry. Mind your own business. It'll be fine. We get very possessive about our reigners, which is funny because. I don't know, for some reason the whole time we've been married 18 years and we've always had his and her horses.

They're always in one name or the other. We never have a joint owned tours. And so this last one that we bought, we've really been arguing about whose horse she's going to be. So he was, you know, that was his horse. So he was very, and I'm possessive about mine too.

I just, his face was so funny. Cause he just like walks into the barn and we have Randy looking like he's getting ready to show and he's just like, what is going on? I had this horse for like 24 hours. We did, we had just got him home,

but it turned out really good. It said, I love him. All right. So you kind of talked about what you're doing in the future, what your plans are, and, and, um, we've talked about your reigning addiction and collection. And I swear it gets bigger every week. I hear from Dana and she'll be like, Oh, I bought another horse.

I want another horse. And I'm just like, well, how, what, how, where are you putting these horses? Cause I've been in that barn and you're going to run out of room. The barn is full. It is,

but we might sell one, you know, To buy like three more. That seems to be night. It's our near retirement plan. I don't know if it's the best one, but, um, you only live once and we're enjoying it. So, you know, my husband, we have a very stressful business and it's growing like crazy, which just causes more and more stress.

And we have, you know, five people that work for us that. You know, whose families depend on us for their, their livelihood. And it, it is a lot of responsibility, um, to own your own business and the horses for us. Um, we get to blend our business because we have a hay business. So definitely that goes back to all of our course connections, but it's, the horses are our release are our stress relievers, our relaxation.

Um, we get to do it for fun now. It's not a business. Um, my husband doesn't really train for the public anymore. I'm just riding our own. So it's, um, it's our time to go out to the barn and just relax and. And enjoy the horses. Oh, you talked about how you only live once that kind of, they became your motto.

Once you, um, realized that like, you don't have to live for mediocre. You can, you can do all the things that you want to do in your life span, but, um, what. You know, I'm sure you're not the only person out there. And possibly even listening to this podcast that I've struggled with health and being able to do the things you do.

What would your advice be to somebody who might be in the situation you were in 10 years ago? What would you say to yourself now? You know, back then? Oh, definitely. Um, Yolo. That is my, my life motto and Goya, which is get off your assets. But that is, that is the true. That is my true motto right there.

Because I could sit around in the house and I could feel sorry for myself about things that I can't do or, you know, things that I used to do. And I think anyone who is healthy and takes their health for granted, and then as you know, hit with whether it's cancer and auto-immune diagnosis, or, you know, there's a time where I feel like it is okay to.

To sulk and feel sorry for yourself, but there's also a time to go, ya and buck up. And your attitude is so huge to your healing. Probably more so than anything you can do. And I realized that more, um, when I've had Joey in my life, because he definitely has changed my attitude. Like. A hundred percent where every day I'm like, okay, I don't feel like I don't feel like doing this.

Oh. But I feel like going to ride Joey. So, you know, you just have to check your attitude and not give up. And don't accept, um, answers from doctors. I mean, there's a lot of great doctors out there, but there's also a lot of doctors that just, um, go through the motions. And I think if you get an answer and you know, it's not right.

And you feel like. You know, there's something else for you. I mean, check out a holistic path or a different doctor. Don't just take one person's opinion of what you can and can't do only you yourself can set those parameters for yourself. And if you want to do something and get up and do it, I feel did that inspiration for today.

Like that was very motivating and I hope that our audience takes away with it. What I just did because I'm like, yes, I'm here. But I need to go out and do things well, there's always people. I mean, there are always people that have, you know, worst conditioner, you know, when I look at Amberley, that's in a wheelchair, I'm like, I have no excuses not to do anything.

I mean, she does way more than I do now. And I have legs. I mean, I don't one time I didn't. So, I mean, there's just so many people out there that you can look to that. Just don't don't accept no for an answer and just keep going. And some days you might not feel like it, but you know, tomorrow I might feel like conquering the world.

Awesome. Well, thank you so much for joining us. We so appreciate you telling your story and hopefully inspiring somebody who's going through something similar or just feeling like they're stuck in a spot that they don't want to be to, to keep on going. Cause it can get better. And you're, you're proof of that.

So thank you. That's that's Dana's um, response to everything. Don't feel good by her. You're boring. Fire Rainer. Well, I, you, you should probably talk to the NRH day about some marketing, cause I feel like we're missing out on from that should be their new motto by a Raider. I always joke. Um, before we sign off, I always joke that Dana is NRHH super fan.

Um, I used to be the managing editor for the NRA, Jay Rayner for awhile. And I remember when I introduced Dana to some of the staff at the NRA J and I was like, this is the NRA J super fan. Like she can tell you everything that's happening at the fraternity. She can tell you what she went to the, um, to the.

What was it? The college judging contest. And you were scribed you scribes so that you can learn more. I mean, she legitimately is NRA super fan. And so I was joking with the staff and I was like, if you don't know something like just does Dana, because she probably knows. Cause she's just been keeping up on everything.

Well, and that does go back to just, you know, finding something that you really enjoy and that you're really passionate about. It doesn't matter if it's raining or a barrel racing or. I mean, motorcross is just, if you find something, you know, in you that makes you want to get up in the morning, that's, that's what it's all about.

Awesome. Well, thank you so much for, for taking time to talk with us, even though you had to do it because you're one of my best friends. Um, we still really appreciate it. Thank you guys for tuning in to the ride podcast. We hope you enjoyed this episode and please be sure to subscribe wherever you listen to podcasts, follow horse and rider magazine on social media and kindness@horseandrider.com.

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