

## ***Russian Enncore (Cali) and Madison Sexton's Story***

By Lisa Beckwith

The nomination is an absolute honor and I'm happy to tell this mare's story along with Madison's journey with her.

Russian Enncore (Cali) is a 22 year old mare who we adopted from Hanover County Animal Control. In Feb of 2019, I received a call from Hanover Animal Control about using my trailer and expertise to help remove many animals off of a property nearby. The owner was arrested for many counts of animal neglect and abuse. I've loaned the department my trailer before for assistance with other livestock moves so I headed off to help. I assisted in removing four horses off the property and admitting them into Woodside Equine Hospital. Of the four horses we identified two Thoroughbreds, one gaited pony and an Arabian. The Arabian and one of the Thoroughbreds were BCS 1 and were placed in ICU, another volunteer horse helper who transported had a soft spot for the two TB's as she was a retired jockey and offered to foster them once released from ICU. The gaited pony was a BCS 3.5 and easily placed in a gaited rescue.



The little sad bay Arabian mare had no one speak up for her, old and frail she sat on IV's alone in the ICU for days. So, on a big leap of faith I offered to take her. I sat in ICU with her for 48 hours and talked to the mare about how I knew she was old, and that if nothing else she'd have a good end of life. At best we'd see if she was rideable and I'd find her a 4-H kid and a little girl to love her forever and scoot her down the road. We renamed "Sassy" when she arrived to just Mare or pony until a name would jump out. We worked with an equine nutritionist to bring along our starved little mare safely and correctly.

During this time of rehab several things fell into place. The owner facing prosecution surrendered papers for her, giving her an identity. "Sassy" was Russian Enncore, which my students decided to name her Cali as she was last owned and was born in California. At this time Madison Sexton came into our lives more prominently. I can't tell you which one of them this year has been better for each other. Madison was struggling in a very toxic hunter barn being pressured in unhealthy ways. Cali was gaining weight, getting sassy and needed a job!

Madison and her family took a huge leap of faith in January 2020 and walked away from traditional hunters. She trusted me, and a sassy bay mare and tried dressage. I told them that this year would be hard, it would challenge her, she would have to retrain a horse from the ground up in a sport she has never tried. A horse that is opinionated about loading, tying, jumping, even treats! Those two have spent 2020 learning new disciplines, new personalities and growing. I am so proud to have a smart, strong and compassionate teenager here working off her horses' needs every day, and a horse that is safe, smart and pushes Madison to be her best. Madison started dreaming BIG, she started dreaming of Arabian shows, the internet provided her live videos of Sport Horse Nationals, and things she'd never imagined were possible.

When COVID began shutting things down, Madison took it with grace that her chance to show was fading away. Her year-end goals of the state 4-H show were shot, we attempted to regroup and hope for 2021 to attend an Arabian show. By chance, another Arabian junior in my 4-H club mentioned ECAHS and East Coast Championships (ECC) to us, explaining that ECC had waived

qualifying. After probably a dozen calls and emails to the show to educate ourselves we had our sights set on trying it. I told Madison "This is a once in a lifetime chance to show the world how hard you've worked" She responded "Next year I will earn my spot at ECC, but this year I'll get a taste for it"

So the mad dash to re-paper and register for a show began. Cricket Gates was so helpful in this! We began with community help. Region 15 heard of Cali and Madison's story and our hunt for a previous owner who was on papers but not the last owner. Region 15 leadership contacted Regions 2 and 3 as she was last recorded living in California. Together they found her history, her past owners, and connected us to her last listed owner, a very sweet man who is walking through his last stages of cancer. He was so happy to know she was safe, she was loved and sent his signatures and blessings. We rushed her papers to AHA, somewhere along the line the word Crabbet kept popping up. We knew nothing about Crabbe, so at the encouragement of Cricket and others we applied to have her pedigree researched.

We pulled in late at night to ECC where we were welcomed by Arabian owners we didn't even know! Settled in, a panic 4 hour round trip drive home by dad for the forgotten show clothes, and a few hours of sleep later, Madison began her first ever "Big" Show. We had a BLAST! She tried SHIH and was encouraged by the trainers and kids there as she tried running. We went up the hill for a Dressage Training 3 ride that was mediocre, but I knew it was nerves. The mare was such a citizen in SHUS as Madison rode around the East complex. On a horse we'd never put in an indoor ring!

Our day at ECC was a day full of memories. Madison woke up ready to win, she was so calm and focused, she knew her ECAHS ride wasn't going to cut it today. She and her parents commented on how welcoming and calm the environment was and how they'd rather do these shows than the hustle and bustle of local hunters. Madison rode for her life on that hill. She knew she had 24 good horses in her class, horses with +/- all stacked behind their names, she was one of the only ones with just a horse name. She committed that day to not only making top ten in that class, but that before Cali retires she will help Cali earn her +. Both of them rode a beautiful test, Cali was calm, focused and just as determined.



Madison was crying when she walked out of that ring, crying with pride. We were astounded to receive 5th and a 69.9% in that very competitive class, with no margin to error she exactly tied with another rider for that 5th place spot and won it on her collective marks. But the Arabian Community wasn't done welcoming her. Our stall neighbors had competed in Native costume the night before. Madison was enthralled with it, she'd never seen it and by the morning was asking me how to make a costume. That night, our stall neighbors approached us and offered to let Madison try on their native costume and ride the ATR. Never have I looked at my horse and prayed so hard that she was as good as she can be. Cali wore the outfit like a champion, never batted an eye. So that night we stayed and Madison rode in Native Costume. She was supported the entire time by Robin Peak who rode the class with her. Cali was completely out of steam and trying her best to hand gallop but never batted an eye at the costume. We continued our Arabian show journey with visits to the Heritage Sport horse shows as well as continuing our pursuits in open schooling dressage. Cali recently traveled to Lititz, Pa and participated in the

Interscholastic Equestrian Association's Region 11 Finals.

Cali has been an amazing horse and story to tell the last 18 months. While we say we saved and rehabbed her, what Cali really did was save and rehab a child. The end of our short story is only the beginning. In 2020 Cali's abuser was sentenced, fined and banned from owning animals, bringing justice to the TB who died and Cali. This sassy mare continues to excel as Madison ventures into the larger horse community.

At the conclusion of 2020 Madison and Cali were awarded the following honors:

USDF Region 1 Regional Schooling Show Program Reserve Champion Junior Training Level  
Virginia Dressage Association Schooling Level Champion Junior Training Level  
North East Virginia Dressage Association Champion Junior Training Level, Junior Volunteer of the Year  
Heritage Arabian Horse Association - Overall High Point Youth Rider, Rated Show Training Level Jr  
Champion, Schooling Show Training Level Champion, Virtual Show Training Level Champion. Top 3's  
in SHIH Mares, Over Fences, SHUS.

The most important honor that Madison and Cali received in 2020 was the opportunity to call each other family. Cali was given to Madison at Christmas as a surprise. They will continue their partnership into 2021 with goals including attending ECAHS, ECC, Other Arab shows, and Qualifying for the USDF Region 1 GAIG Regional Finals.

Thank you for considering Cali and her story. We are so thankful that the entire Arabian community has rallied around a kid and horse from humble beginnings.

Lisa Beckwith



*Russian Encore and Madison Sexton at Commonwealth Park June 26 & 27, 2021. They were high point Arabian and received an ECAHS neck ribbon along with many other wins!*