

## Eternal (comma) Springs

What horse-addicted kid hasn't reveled in dreams of Olympic glory? Whether it be jumpers or eventing or dressage, it's not usually about the monetary rewards. It isn't about fame *per se*. It's the dream of competing to be Best of All and the hopes of landing breathless in the footsteps of childhood idols.

A couple of times a summer I visit the ballpark of the Dunedin Blue Jays of the Florida State League. These are basically kids too—fresh out of high school, having signed a bottom of the barrel minor league contract. For most it's their first real time away from home, and every one of them dreams of getting to The Show. Some years down the road perhaps a few will. Some will languish in the minors for years. Some will blow out a knee or an arm. Many will just find their skill level wanting and end up back in their hometown packing groceries or working at the car wash.

But nobody should tell these kids what a long shot they face to find success in their sport or how hopeless their plight is. At age eighteen they deserve their dreams.

Back about twenty years ago we heard how terrific a local high school player was—the son of a very nice rider we used to see around the horse shows. Amazingly, he grew up to be Chipper Jones, and five years (mandatory) after his retirement, he'll likely be a first ballot inductee to the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown. Some kids actually do make it!

There are lots of kid riders with dreams who clearly are not going to make it to "The Show." A shortage of the extraordinary talent required or the gumption to get there; maybe not the financial backing that such a mammoth undertaking requires; maybe just not being in the right place at the right time—not everyone has Lana Turner's luck to be sitting on the right stool at Schwab's drugstore.

One who has a decent shot is Georgina Bloomberg. I'm told she's a hard worker who doesn't mind getting her hands dirty. She's got big time riding skills, and oh, by the way, her father is the billionaire mayor of New York City. That won't hurt.

As for all those you meet with more ordinary abilities and more meager backing, those kids have just as much right to keep their dreams alive as the ballplayers I mentioned earlier. At some point in adulthood most will have to confront reality, accept their limitations, acknowledge their place.

But not too soon. Delivering that kind of news to young hopefuls is not in my job description, and it shouldn't be in yours.