

My name is Esmee Ingham and I am nominating Norseman for the “Non-competitive Horse of the Year” Award.

Norseman, also known as “Normy”, bred by Biz Bastian, was born in Smithers in 1996. Growing up in the interior, Normy began his Dressage career at the age of eight with Joni Lynn Peters of Armstrong. I purchased Normy in 2008 and so began our successful four years of international Dressage competitions together. Due to injuries – to Normy and myself – he was retired from competitions in 2012. Moving him up to our family farm, Normy adjusted quickly to life on the ranch and became one with the herd (even chasing a cow every now and again). To go from a North American Junior and Young Rider horse with a Bronze, Silver and Gold medal to a backyard pet was an easy transition for him, showcasing his sensible mind and easy going nature. Fast-forward to spring of 2014, after four months of slow and cautious conditioning after the winter he was starting to feel back to his sound and athletic self. Unfortunately, early June, I fell off a horse at work and broke my back. Unable to ride, I could not stand the thought of letting my horse down after months of work on his fitness, so I asked anyone (and everyone) to come over and ride him. From a petite eleven-year-old girl, to my novice horseback-riding boyfriend, Normy packed everyone around out on the trail, happy to go to work. After contemplating the plans for the rest of the year, I wanted to move Normy to the city in order to maintain his fitness over the winter, but I wouldn't be able to ride until January so I contacted my friend Andrea Taylor (Team Canada Para-Equestrian Coach for Dressage). I am a Special Education Assistant and have brought a couple of my students to visit with Normy on occasion and he could not be any more gentle or kind for a horse of such great size with such small children, so I immediately thought of Andrea and the work she does. Andrea had emailed back stating that her student Ashley Gowanlock was looking for a horse and that they would like to come and try him out. At our family farm, there is no arena, just three very large fields and a few paddocks by the barn. When Andrea and Ashley arrived to try him, he stood patiently in the barn as Ashley came to greet him. Andrea rode him first out in the field, as I apologized profusely that we didn't have a proper arena to ride in. And next was Ashley... I think I held my breath the entire time she rode. with two of us helping to get her on Normy, she was then strapped to the stirrups with thick rubber bands and off she went just like the pro that she so naturally is. I continue to look back on this video footage of Normy, who lowered his head and knew exactly what his job was. The connection between Ashley and Normy was instantaneous as she rode so gracefully through the tall, swaying grass. Not even a week later, I trailered Normy to Langley where he lived from mid-September 2014 to mid-April 2015. I watched Ashley's riding excel over this short period of time together, and although she was hoping to make it to the Rio Olympics with Normy, he needed a maintenance program that would not be acceptable for International competitions and the travelling would prove to be too much – but that did not stop him from trying his whole heart out each ride for Ashley. She was able to increase her riding fitness (which in return, benefits her whole body), try out some fancy tricks (flying changes and half passes) and even went to two local

schooling shows. As for me, I drove out at least once a week while I was in school to visit him and help Ashley, and he was the first horse I rode after my accident. It wasn't until the beginning of April that his arthritis began to get the better of him and so we tapered back the riding until I moved him to Ladner where I was living and working. We then spent the summer with leisurely rides on the beach and giving pony rides to the little girls in the barn. I may be biased, but I cannot think of another horse than Norseman – an International champion, turned para-horse and pasture pet – that is more deserving of this award. He is truly the perfect horse.



Para Equestrian Athlete Ashley Gowanlock

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While it feels like life is moving at a thousand miles per hour these days, I need to take a moment to tell you about a one of a kind creature. Normy, oh how I love you! I hope this is something that you knew in the depths of your soul. In a short period of time you allowed me to feel brave and free to be bold and take risks, and for that I will be eternally grateful. Enjoy your time off and kisses and carrots from your mom. Your mom who I will also miss for her spunky always ready to jump in with both feet spirit. Esmee you are a champ. Thank you so much Much love always Ash 😊
— with Esmee Ingham.

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Kim Spencer Normy is a wonderful boy with a 🏆 heart of gold. Then you add Esmee to the mix and wow what an absolute pleasure to have around. 🐾 Watching Ashley ride Normy from the beginning first tentative steps of their partnership...to their confident striding around



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