

WORKING & WINNING

with JODIE NEWALL

LAWYER & GRAND PRIX DRESSAGE RIDER

What does a normal working week look like for you in your job as a Lawyer? I work in the Commercial Disputes/Litigation team in the Canberra office of Mills Oakley, a national law firm. I've been there for two years. Technically, I am in the Building, Construction and Infrastructure sub-area; so, in addition to general commercial law and litigation, I have also been involved in drafting some major construction contracts and in actions, for and against, builders on defects. I am the contact for Mills Oakley's ACT insurance matters, so I also work for major insurers and represent their clients in the relevant Court or Tribunal. Then, with my horse background, I am doing a lot of work in Equine Law. My preference is to do this on an educational basis via seminars and drafting sales/training/agistment contracts, but there are also situations where disputes have arisen (typically in horse purchase/sale transactions) and I am sought out for my equestrian background.

At the small firm I was at prior to MO, I had negotiated that I would train the horses in the mornings and work in the afternoons – I don't mind what time at night I finish work, and that way I knew my riding obligations for the day were done and I wasn't trying to race home to ride before dark. When we were essentially taken over by the much bigger Mills Oakley, there was a lot of initial scepticism as to how my job could possibly be

done if I wasn't physically at the office desk from 8am – 5:30pm, but they're good about it now – they tolerate my many animal stories and even get a bit of a buzz out of following the dressage journey (even if they now think every competition is at venues as glamorous as the stunning Willinga Park!).

When I need to attend Court, I usually go into the office early, and the horses might have the day off or I work the competition ones in the afternoon – 'Court' ranges from the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal to the ACT Magistrates Court and ACT Supreme Court.

"I THINK IT'S IMPORTANT NOT TO LET HORSES CONSUME ABSOLUTELY EVERY ASPECT OF YOUR LIFE (EASIER SAID THAN DONE THOUGH)"

In addition to my work as a lawyer, my family also has 400 olive trees, 80 fig trees and a small vineyard. We picked our 2018 vintage of Shiraz last week, and fig season runs any time from January through to May depending on the year, so we're flat out with that at the moment. A couple of weeks ago, as I made a delivery of figs, I noticed a strong police presence and security in the carpark. In the kitchen the chef said "These figs are magnificent! They'll be going on fruit platters for Malcolm Turnbull in about 30 minutes." The olives get harvested (by us, by hand) in May and are cold-pressed for oil. Our Extra Virgin Olive Oil won a silver medal at the 2017 Sydney Royal Fine Food Show.

If I tried to describe a week, you'd have a novel, so I'll describe a day! I'm a night person, not a morning person. The thought of getting up for a 5am gym session horrifies me (going early to a horse show is different!). I'd much rather work, when needed, until 1, 2 or 3am and set the alarm for 7:00am. A 'normal' day at the moment consists of sorting and weighing figs, working horses, delivering figs to some of Canberra's top restaurants on my way to work, then work, on average from 1pm-9pm; home about 9.30pm and it's onto all the admin required to look after a farm and horse business - everything from ordering feed to advertising figs and organising farriers. And I also put together freestyle music in my 'spare' time.

What commitments do you have at the stables before and after work (also are the stables at home or offsite)? The horses are at our home on the farm and we have a handful of horses on agistment. We actually don't have stables (yet). Yes, my horses get woolly and it gets miserable riding in winter without somewhere to shelter in between, but the horses are happy out in paddocks.

You have been having a successful run with 'The Royal Huntsman C'. Describe your partnership together? We bred 'Spider'. All foals have long legs but these were incredible and on the tiniest body, so 'Spider' it was. He's by 'Royal Hit' so we think his competition name of the 'Royal Huntsman' is pretty cool! He



Jodie & 'Jive Matrix' at the Sydney CDI. Photo: Amy-Sue Alston.

Jodie & 'The Royal Huntsman C' at the Sydney CDI. Photo: Amy-Sue Alston.



He would rather leave his feed to con a cuddle out of me, and when you check his water trough in the mornings he's going to sneak in front of you so you have to give him a scratch. When doing some growing up, he is lovely on the ground as well as to ride. That said, although he's a smooch he definitely has a bit of attitude, as all the good ones do.

Do you have any other horses in work, if so how many? I have six in work at the moment. One is a client's horse for training, the others we've bred or purchased as foals. Currently my other main competition horse is *five Matrix C (Julius)*.

How often is each horse worked and for what time frame? The horses are normally worked five days a week - Sundays are off unless there is a competition, and they also have a day off during the week. Duration depends totally on the horse on the day - if we get to where I want in the session, I put them away - they might barely break a sweat, yet other days it might be windy and cold and they're full of beans, so we might be working a while (or a lot) longer.

Do you have a strapper to help you at competitions? Yes, one of my amazing parents comes with me, so I am lucky enough to have way more than a strapper - they're co-driver, videoer, chef, psychologist, groom and friend (and everything in between).

I always do the plaiting, and despite the occasional difference in opinion, even if we're busy having taken three or four horses with us, we work really well together. At the moment it's Dad mostly coming with me - as *Julius* is rather big and rather special, and he has a great relationship with Dad. This means Mum has to man the fort back home, which in simple terms is four rescue cats, a cockatiel, a pet pig, nine chooks, 15 or so horses and one aged dog. I'm not sure which is the more daunting task.

What do you do after a weekend event to prepare for the next weekend's event? Collapse in a heap and wonder how I'm going to get out of bed on Monday morning? And I promise myself I'll straight away get everything washed and ready to go for the next event... It doesn't necessarily happen though, I'm sure Dad would think something was up if, on the morning of departure, I wasn't loading wet washing into the truck to dry once we get there!

Out of your four weeks annual leave, how much of that is used for competitions? Other than the odd day here and there, I haven't taken a chunk of annual leave for a holiday since a 2014 trip to Europe. When I go away to a competition, there's normally a couple of days that I will still be working remotely, so it's only one or two days that I take as annual leave, although I



Jodie & 'The Royal Huntsman C' at Willinga Park CDI in Feb, he placed 5th in the Medium 4.3.
Photo: Amy-Sue Alston.

negotiated in my contract that I can take additional unpaid leave for horse competitions. I live in hope that I will find time for a substantial break soon.

How many events would you compete at in a year? I just do enough local competitions to qualify for the bigger ones. Between State Champs, Nationals and various CDIs, we'd do about six big competitions (4-7 days depending on travel distance) a year and then Dressage NSW events and regional Championships (both of which still end up a 2-3 day exercise) about 5 or 6 times a year.

How do you balance work, family, social life and competitions? I make sure I do a lot of non-horsey things. I have hockey training on Thursdays and matches on Sundays. I go to trivia with a bunch of non-horsey friends each week, and although I sometimes have to go back to the office afterwards and I'm completely hopeless at any pop-culture questions, it's great fun. We attend the aply named Brumbies rugby home matches when we're not away. My family is fairly active too, so I'm often cheering Dad on at the finish line of an ultra marathon or, like over Easter, off to see my brother's photography exhibition.

I also mentor female law students for both the ANU and the University of Canberra's Women Lawyers programs, so there are some other connections to the 'outside' world. It's all about perspective – whilst non-horsey people don't really understand what we go through, I think it's important not to let horses

consume absolutely every aspect of your life (easier said than done though). I'm also currently completing a Masters of Legal Practice.

What sacrifices do you have to make to do it all and do it all successfully? I don't get as much sleep as I would like – sometimes I get really annoyed at the function on my phone's alarm clock that tells me how many hours and minutes until the alarm goes off. And I do miss plenty of social engagements because I'm away at competitions or just doing the horse things that need to be done (they will always come first), but I have an awesome bunch of friends who are really supportive and understanding.

Turnout time for your horse, does that also mean a break for you and if so, how long for both? I normally give the horses two or three weeks off over Christmas and just get on with other jobs around the farm, read some good books and have a bit of a break. Other than that, I don't tend to give them all a set block of time off. They're horses, so throughout the year things happen and they need a break here and there – that means one less that I need to ride at that time.

"YOU MIGHT HAVE TO WORK HARDER THAN OTHERS WHO DON'T HAVE HORSES IN ORDER TO FIT IT ALL IN, BUT YOU'LL BE 'RICHER' FOR IT."

What words of advice can you give to other riders who want success in all aspects of their life? You can absolutely do it! You might have to work harder than others who don't have horses in order to fit it all in, but you'll be 'richer' for it. Yep, non-horsey people don't understand the complete and utter devastation after losing your best bud who you've got that incredible connection to and trained with in rain, hail or shine, but they also don't get that incredible feeling of peace and satisfaction while riding a beautiful horse, on a glorious sunny day, as everything you've been training towards falls into place. On a serious note, you have to be prepared to ask for what you want and then prove why it should be given to you – there's no way I would have been offered the flexibility with work hours that I have got. I had to ask for it, suggest a business case and then prove that it could work. I am a better lawyer for the time spent outside riding doing what I love in the mornings and I am a better rider for the time spent away from the horses doing a job I love in the afternoons. My work is my break from the horses and my horses are my break from work. Work also gives me the financial flexibility that the horses are not my sole source of income – I can pick and choose which ones I take on to ride or sell. It doesn't make me a less dedicated rider, I am just maximising every opportunity that I have worked hard for along the way.

I am so incredibly lucky and I encourage any young riders who think they need to sell their horse to do Year 12 or Uni, to contact me. I managed to campaign five horses throughout Eastern Australia right up to Grand Prix level, whilst completing a double degree of Commerce and Law at the Australian National University. I had immense support from my family, and simply couldn't have done it without them, but with the right people around you, you can do both!