



The hard truth about our sport

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[Back to Articles...](#)

Many people have said it. “We lose more than we win” in the sport of show jumping.

And it’s true. Other than the top few riders in the world, we finish out of the ribbons more often than we are in them, and consistency and clear rounds aren’t always on our side.

The other hard truth is that to a certain degree you can buy your way up the ranks of this sport, and if you are like most of the world that isn’t an option either.

This is ever-frustrating when you see someone that doesn’t practice as much as you, or love it as much as you do, winning in a class that they chipped in to the double or had a huge mistake in but won anyway. This is the hard truth about our sport.

You can’t practice or devote yourself so much that you get the win every time. There is luck, and there is sometimes more conspiring in the universe to determine the outcome.

I once heard someone say to a rider, “You are more consistent with your quality of riding than anybody I know, and yet I still haven’t seen you win this circuit.” How is that fair? The point is, of course, that this sport isn’t fair.

I also heard a coach say to his student that had a beautiful round and didn’t place, “As you jump bigger, the sport becomes more fair.” As the margin for error from horse and rider alike diminishes with increasing jump height and difficulty, the theory is that the better prepared team of horse and rider together should rise to the top.

This really is a team sport. But just because you are both at your best today doesn’t guarantee a win.

So what then? Why do we do this?

It’s the love of the sport, the horse, the lifestyle, the journey, not sitting at a desk, the unbelievably fulfilling moments of discovery, connection, accomplishment, progress – and the rare wins – that keep us practicing everyday.