

NZ Redford Comes Full Circle In Kentucky

By **Mollie Bailey**

Photo By **Shawn McMillen Photography**

Tracy Treace had no intention of finding her horse of a lifetime when she inquired about horses from Butch and Lu Thomas. But instead of the resale project she was seeking, she found NZ Redford, a special Thoroughbred who would stay in her life for two decades.

The Thomases imported NZ Redford from New Zealand, and Treace bought the Spectacular Bid grandson (Spectacular Love—Romantic Mission, Diplomatic Agent) as a 4-year-old.

“He ended up being the most incredible horse,” she said. “He was the easiest young horse with the biggest personality, just a complete clown. He’s never bucked or done a dirty thing. He’ll stand to get his teeth [floated] with no sedation; he loves the chiropractor. You can do anything to him. He’s just a people horse.”

After a brief foray in the baby green hunter division—they were excused from their first flat class when NZ Redford refused to walk—Treace competed him successfully in the 5-year-old jumper division. She didn’t want to part with him but arranged to sell him to her best friend Kristy Lagle (now Ruiz), and the two shared the ride. By the time “Redford” was 7, Treace was competing in national-level grand prix classes and speed derbies across California with him.

“He wasn’t a big-time grand prix horse,” she said. “He struggled at that level a bit, but he’d always try. He just takes care of people. He loves to do his job. He’s always been the best horse for anyone who’s ever ridden him. He’s not legendary; he didn’t go to the Olympics. But in terms of a first horse, he’s the most amazing partner for that.”

Redford stayed in California when Treace moved to Tennessee, but when Lagle called to report that Redford had

injured his suspensory, she and Treace agreed to move him to Tennessee to enjoy a better lifestyle for his rehab. Once he was back in work, various riders at Dave Pellegrini’s Spring Mill Farm took turns leasing him, and he earned a reputation as a super fun and talented adult amateur jumper. Treace was so impressed with Pellegrini’s management of Redford that she left him there after she and her husband moved to Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida.

Five years ago, at 19, Redford paired up with his final rider, Spring Mill Farm barn manager Margot Meyer.

“It was a little rough at first because I came from riding a big warmblood I had to use rowel spurs on,” Meyer recalled. “He’s a hot little Thoroughbred and a different ride. But I grew to love it.”

They moved from the low adult amateurs to the highs, then back down to the lows when Redford told them he’d rather not jump that height. Then last year Meyer started riding him

in the TAKE2 Thoroughbred jumper division. This year they led the national standings most of the year, slipping into second just before the end of the season.

Now 24, Redford competed in his last show at the TAKE2 Finals during the Kentucky National, Sept. 16-20.

“I hope people will realize older horses still have so much to give,” Meyer said. “I’m in my 40s, and he’s kept me motivated to stay fit by going running and working out with the trainer. I wanted to do good for him.

“He’s given me so many special memories,” she continued. “We got to go to Atlanta a couple of years ago and compete in the Olympic ring. We did the high adults and won a class. He’s a once-in-a-lifetime horse, and I’m so grateful that he came into my life.”

Treace traveled from Florida to Kentucky for his final show, excited to watch the gelding come full circle in the state where his grandsire was born and won the Kentucky Derby in 1979.

“I’ve had dogs, and they represent chapters of your life; they witness your life,” said Treace. “Redford has been the only thing in my life that’s seen me grow up from a young 20-something to in my 40s and being a mom. He’s like three chapters of my life. He’s been such a great witness to the evolution of my life.” 🐾



NZ Redford has been the horse of a lifetime for both Margot Meyer (pictured) and Tracy Treace.