

# Touching Grass



Dear Readers,

Just over three years ago, I hung up my tall boots and stepped away from the equestrian world, both as a rider and as a career. An industry that had been such a large part of my life for most of my life suddenly became something I experienced primarily through social media and the pages of this magazine.

While I miss the smell of the barn, the early morning drives down a long driveway to feed and ride horses, and the quiet moments spent with my favorite equine partners, what I miss most is the people. Horse people are truly our own breed. We understand the joy, the heartbreak, the triumphs, the setbacks, and yes, even the barn drama. Deep down, we are all still that little child who fell in love with horses somewhere along the way.

We are also people who choose to be outside. Rain or shine, wind or snow, we willingly spend our days in the company of our favorite animal. In today's world of social media, constant notifications, and AI, horses remain one of the purest ways to "touch grass," as I often tell my children. It means being present. Being unplugged. Being connected to something real.

While I no longer make that long drive down a barn road, I have found myself in a new career that somehow still allows me to follow a sport, be surrounded by incredible people, and do what I love—creating experiences and bringing communities together. As Director of Sales for the San Francisco Giants, I now plan events for a different kind of fan and occasionally even get to touch some grass myself—when it's not game day.

That idea of connection, authenticity, and the things that ground us feels especially fitting for this issue. There is something endlessly inspiring about the details that live just beneath the surface of equestrian life. The quiet craftsmanship behind a perfectly tailored show coat. The early mornings spent preparing for a ride. The thought, care, and intention woven into the products, places, people, and partnerships that shape our sport. This issue is a celebration of those details: the stories behind the seams.

For our 2026 Volume 1 issue, we are thrilled to feature Melina Nasab Keefe on the cover. A personal trainer, Pilates instructor, entrepreneur, show jumper, and unapologetic lover of color, Melina brings a refreshing energy to the equestrian world. Her story reminds us that modern horsewomen are never just one thing. They are athletes, creatives, business owners, riders, and dreamers, building lives that are as layered and dynamic as the sport itself.

This issue also takes us back beneath the soaring glass roof of the Grand Palais for Saut Hermès, where heritage, sport, and Parisian style meet in a way only Hermès can deliver. From world-class show jumping to the quiet elegance of the maison's equestrian roots, Saut Hermès remains one of the most magical expressions of horse sport on the international stage.

True to our theme, we go behind the seams with brands that continue to define

and redefine equestrian style. R.J. Classics shares its legacy of fit, function, and forward motion, while CALLIDAE opens the door to a new vision of modern athletic style. Ariat gives us a closer look at the innovation shaping the future of show apparel, and Solid Citizen, Hannah Childs Lifestyle, Kensington, and Huntsmen & Hounds each remind us that what we wear in and around the barn can carry meaning, memory, and purpose.

We also explore the brands and makers shaping daily equestrian life, from the timeless ritual of tack care with Tack Butter to the sweet tradition of Mrs. Pastures, the thoughtful mission of Three Mares, and the elevated approach to summer grooming from The Infused Equestrian. These stories remind us that the barn is built not only on sport, but on small rituals, trusted products, and the care we give every day.

On the lifestyle side, we travel through Virginia horse country, step inside the artful world of Bettina Norton, visit the thoughtful design process behind B&D Builders, and look at the growing influence of digital trust, authenticity, and storytelling in the equestrian industry. We also spotlight wellness, recovery, and rider mindset, because caring for ourselves is part of caring for our horses.

From the fashion that carries us from stable to street, to the footing beneath every stride, to the people and brands working quietly behind the scenes, this issue is a love letter to the many layers of equestrian life.

As always, thank you for riding along with us.

Warmly,

Sarah Appel  
Publisher, Horse & Style Magazine