



Listen: David O'Connor, Daniel Bluman, and Emma Chapman Podcast Episodes

Connaway & Associates is proud to present three more supported podcast episodes from Horse Person and Dear Horse World. These three illuminating episodes feature the ever-wise David O'Connor, showjumper Daniel Bluman, and groom Emma Chapman.

David O'Connor

O'Connor won individual eventing gold at the 2000 Summer Olympics in Sydney and is now US Equestrian's Chief of Sport. In this wide-ranging conversation, one of the most respected voices in equestrian sport opines on where horsemanship is headed and what still needs to change. From the power of "feel" to the importance of fairness, O'Connor shares hard-earned wisdom on how riders, trainers, and coaches can build better partnerships and a better future for the sport. Whether you're a dedicated eventer, a curious amateur, or someone rethinking what it means to do right by the horse, this episode will challenge and inspire you.



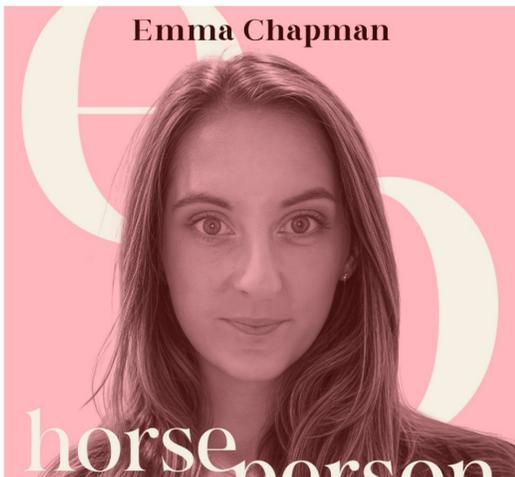
[Listen to David O'Connor](#)

Daniel Bluman

A three-time Olympic showjumper, Bluman was born in Colombia and now rides for Israel. He began competing at the age of three and is a familiar face at the world's biggest shows. His home is now in Wellington, Florida, but in this episode, he discusses the choice he had to make between the needs of his family and his desire to return to America from Colombia to continue building momentum as a junior rider. He charts his journey through the risks, resilience, detours, and drive it takes to build something meaningful in the equine industry. Bluman explains how he developed Bluman Equestrian from a small family enterprise he founded when he was 20 and turned it into a global, multifaceted equestrian business.



[Listen to Daniel Bluman](#)



Emma Chapman

Chapman, one of the most respected grooms in the industry, reflects on nearly two decades of working at the highest level of equestrian sport. With 18 years of experience, including caring for Adrienne Sternlicht's top jumping horses through international championships — including the 2018 World Equestrian Games, where Sternlicht helped clinch team gold for the U.S. — Chapman has seen it all. This episode is a must-listen for anyone who loves horses, wants to understand the inner workings of top-level show jumping, or believes in making the equestrian industry a better place for humans and horses alike. Tune in for an eye-opening conversation with one of the sport's most passionate advocates for change.

[Listen to Emma Chapman](#)

'I just want to be your favorite horse's favorite rider' — Meet Megan Lebaire, Inaugural Recipient of New Connaway Amateur Sportsmanship Award

The team at [Connaway & Associates Equine Insurance Services, Inc.](#) is delighted to support the Connaway & Associates sportsmanship awards at the [Experience Equestrian League \(ExEL\)](#) at the Germantown Charity Horse Show grounds in Germantown, TN, for the second consecutive year.

At each of the five ExEL shows in 2025, the junior sportsmanship award is joined on the roster by the brand new Connaway & Associates Amateur Sportsmanship Award. The awards are given in recognition of competitors who embody the ideals of sportsmanship and teamwork.

We meet the amateur award's inaugural recipient, Megan Lebaire, in this Q&A. She works locally in a pediatric therapy clinic and attended ExEL's April show with her mount Crown Victoria. Together, they were champions in the 70cm jumpers, winning two of the classes. Always an enthusiastic participant in the ExEL shows and often the first to register, Megan is a true ambassador for the sport, a devoted horse lover, and a positive role model.



Amateur sportsmanship award winner Megan Lebaire and Crown Victoria. **Photo by E. Reilly Photography.**

What did it mean to win the Connaway sportsmanship award?

I about cried! I had no expectation of anything. I'm just here for the fun of it. It was special to me because I want to be a good ambassador for the sport. I also love to talk to everyone about their horses. I can find something good or special about every horse, regardless of their talent or ability.

What are your biggest achievements with horses to date?

Growing up in the Northeast, I showed extensively because we were close to so many great competitions. As a young adult, I groomed at shows so I could continue to have fun with the good competitions with my horse. I've been to some fabulous facilities and had great results with lots of prizes. That used to be important, but I'm most proud of having developed a few nice young horses over my lifetime that went on to have really special relationships in their new homes. Some won Horse of the Year awards, carried their timid kids to success in the junior hunters, or became useful teachers in college or non-profit programs. I love the small victories that come with giving horses really good experiences, and there isn't necessarily a ribbon or a trophy for that. The prize is a horse that is rideable, versatile, and trusting of its rider.

Has anyone in particular helped you get to this point with your horse?

I feel very lucky to have grown up with access to programs that truly taught horsemen, not just riders. It makes me sad to think that it could become a lost art. I have spent more than 20 years riding with McKrell and Christian Baier [owners of Southern Blues Equestrian Center in Collierville, TN]. They nurture our independence and equip us to make the best decisions for ourselves and our horses, so we can enjoy long partnerships and feel confident in our riding. I also enjoy a very supportive family.

What would you like us to know about your horse?

Crown Victoria (Vicki) is owned by my mom and my niece, Kristin and Alexis Smith, but she is truly a family horse. She is a 16-year-old, 15hh paint mare. She's a busy body who wants to be involved in everything. That's easy at home, but any time we leave the farm, she has to have an 'Emotional Support Chestnut' — either my mom's other horse, King, or her turnout buddy, Freya — or she will yell at all her neighbors. Other than that, she's game for pretty much anything you stick in front of her. She truly rewards her rider for being correct and soft by being the most fun ever. She jumps cute, and she is super handy. When she wins, it is from great turns and tracks, not from going crazy fast on those little legs.

What is your history with Vicki?

My mom was casually looking for a horse so she could get back to riding, and wanted something that my niece and I could also have fun with. She got a phone call from McKrell, who said: "I found you the perfect horse, but we have to make a quick decision. Trust me." So, Vicki made her way up to us from Louisiana sight unseen. I think we got her sale photos and video when she was already on the van. McKrell knows me and my riding so well after decades in her program, so it was a very easy decision. I can't say I'm super picky anymore, though. I used to want the hack winner. These days, sound and jumps safe are pretty much my only criteria. A comfy canter doesn't hurt. Vicki has been a part of our family for nine years now; it's the longest partnership I've ever had with one horse.

What do you do for a living?

I'm an admin for a pediatric therapy clinic in Germantown called Janna Hacker & Associates, where I've worked for almost 12 years. My niece Alexis is on the autism spectrum, so it's a community I feel very close to. I love working with the professionals who help this community.

What are your hopes for the future with horses?

I just want to be your favorite horse's favorite rider. And maybe your least favorite horse's favorite rider, too. My goal is to be the rider the horses would choose if they could tell us. It's a weird season of life, where I'm trying to balance work and family, and still keep riding. Hopefully, there is another horse of my own in the future, but in the meantime, I will keep working on my position so I can be the most elegant old lady in the amateur ring.

Anything else you would like to add?

I am super grateful to have access to fun shows like ExEL and other exciting events being developed by caring professionals in the sport. I love the way horse shows used to make me feel, but it seems that many people are being priced out of participation. I am glad that some in the industry are working to provide access and improve the events and experiences for both horses and riders. I'm really looking forward to what ExEL has planned for the rest of the year.

About Connaway & Associates Equine Insurance Services, Inc.

At [Connaway & Associates](#), *teamwork allows horse people to protect horse people.* Since 1992, [Connaway & Associates](#) has built a strong reputation as a reliable partner in competition and in business. [Connaway & Associates](#) is licensed in 48 states and offers competitive insurance coverage through several A-rated admitted insurance carriers. [Connaway & Associates](#) does the work so its clients can enjoy their passion for horses. For more information on [Connaway & Associates](#) and its offerings, visit [www.connaway.net](#).