



Tom's Message Board

Boot Camp Summer

The end of August typically, and all too sadly, defines the end of summer as we know it. This is especially true this summer due to the spectacular weather we've enjoyed, which sets the tone for this all-too-short season. However for our daughter Abby, the sentiment is different; in most ways she can't wait for it to end.

She is completing her summer internship as required of her equine industries curriculum at UMass. This is a two credit course where the student must work at a horse farm or stable to become immersed in what it takes and what it means to work in the horse world. Abby's been riding since she was 5 and has cleaned her share of stalls, hauled hay, food, and water, turned out to pasture, provided medical care, cleaned tack, and hauled horses to and from events. After 14 years of this she thought she'd experienced it all, but, not quite. It's one thing to enjoy a hobby or sport but quite another when that hobby or sport become a job. I'm pretty sure A-Rod didn't know the pressures, challenges, and expectations that are part of his life today while playing little league baseball. Abby's glimpse into the *life* of working in the horse world has been a real eye-opener for her, which of course is the objective of the program.

To begin with, what was *play* has become *work*; running from 6:30 am to 4:30 pm... six days a week! During the 2 weeks between school and the start of this internship (near Concord, NH) she worked with an athletic trainer to prepare her for what was to come and also help her learn some fundamentals of functional training. While this certainly helped, it didn't take long before Miss Abby came to appreciate the sheer physical demands of working 10 hour days caring for 17 horses. She also discovered what it means to work with others and to be truly *managed*; i.e. held accountable. Mid-way through, her boss conducted a performance review on Abby... the first of her budding career. Ninety-nine percent of the review was positive, but the **ONLY** thing Abby heard was the one item that she was told she could improve upon. She was devastated! Once we talked her down off the ledge, she came to appreciate the value of this experience and realized how good a job she's actually doing, but that the workplace goes beyond the hobby and sport of it. To this point, she learned what the term *customer service* is truly all about. This stable is home to some well-heeled clients and their precious (and expensive) horses, and the level of expectations that follow suit. She learned, in a not-so-subtle way, how clients can be different, have different expectations, and possess varying needs. And finally, there have been the occasional *meltowns* where the rigors of working 60 hour weeks with less sleep than usual, living with strangers, while enduring stifling 90 degree days in a very physically demanding job – were more than she could bear at times.

The Marines and Navy Seals initiate their recruits to their world via *Boot Camp*. Not everyone who starts, ends – and that's the point. Sometimes we need to find out what we're made of and where our heart really is. Our little Abby isn't so little anymore and she has endured and excelled at a valuable step in her life, one that will pay dividends going forward. As always, she makes us proud.

The few, the proud, our kids,

Tom Brassard
President