

My experience at the Pan American Games 2015, Toronto Canada.

To be honest going to the Pan Am Games wasn't part of my plan in the beginning of 2015.

Granada was semi-retired (he is 19 years old), my working student at the time was riding him, but in March I found out that I was already qualified for the Games. Since Granada was still in good shape and enjoying his work, Sam Grunkorn (Granada's owner) and I decided to go for it !!

I was fortunate enough that my federation didn't ask me to participate in a lot of CDI's in preparation for it, they just asked me to do a show in Florida to "prove" we could still do it. The test was ok, nothing spectacular, but in total fairness to the horse, he hadn't been preparing for that.

After that show I created a plan to improve Koa's fitness level without stressing him, lots of hill work, cavalletis, and hacking. We only schooled the movements once or twice a week, and never in the ring :-). He enjoys working out in the field, so that is where we stayed. I didn't want to change our way of doing things because of this competition. My goal all along was to keep him healthy, happy and inspired.

On June 25 Koa and I travelled from Mount Kisco NY to Toronto, Canada. The trip was easy and uneventful. Prior to the competition we stayed at a beautiful farm in Cookstown, ON. The rest of the Argentinean team had already been there since the beginning of June. We all stayed at the beautiful farm house, where we had the chance to get to know each other more and create a team-mate bond.

On July 1 the team coach arrived from Spain, Antonio Diaz Porras. At first I was a bit hesitant about working Koa with him, since I had never ridden with him before, but to my surprise he was very respectful and understanding of our program. At the farm there were 2 riding rings, but I found an old polo field (with grass up to the knees) to ride Koa in. Even though it is not the most conventional way to prepare a horse for the PanAms, it was the best way to prepare Koa for them. I have been riding Koa for the last 8 years, and I knew that as long as I could keep him inspired and interested on the job he would do it for me.

By July 7 we moved to the show grounds. The place was incredible, the stabling was very airy

and comfortable, the rings were fantastic with great footing, and the Stadium was breath taking. When we walked into the stadium it really hit me! We were going to represent Argentina at the Pan American Games!!!!

The Jog was the next day, everyone in the team passed. Koa schooled wonderfully Wednesday and Thursday, he had lots of power and was very fresh and supple. On Friday we were allowed to ride in the Stadium, to get the horses familiarized. I just wanted to hand walk him around (because I usually give him the day off before the competition), but since I wasn't allowed to do that, I just hacked him around the ring on a long rein.

The first day of the team competition was on Saturday. I was the third member of the team to go into the ring, and the first rider of the GP group. Koa was feeling great in the warm up, and I went into the ring feeling very good and confident. It was one of the best tests of my life, it was clean and smooth and Koa felt fantastic underneath me. It was so special. I came out of the ring feeling very pleased. Once I got the barn I got lots of messages congratulating me for the score, I had no idea what it was at that point...67.2% I couldn't believe it! It was our best score ever in the GP in a CDI.

On Sunday we rode the GP Special, it was the second test of the team competition. Koa felt just as awesome in the warm up, I even went into the ring feeling better because he pooped right before we went in. The test was really good, unfortunately we had 2 big miscommunications. One of them in the right trot half pass, I surprised him with my leg and he cantered the first half of it. It was a double coefficient movement, so it was very expensive. The other mistake came in the 2 tempis where he took a misstep in the second change... We ended up with a 65.6% . I was still very happy and proud. His attitude in the ring was amazing, and nobody could believe he was 19.

Argentina ended up 5th in the Team Competition, this was a huge accomplishment for us, it was the first time ever that the team had such a good standing.

Because one of the GP riders was eliminated on the first round, only 4 riders moved forward to the Freestyle. So we didn't make it.

My experience in Canada was fantastic all around! Being able to represent my country and to be

part of a team is an honor and to be able to share it with Koa was priceless.

Thank you Dressage 4 Kids for helping me make my dreams come true! It truly was a once in a life time experience.