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Max Amaya's love of horses has propelled him from his home country of Argentina to the U.S. grand prix circuit. Riding Church Road, Amaya began regularly placing in the ribbons in 2004.

Back home in Argentina, it was Amaya's grandfather, who'd ridden in the Argentinean Army, who first introduced him to horses. Amaya started riding when he was 9 and learned to ride a variety of horses while growing up.

"In Argentina, I think you learn to be very perceptive of horses," Amaya said. "You get to ride a lot of different horses, and sometimes those horses have problems with the job that is being demanded of them, so you get a little more accurate."

Amaya first came to North America in 1992 and rode with a barn in Canada. He eventually returned to Argentina but continued to visit the United States each winter to see friends, such as Joe Fargis and Ramiro Quintana. Then in 2001, he decided he wanted to relocate to the United States permanently. It was Fargis who introduced him to Frank Madden, and Amaya has worked at Madden's Beacon Hill in Colts Neck, N.J., ever since.

Madden said he was impressed with Amaya from the beginning. He said he suggested that Amaya spend a day with him to see if he really wanted the job, and Amaya showed up at 6 o'clock the next morning.

"He spent the whole day with me trying to keep up with the schedule and going from ring to ring to ring." Madden said.

Madden said he rode a bicycle while Amaya kept up on foot. Then the next day, Amaya arrived at work with a bicycle himself.

"That kind of sums up the kind of thinker he is," Madden said. "He was eager for the job and eager to do what he had to do to keep up and show that he wanted the job. That was probably the biggest reason that I hired him, and the rest has fallen into place nicely. He is a real family member as far as I'm concerned."

Amaya spends most of his time working at Synergy, a sister barn of Madden's Beacon Hill that is owned by some clients of Madden's and where Madden runs part of his business. Madden said Amaya does "a little bit of everything." Some of his duties include helping get horses ready for the ring, showing horses, barn management, horse care and teaching lessons. Madden said he values people like Amaya who are able to multi-task.

"He is an easygoing guy, but he is very responsible," Madden said. "He's got a great personality as far as his involvement with the clients--serious enough that they feel like they're being handled by a

professional, but at the same time nice enough that they feel comfortable. He's got a nice balance that way."

"Involved With Everything"

One of Amaya's students is junior rider Brienne Goutal. She said he focuses on flatwork during their lessons. She said Amaya has helped improve her flatwork a lot. Goutal said Amaya also makes sure his riders know what's going on in the sport and with the care of their own horses. "He keeps all of his riders involved with everything," Goutal said.

Amaya's students are not the only ones who have found success. Amaya had ridden grand prix horses in Argentina, and he started riding in the United States at the grand prix level in 2004. He rides Church Road, an 8 year-old Irish Sport Horse owned by Sarah Becker and B & B Saddlery.

His ribbons include a second-placed finish in the \$75,000 HITS Grand Prix in Saugerties, N.Y., last July. In June, he finished fifth at the \$75,000 EMO Grand Prix in Saugerties, and he had a seventh-placed finish at the \$30,000 Stillwell-Hansen Grand Prix in East Freehold, N.J., in August. Amaya also represented Argentina on the Nations Cup team that finished third in the \$50,000 Samsung Nations Cup in Wellington, Fla., last March.

Goutal said Amaya is "an amazing rider," who has done well with Church Road.

"Nobody thought [Church Road] could jump that high," Goutal said.

Amaya said Church Road gives 110 percent each time he competes. He said the horse is very smart, has a lot of heart, and is always thinking ahead of his rider.

"You have to be really smart and read what he's thinking," Amaya said. "If he's right, just go with him and let him do his job, and if he's not, then try to correct it."

Madden said that Church Road and Amaya suit each other well.

"Church Road goes a little bit like an aggressive Thoroughbred," Madden said. "I think with him having a lot of experience dealing with Thoroughbreds in Argentina, that's an easy thing for him. He's very comfortable with a horse that has a lot of blood in it."

Learned To Be Patient

Amaya said he enjoyed getting to represent his home country on the Nations Cup team. He said that it's sometimes difficult for riders from Argentina who live in the United States to be selected to represent Argentina. He said he hopes to get the experience again.

"It is a pleasure and you forget about every time commitment," he said. "It's all about the real sport and why it is there. It was a really fun moment, and I enjoyed sharing it with my teammates, who are friends also. It was a really fun experience."

Amaya said he has learned much from working with Madden over the past five years and he considers Madden a friend. He said he has learned how to work through tough situations to benefit both the horse and rider. He said he's learned "to be patient and work hard to achieve goals."

Madden said Amaya has worked hard to improve his riding and he has seen him grow as a rider since he came to the United States. Teaching students, managing the horses, and choosing the

horses he rides wisely have all benefited Amaya's riding, Madden said.

"There is no question that he is a smoother rider than he was when he first came," Madden said. "I think a lot of that is just his own interest in improving his riding and being around lots of other top riders that we have in this country."

Amaya said that his "big dream" is to someday have his own barn, but before that Madden said that he would like to gradually turn over more of his business to Amaya. He said Amaya lived in his house for almost a year and he sees him as a family member, rather than just an employee.

"If it turned into a real long-term relationship, I could see myself turning most of the business over to him," Madden said.

Although Amaya loves his work, he doesn't spend all of his time at the barn.

When Amaya isn't working with horses, he likes to spend time on the water. He has a boat and loves to fish.

"Whatever time I have off, I spend fishing with my friends," he said.

Horse Shows

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