

You've arrived, now what?

What to do when you've met your goals

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Congratulations, you've arrived. You've finally achieved the goal you have been pursuing for so long. You've got the championship, the horse you always wanted, moved up a division or mastered a high level skill. You feel as though nothing will ever hold you back again because you, the winner, are in complete command.



Now what?

That's exactly what Chelsea, a very successful junior rider wanted to know. "I had had this fantastic year. I won more classes than I could have ever dreamed. In a way I exceeded my goals. I felt very happy and confident but then that all changed. That turned into worrying about what was next. I think people around me were confused about my mood, but I just kept focusing on the question of where could I go from here?"

This sort of emotional let down is normal after you've achieved a large goal. It's kind of nature's way of establishing some equilibrium. You may also find that everyone else stops celebrating you too, a spotlight shift that can be quite disorienting. You may even feel like you've lost a little enthusiasm, like your motivation has been drained. This loss of motivation is also common. You can liken motivation to the fuel you need to drive you to your destination. Once you have arrived at your intended target, you are either out of gas or no longer need any propulsion.

[Enjoy the view](#)

The first thing you should consider after completing your achievement is to savour it completely. Many riders forget this important step and move briskly onto the next task. As an athlete, it's your right to enjoy the perks that come along with a big win. So go ahead and talk about it, recognize your hard work and pat yourself on the back. Let others do the same. Also build in some time for rest and recuperation while you are enjoying the view from your new perch. Celebrating appropriately is a pleasant and necessary way of putting some closure on your accomplishment. Giving yourself a cue or ritual to signify your

task completion will allow you to truly be free and present to plan your next challenge.

Another task you should consider at this time is cataloguing and filing your experience in your mind for future use. Start by writing out a script of key thoughts, emotions and moments. Visualize your experience while it is still fresh and vivid. There will be a time that inevitably comes, when you will need to remember and rehearse what you recently achieved. A tough moment where you need to call on the positive end of the depth of your experience as a rider, and now is your chance to sharpen this tool so it will be ready.

Should you opt for a maintenance plan?

Once you have recovered physically and cleared your mind, you're ready to consider your options. One question often pondered is: should I just develop a maintenance plan? When building muscle, athletes get to a stage where much of the development aspect has been accomplished, and they are just looking to stay at that level of strength. Dieters know the term maintenance plan all too well. It is often the most challenging part of their health related goals.

After scoring consistently in her dressage tests, rider Monique saw a need to construct a plan that would maintain her results in the ring. "I was very proud of having come to a place where my scores were consistent and within the range I wanted. I believe consistency is a very crucial skill for rider to develop. I didn't want to lose any aspect of what I had accomplished, so I broke it down. What I thought was involved in those scores, and I made sure that I checked on those skills in my training regularly."

Maintenance goals can be extremely valuable tools to keep you on track. It's not unusual for athletes to get a little cocky, and a little sloppy, after performing well. Unconsciously, they may feel they don't need to pay attention to their skill level in certain areas. This can lead to taking for granted competencies that require upkeep to remain solid. It may lead the rider to either stop rehearsing that skill, or making sure that skill is sharp under a variety of conditions. So you may have cornered the market on that half pass, but can you do it in inclement weather, with unexpected distractions or with a tired and sullen horse on your hands?

What about new goals?

Creating new goals is a must both for your physical development as a rider, and for your motivational needs. Desire and willingness to put in training hours is born from the knowledge you are going to get something from the experience. You're after a certain feeling about yourself, a new level of confidence, the knowledge that progress is happening. Finally, yes, you are most certainly after the win, as you define it.

Imagine if you really had done it all, achieved it all. Sound a bit boring? Sound like an activity you might want to take a pass on? This is why, even after a series of successes even the most proficient rider must find another star to hitch their emotional wagon to. Emotional engagement is present in every elite athlete, and even if you're not a professional you require it too.

Take a look at what your most recent accomplishment was and ask yourself what seems to be the most logical next level for you as a rider. If you are feeling as though you need some extra oomph, make this a larger step. If you have just dominated the preliminary jumper division don't just consider what the intermediate division will be like, allow yourself to dream about the open division. Now that you are feeling appropriately jazzed up, take out some paper and make a map for yourself. What will it take to make it to your dream destination? Keep breaking it down until you have shorter term and daily goals. These smaller steps are likely the exact same ones you would have taken next, but they'll hold more meaning and drive you onward, now that you have those stars in your eyes from staring at your dreams.



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