2005 Michael Matz

Michael Matz of Collegeville, Pennsylvania is a three-time Olympic and four-time Pan American Games veteran. He won the USET Show Jumping Championship a record six times, and first represented the United States in international competition in 1973. He competed in the 1976 Montreal, 1992 Barcelona and 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games, winning a team Silver Medal in Atlanta.

Matz won eight Pan American Games medals, including five Gold, and rode in three World Championships where he won a team Gold Medal in 1986, as well as team and individual Bronze Medals in 1978. In 1981 and 1984, he was the American Grandprix Association (AGA) Rider of the Year. Matz was also a two-time AGA Show Jumping Champion in 1991 and 1992.

With all his riding accomplishments, Matz received unprecedented notoriety when he survived the crash of United Airlines Flight 232 in Sioux City, Iowa in 1989. Matz was named ABC-TV's "Man of the Week" for helping to save the lives of two young children on the plane. Less than two weeks later, he won the USET Show Jumping Championship.

Matz's partnership with the legendary Jet Run, a Show Jumping Hall of Fame inductee, was the most significant of his career. Matz and Jet Run topped the medal stand at the 1979 Pan American Games in Puerto Rico, earning both the team and individual Gold Medals. In 1981, the duo emerged victorious at the FEI Jumping World Cup Final in England. That same year, Matz rode Jet Run to the AGA Horse of the Year title.

Matz also paired with other memorable horses such as Chef, Bon Retour, The General, Heisman, and Rhum IV. Chef was his mount at the 1983 Pan American Games where he earned team Gold and individual Bronze Medals.

The pair also helped the U.S. team win the World Show Jumping Championship in 1986. Matz rode The General to the individual Gold Medal in the 1995 Pan American Games in Buenos Aires and he rode Rhum IV to help the U.S. win the team Silver Medal at the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta. At those 1996 Games, Matz was honored by his fellow U.S. Olympic athletes when he was selected to carry the United States flag before the entire U.S. delegation during the closing ceremonies.

Besides his success in the show arena, Matz also earned renown for his training of thoroughbreds for racing. In fact, Matz was unable to attend his Show Jumping Hall of Fame induction ceremony at the Budweiser American Invitational in the Spring of 2006 because he was busy at the Florida Derby as the trainer of Barbaro, whose win kept him undefeated. Under Matz's guidance, Barbaro then went on to post a win in the biggest race of all, the Kentucky Derby.