



[FARRAH HALL, ANNAPOLIS]

FARRAH HALL MUST HAVE FORGOTTEN TO MAKE a sacrifice to the wind gods.

In the last race on the last day of the 2008 Olympic windsurfing trials in Long Beach, California, the 25-year-old was two points behind the leader when disaster struck.

Hall's closest competitor, Nancy Rios, collided with another sailor seconds after the regatta's start. A protest was called. Though Hall crossed the finish line first, the jury awarded Rios two points, rendering her the winner—and the official U.S. Olympic representative—by one point.

"To be involved in a collision is simply bad luck," says Hall, who will serve as the alternate. "I've dedicated the last two years of my life to training and I am disappointed. However, I still hope to compete in the Olympics and will continue to train hard and compete."

And compete she will. The Maryland native is already back in Florida—living out of her beat-up van—as she trains for the upcoming World Competition in New Zealand.

Pretty and petite, this endurance athlete is also surprisingly gritty. She needs to be, since windsurfing is a tough sport. In light winds, windsurfers use a daggerboard to steer through the water. In stiff breezes, they plane the board so that it appears to skip over the waves. Planing is Hall's specialty.

A track star in high school, Hall took up windsurfing at 17. She became an award-winning swimmer at St. Mary's College, but her passion for her new sport began to consume her. She started a windsurfing club and increased her training. After graduation, she worked in Florida as a biologist until she took up windsurfing full time.

Deciding to go for the Olympic bid was no easy feat. Unlike European countries, the U.S. has no organized team—and no money for training.

Last summer, broke but determined, Hall spent a brutally cold season in Poland improving her skills on the Baltic Sea with the Polish Windsurfing Team, which is among the best in the world.

Though disappointed in the 2008 Olympic Trial results,

she's certain her hard work will pay off. "In Europe, it is a great honor to represent your country at the Olympics," says Hall. "As an American, I want to be a good ambassador at the Olympics while I help put our country back on the map, at least in the sailing events."

For more information on this Olympic hopeful, visit www.farah-hall.com.
—Jennifer Keats Curtis

[VALERIE VIZCARRONDO, HARWOOD]

VALERIE VIZCARRONDO IS RIDING FOR THE GOLD.

The lithe 27-year-old St. Mary's College graduate hopes to wrestle her 1,200-pound horse into perfect form when she rides with the United States Olympics Team in London in 2012.

A self-proclaimed perfectionist, Vizcarrondo will compete in the most difficult of equine sports: eventing.

"To my mother's horror, I graduated valedictorian of my class and went right back to working in the barn," laughs Vizcarrondo, an Indiana native who has spent most of her life in Maryland.


Likened to the human triathlon, eventing attempts to measure speed, agility, and stamina during three disciplines of horsemanship: dressage, show jumping, and cross-country.

Starting with dressage, Vizcarrondo and her 9-year-old horse, Trick, will complete mandatory moves in about eight minutes on flat ground. "It's like ice skating and gymnastics; everyone is required to do the same thing," she explains.

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Olympic hopeful Farrah Hall takes to the water. Equestrian Valerie Vizcarrondo, pictured on page 28, practices with her horse, Trick.


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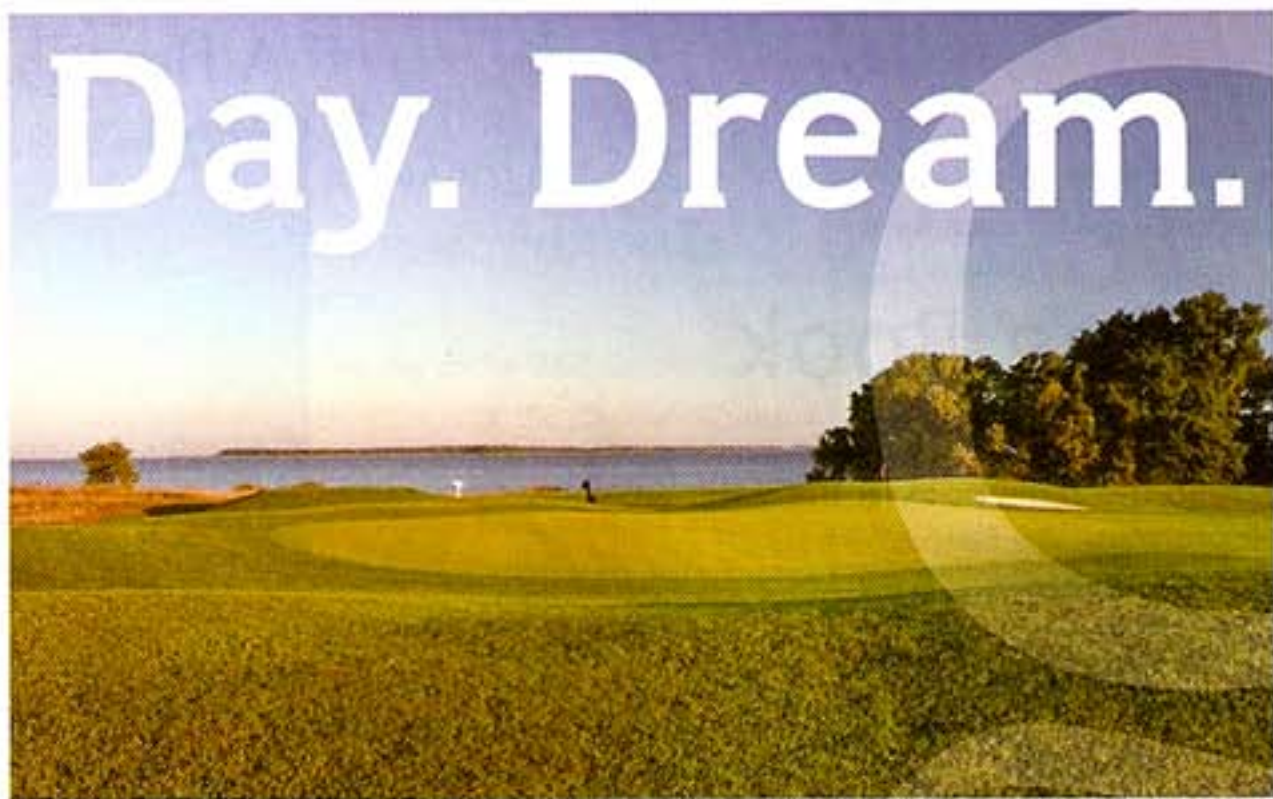
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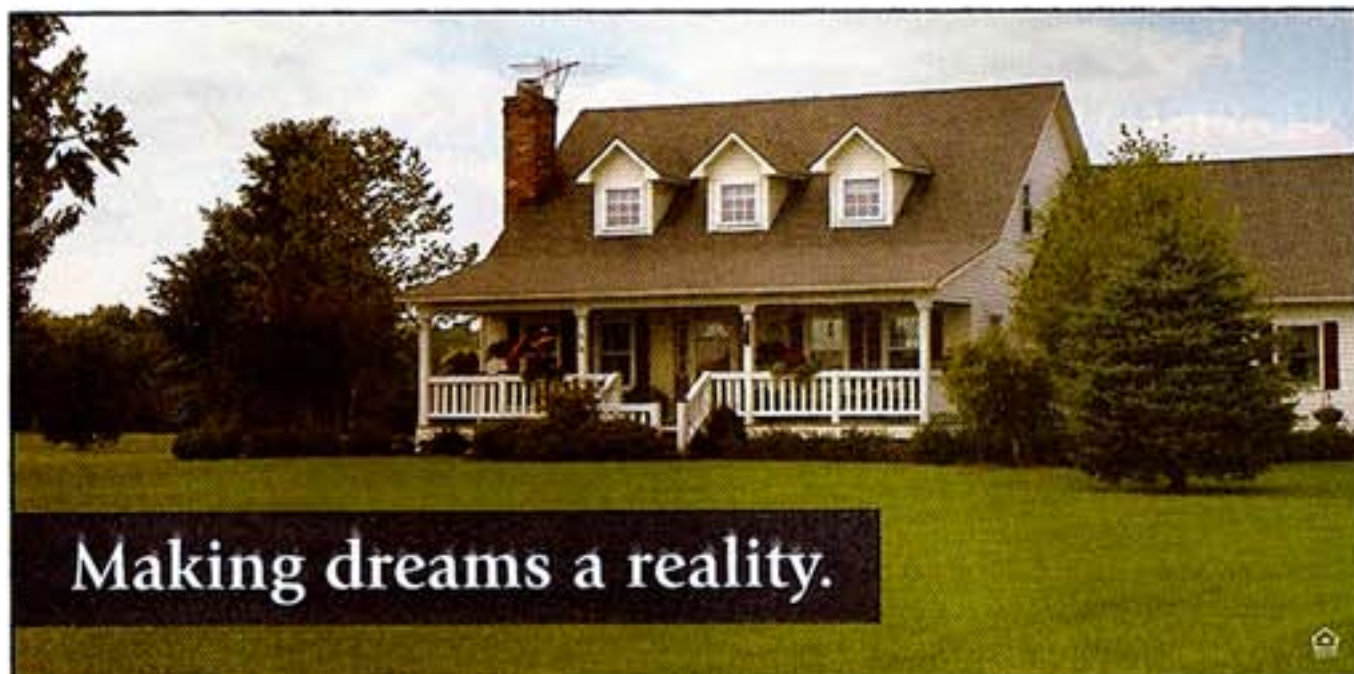
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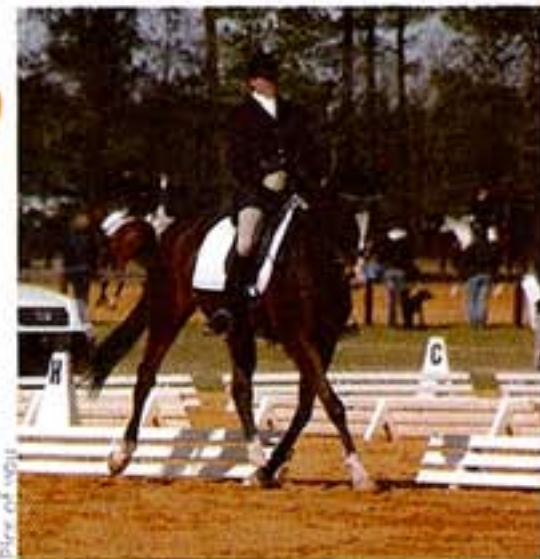
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At the Olympic level, cross-country is a complex combination of galloping and jumping that must be completed within a precise time-frame. "Cross-country is the phase that differentiates us from all other horse sports," says Vizcarrondo.

While she gleefully proclaims cross-country to be fun, Vizcarrondo notes that transitioning to show jumping—the final phase of eventing—can be difficult.

"After asking my horse to be brave and jump, now we have to come back into the ring and be very composed, organized, and careful," she explains. "It's easy to get two of three, but if you can get three of three on the same day, you're probably going to win."

To maintain her spot on the Olympic team, Vizcarrondo must continue qualifying for international horse shows. However, like the other team members, she must pay her own way. "Campaigning a horse at this level costs \$65,000 a year. Even if I tripled my lesson rate, I'm not coming up with that!"

One of Vizcarrondo's current sponsors, dentist Kathy Farley, has no doubt that her young friend will succeed. "I've been around horses my whole life and I've never seen anyone ride like that," says Farley. "Today, there is no one more skilled than Valerie on a horse. She is unreal."

For more information on Vizcarrondo, visit www.blueclovereventing.com.

—Jennifer Keats Curtis