

Jennifer McKenzie was born to ride. She was an avid Pony Clubber and was developing into a competitive three-day eventer, when an unfortunate twist of fate changed her life. While galloping, in a three day event competition, Jennifer's horse stepped into a hole on the cross country course, and the accident left her struggling to survive. A traumatic brain injury and resulting paralysis of her right side were not enough to keep Jennifer away from horses. After ten years of recovery, she started riding again at the Maple Ridge Branch of Pacific Riding for the Disabled Association.

Jennifer's determination quickly took her back to the show ring, where she became a serious competitor in dressage. Paired with "Digger", a wonderful therapy horse at the Maple Ridge center, she excelled in many local competitions and was long listed for the Canadian Paralympic Dressage Team. In 2000, Jennifer won the Western National Championships for Riders with a Disability, and was invited to perform at the Royal Winter Fair. She was invited to compete in several international competitions, including the first ever International Dressage Championships for Riders with a Disability and the Inner Vision Dressage Championships in New York. She participates in many dressage clinics, some with an international coach and trainer. Jennifer also started competing in open dressage shows against able-bodied riders with many excellent results.

In 2003, Jennifer was selected to travel to Belgium to the World Dressage Championships for Riders with a Disability. She spent several months extensively training for this wonderful opportunity, and went to Europe with the rest of the Canadian team to train for two weeks on the leased horse she rode in the competition. She did extremely well, placing 12th in the team test and 3rd in the freestyle competition against many riders on their own horses.

Jennifer's cheerful and determined attitude is an inspiration to all competitors and riders alike. She also volunteers her time to the B.C. Therapeutic Riding Association and the Maple Ridge branch of Pacific Riding for the Disabled, and attends many shows and clinics to help out and learn as much as she can.

We cannot think of anyone who deserves the title of Athlete of the Year more than this outstanding young woman, and thank the board and members of the B.C. Therapeutic Riding Association for her nomination.