

= Karen O 'Connor =

Karen Lende O 'Connor (born February 17 , 1958) is an American equestrian who competes in three day eventing . Although she did not come from a family of equestrians , her interest in horses started at an early age , and she received her first horse for her 11th birthday . O 'Connor began competing internationally in the late 1970s , and in 1986 began riding for the US national eventing team . Since then , she had ridden in five Olympic Games , three World Equestrian Games and two Pan @-@ American Games , winning multiple medals , including a team silver at the 1996 Olympic Games and a team bronze at the 2000 Olympic Games . She has also posted numerous wins and top @-@ 10 finishes at other international events . As of 2013 , O 'Connor is not competing , having suffered fractures to two thoracic vertebrae during a fall at a competition in October 2012 .

In 1993 , O 'Connor married fellow equestrian David O 'Connor , also a three day event rider for the US team . When not competing , she plays active roles in the administration side of the United States Equestrian Federation and the United States Eventing Association (USEA) . O 'Connor and her horses have been honored by multiple organizations for their competition record , and as of 2013 , six horses ridden by O 'Connor held positions in the list of the top 50 USEA high scoring horses .

= = Early life and marriage = =

O 'Connor was born in Bolton , Massachusetts , to parents Phillip and Joanne Lende . She was the second child of three , and the only girl ; her two brothers are Steven and Chip . She did not come from a family of equestrians , but became interested in the sport after seeing a documentary on Great Britain 's Princess Anne 's involvement in the sport . For O 'Connor 's 11th birthday , she received a horse named Midnight . She was a member of the United States Pony Clubs , in the Groton Pony Club in the Central New England Region . She has been inducted into the United States Pony Club Hall of Fame . She later owned a Connemara pony named Erin 's Shamrock , who in 1978 was awarded the Camlin Trophy by the American Connemara Pony Society " in recognition of a career of outstanding competitive performance " .

O 'Connor married fellow equestrian David O 'Connor , also an international three day event rider , on June 26 , 1993 . The pair became the first married couple to compete on the same US Olympic equestrian team when they rode with their team to a silver medal at the 1996 Summer Olympics . They rode to a second shared medal at the 2000 Summer Olympics , again marking a historical Olympic moment as the first husband and wife duo to do so . They operate equestrian training facilities in The Plains , Virginia and Ocala , Florida .

= = Career = =

O 'Connor began competing internationally in the late 1970s , and in 1986 started riding with the US national eventing team , beginning with the Australian Gawler World Championships , mounted on Lutin V. She won multiple CCI3 * events , including the Rolex Kentucky Three Day and the Fair Hill International , and the CCI4 * at the 1999 Rolex event , riding Prince Panache . During the 1990s , O 'Connor and her horse Biko were mainstays of the US eventing team , riding to multiple top @-@ ten finishes at major international events , including the Badminton Horse Trials and the Rolex Kentucky Three Day . O 'Connor rode at the 1994 World Equestrian Games and the 1998 World Equestrian Games , helping the US team to a bronze medal at the latter . At the 2006 World Equestrian Games she rode Upstage as an individual , but did not compete in the team portion of the event .

O 'Connor has competed in five Olympic Games , representing the US team at all five and also riding as an individual at three . At the 1988 Summer Olympics , riding The Optimist , she posted a DNF (did not finish) in both the team and individual portions . At the 1996 Summer Olympics , riding Biko , she and the US team rode to a silver medal . At the 2000 Summer Olympics , riding Prince Panache , O 'Connor and the US team again took a medal , this time bronze . O 'Connor did

not ride as an individual at either the 1996 or the 2000 events . In the 2008 Summer Games , riding Mandiba , she placed 44th individually , while the US team took 7th . O 'Connor was not originally scheduled to ride in the 2008 Games , but was moved to a competition spot in July 2008 when teammate Heidi White was forced to withdraw . Four years later , at the 2012 Summer Games , the US team repeated their placing , while O 'Connor improved to 9th , riding Mr. Medicott . Her 9th place finish was the highest rank achieved by a US equestrian at the 2012 Games . O 'Connor was the oldest Olympian to represent the US in any sport at the 2012 Games .

At the 2003 Pan American Games , O 'Connor took an individual silver medal , riding Joker 's Wild . During the 2000s , O 'Connor and her 14 @. @ 1 hands (57 inches , 145 cm) sport pony Theodore O 'Connor , nicknamed Teddy , gathered a large following as he competed and won against much larger horses . The pair finished third at the 2007 Rolex Kentucky Three Day and sixth at the same event in 2008 . At the 2007 Pan American Games , O 'Connor , riding Teddy , won individual gold and assisted the US squad to a team gold . In 2008 , short @- @ listed for the US eventing team at the 2008 Olympic Games , Teddy suffered a catastrophic injury and was euthanized . The United States Equestrian Federation (USEF) issued a press release that stated " Seeing was believing with ? Teddy ? as it seemed impossible to imagine that a pony of his size could do his job with such tremendous ease . " In September 2009 , O 'Connor suffered a broken shoulderblade in a motorcycle accident . She was out of competition for five weeks , during which time her main mount , Mandiba , was ridden by fellow US eventer Phillip Dutton . Between 2010 and 2012 , O 'Connor continued her successful career , riding to multiple top @- @ ten finishes , and several wins , at CCI2 ? 4 * events , aboard a number of horses . On October 6 , 2012 , O 'Connor fell while competing at the Morven Park Fall Horse Trials in Leesburg , Virginia . She suffered a burst fracture of her T4 vertebra and a compression fracture of her T5 vertebra . After one of the vertebra shifted , she underwent surgery on October 18 . In June 2013 , it was announced that during the remainder of her recovery , Phillip Dutton would again take over as the rider of her top horse , this time 2012 Olympic mount Mr. Medicott .

When not competing , O 'Connor serves as a member of the USEF 's Board of Directors and as an active member of the United States Eventing Association 's (USEA) Instructor Certification Program .

= = = Honors = = =

In 1995 , O 'Connor 's horse Biko was named The Chronicle of the Horse 's Eventing Horse of the Year , and in 1996 , O 'Connor was named the journal 's Eventing Horseman of the Year , in combination with her husband , David . In 1999 , Biko was honored as the USEA 's Horse of the Century , and in 2006 , was inducted into the organization 's Hall of Fame . In 2007 , O 'Connor 's pony Theodore O 'Connor was named The Chronicle of the Horse 's Overall Horse of the Year and Eventing Horse of the Year , as they called him the " horse world 's most adored underdog " . As of 2013 , six horses ridden by O 'Connor (Upstage , Biko , Prince Panache , Mandiba , Regal Scot and Grand Slam III) held positions in the list of the top 50 USEA high scoring horses .