



Wendy Schaeffer

– the 21-year old who rode her Pony Club horse at the Olympics

It was like a fairy tale. Wendy Schaeffer 21, from SA won gold in Atlanta on 'Sunburst', her Pony Club horse. She had suffered a broken leg during training and it wasn't fully healed, yet she strapped it up and rode anyway. Not only that, she was the best placed Australian, ahead of Phillip Dutton, Andrew Hoy and Gillian Rolton!





Wendy Schaeffer's story

At Pony Club Australia, we teach our members to be the best equestrians they can be, and many of them go on to be some of the most competitive horse riders in the world. There are few better examples of a Pony Club member living up to their potential than Wendy Schaeffer who started out at Mountain Pony Club.

At the 1996 Atlanta Olympics, Wendy Schaeffer led the Australian three day event team to victory with her outstanding performance. With this victory, she became the youngest person ever to receive an equestrian Olympic gold medal, making her an inspiration to young equestrians everywhere. Since then, she has continued to excel in competitions throughout Australia and the U.K.



WENDY SCHAEFFER IS STILL A TOP LEVEL EQUESTRIAN,
but she started from square one, just like everyone else

Even top riders send their children to Pony Club. Schaeffer's mother Di rode for Australia at the World Eventing Championships at Gawler SA in 1988. Schaeffer recalls her parents knew about the local Mountain Pony Club through word of mouth; in fact each of Australia's 800 Pony Clubs is an important part of the local community.

Pony Club was a beginner-friendly environment, the perfect place to learn the fundamentals of horse riding and horse care, as well as making friends with similar interests, and enjoying the variety of activities.



Pony Club is where Schaeffer first began jumping and eventing, which she later turned into a career and became internationally recognised. She recalls learning a lot from the coaches at Pony Club, and then eventually gaining the confidence and passion to assert herself.

FOND MEMORIES



Looking back on her experience with Pony Club, Schaeffer recalled many fond memories. For one, she began riding her horse, Sunburst, at Pony Club at age 11, and their experiences strengthened their relationship – 10 years later they were at the Olympics.

“We grew up together,” Schaeffer said about Sunburst. **“We formed a partnership.”**

Her favourite memories from Pony Club are the ones about the camps she attended. She recalls staying up all night with other campers, spending time with the horses and forming special bonds. Riding at Pony Club helped Schaeffer develop her social skills and networking abilities, which come in handy as a professional horse rider.

Schaeffer remembers how Pony Club taught her not only important riding skills and helped her learn how to be confident, but it also showed her how to form meaningful relationships with horses. Horses don't just grant riders their trust right away — riders have to earn it. This skill is essential for all equestrians.

“When horses just turn around and trust you, that's so important,” said Schaeffer.

Wendy Schaeffer believes that Pony Club Australia is a valuable starting point for new equestrians, and she's grateful for the time she was able to spend riding at Mountain Pony Club.

