

Before becoming Coach of the Canadian Show Jumping Team, Tom Gayford was an accomplished competitor himself. He had the distinction of being part of the first father-son combination to compete internationally on the same team with his father, Major Gordon Gayford. Tom's incredibly successful career first saw him competing at the 1952 and 1960 Olympics as a member of the Canadian Eventing Team before he became a member of the Show Jumping Team which won Canada's historic Gold Medal at the 1968 Olympic Games in Mexico City. Tom was also a member of Canada's Gold Medal Team at the 1970 World Show Jumping Championships in La Baule, France.

After retiring from international competition in 1972, Tom became the coach of the Canadian Show Jumping Team and, from 1978 to 1996, also acted as its chef d'equipe. Great success came under his stewardship including a Team Silver Medal at the 1979 Pan American Games followed by Team Gold at the 1980 Alternate Olympics in Rotterdam, the Netherlands. Countless Nations' Cup victories were celebrated on Tom's watch, including three consecutive titles at the 1977, 1978 and 1979 Royal Winter Fair. Tom was also there for several of Canada's major individual victories including the 1984 World Cup Final win by Mario Deslauriers and Gail Greenough's feat of becoming the first woman to claim the World Championship title in 1986 in Aachen, Germany.

Involved in many aspects of horse sport including hunting, polo, and thoroughbred training, Tommy had an eye for talent, both equine and human. He recognized something special in a young Eric Lamaze, giving the newly crowned Olympic Champion his very first grand prix mount, Big Deal. Tom also took special pride in sharing his coaching abilities with his five daughters, all of whom rode competitively.

Fondly called 'Coach' by his peers, Tom has been a force in Canadian show jumping for six decades. His wisdom, energy and his voice have been a constant presence on the Canadian and international scene.

By: Equine Canada