

## Nicole Shahinian-Simpson/SRF Dragonfly

If you'd asked Shahinian-Simpson about SRF Dragonfly when she first took over the ride in November, the Olympics probably wouldn't have been a goal. But the flashy chestnut mare surprised Shahinian-Simpson by jumping three clear rounds in the trials, finishing second and making the short list.

"It's kind of interesting because this was kind of not really part of her plan. I started her [at the Winter Equestrian Festival] in some of the smaller classes and the owners really believe in her, so they wanted to do this. I said, 'We'll just start and see how it goes.' So that's how we've ended up here. I have to say I'm just thrilled with her. She's really risen to the occasion. Everything that's been asked of her, she keeps doing."

Owner Katie Polk had ridden Dragonfly in the amateur-owner jumper division, and Leslie Steele had shown her in some grand prix classes in California. When Polk moved to New York City for her career, Shahinian-Simpson got the ride on Dragonfly.

"Her flatwork and rideability have gotten fantastic," said Shahinian-Simpson. "She loves her job, and she's thrilled me with her effort and her confidence in herself. She's really grown through the trials. This is a lot for a horse to jump so many big rounds without a break of dropping down for a class or two. She comes back in and doesn't think twice about it."

A member of the 2002 WEG team, Shahinian-Simpson, 33, now rides and trains out of Wellington, Fla.

