

October 2015 - Show Report: CDS Junior Young Rider Championships

Written by Yellow Horse Marketing for the California Dressage Society
Wednesday, 30 September 2015 21:25

Arianna Barzman-Grennan is one of unique event's many bright stars.

by Yellow Horse Marketing for the California Dressage Society

Arianna Barzman-Grennan was all smiles as she modeled her new team jacket emblazoned with a bright championship logo. "I've always wanted one of these," she beamed.



Barzman-Grennan, 20, of San Jose, was one of many winners who traveled as many as eight hours from up and down the West Coast to participate in this year's California Dressage Society (CDS) Junior and Young Rider Championships, held in two locations representing the Northern and Southern regions: July 31-August 2 in Elk Grove, and August 14-16 in Temecula.

Riders ranged in age from as young as 9 years old aboard trusted mounts of all breeds, shapes and sizes. With classes and divisions offered from Training Level to FEI as well as equitation, freestyles, and quadrilles, there was something for everyone whether a casual Pony Clubber attending a large dressage show for the first time or an accomplished NAJYRC competitor.

Barzman-Grennan has been coming to these Championships since 2010, and now in her final year of eligibility she wasn't going to miss attending the show one last time before starting her fall semester of college. "This show has been a big goal for me every year," she explained. "I love coming here and I enjoy the atmosphere because it's different from the regular shows, where sometimes it can be intimidating to be with all the adults and the big horses. Here I feel like the focus is on us - it's such a supportive environment and everyone's so kind, plus it's a great chance to meet other juniors who enjoy dressage as much as I do."

October 2015 - Show Report: CDS Junior Young Rider Championships

Written by Yellow Horse Marketing for the California Dressage Society
Wednesday, 30 September 2015 21:25



Young newcomers to the sport enjoyed the series as much as seasoned veterans like Barzman-Grennan. One of those enthusiastic first-timers was 11-year-old Kelsey Markee of Ramona, who competed in the Training Level 14 & Under Championship division at the Southern Region show. After she and her Welsh pony mare Make a Wish made the transition to dressage from the hunter/jumper ranks last year, Markee set the CDS Junior Young Rider Championships as a goal – and achieved it.

“My favorite part of the event was that Bella and I made it!” said Markee. “It was a huge accomplishment for us. I enjoyed being a part of the show, experiencing all of the new adventures, and being able to test our skills in a new environment and see how much Bella and I have improved from the beginning of the season.” And like so many of the young riders participating in this program, it was readily apparent that Markee’s enthusiasm for the sport extended well beyond the competition ring.

27 Years Strong

For 27 years, the CDS Junior Young Rider Championships have played an integral role in California's strong tradition of developing the next generation of dressage enthusiasts as well as high performance riders, and Margo Hoagland of Santa Rosa has coached competitors at almost every edition of this show. "I encourage my students to come back every year because it's a place they have fun, can get to know each other, and it gives them something to work towards. I know it sounds almost cliché, but it also fosters good sportsmanship and horsemanship in addition to just riding skill. This experience helps prepare them for the future no matter what they choose to do," Hoagland explained. "Another thing I like about this show is that there's everything from Welsh ponies to Thoroughbreds and Grand Prix schoolmasters. Dressage is for all horses, and this is one place you can do it - riders don't necessarily have to have the flashiest mover or most expensive Warmblood to do well."

The CDS Junior Young Rider Championship shows offer a plethora of prizes across both team and individual divisions, with stunning perpetual trophies which carry the names of young stars of the past and the future. Barzman-Grennan claimed her share of honors as an individual competitor including the Reserve Championship at the Prix St. Georges level with Dutch gelding Patriot B.

For the first time she also had the opportunity to compete as part of a team. Aboard the Haflinger mare Romantique, she won not only another Reserve Championship at First Level (18 & Over) but joined her friends Kendra Mitchell and Haley Fava to form a team named WR Dressage, which ran away with the Team Training Level title on an average score of 71.76%. "We're all from the same barn, but it's the first time I've actually been on a team and I was so excited to get to ride with them. We were determined to win those champions' jackets!"

Another fan of the team format was Laurel Kerner, 19, of Ramona, who rode her Dutch Warmblood gelding Soren to win both the Second and Third Level Championships at the Southern Region Championships. But she had the most fun as a member of the Devil's Angels Team, which also topped their division. "My favorite part of the whole show was the team aspect because it created camaraderie between fellow competitors that extended beyond the competition to all the aspects of the show," said Kerner. "Throughout the show the ring sides were filled with riders on horses taking a break from the warm-up ring to watch their fellow teammates compete not only in their team classes but also in their own individual championship classes."

October 2015 - Show Report: CDS Junior Young Rider Championships

Written by Yellow Horse Marketing for the California Dressage Society
Wednesday, 30 September 2015 21:25



Dressage judge Robin Brueckmann (USEF “S”) traveled across the country from North Carolina to officiate for the Northern Region show, and she was impressed by her experience. “The show was well run, the kids were great, and I think it’s a fantastic experience for them to have the opportunity to be on a team,” said Brueckmann. “They learn how to support each other, making it a different experience than a regular horse show. I saw some really well-mounted (in particular some outstanding ponies) and well-coached kids in my ring that would be competitive in any age group anywhere in the country. I look forward to seeing these kids in the future.”

More Than Ribbons

This championship program isn’t just about competition: with a myriad of activities including poster-decorating contests, pizza and ice cream socials, a DJ dance party, and an on-foot quadrille workshop, fun and camaraderie are what make the CDS Junior Young Rider Championships truly special. But the hard work and dedication of show staff and volunteers like Michele Vaughn is also necessary to make an event like this happen. Vaughn not only donated the use of her facility Starr Vaughn Equestrian Center to host the Northern Region show, but also tirelessly managed almost every aspect of the four-day event. Her daughter Genay grew up competing in the CDS Junior Young Rider program, and now competes on the international CDI level with her Grand Prix stallion Donarweiss GGF.

“From having a daughter in this program and knowing how much fun she had, it makes me want to help continue that tradition for other youth and make it better every year,” Vaughn explained. “I think it has a huge impact on the growth and popularity of dressage on the West Coast. This show is a great start to a young rider’s development because anyone can qualify to compete here as an individual, or they can put a team together with their barn mates and just come to have fun! Over the years, we’re also seeing a trend where the kids are competing at a higher and higher level: we used to have only Training Level teams, and this year we had full teams of kids at Second Level. My favorite part is that it’s a terrific opportunity for kids who may not have much exposure to other riders their age to meet and interact with additional youth who love dressage. It’s inspiring.”

October 2015 - Show Report: CDS Junior Young Rider Championships

Written by Yellow Horse Marketing for the California Dressage Society
Wednesday, 30 September 2015 21:25

Barzman-Grennan explained why she and so many others come back to the CDS Junior Young Rider Championships year after year. "This entire show is just such a great experience, and it's an accomplishment just to be here. It inspires you to set a goal and work for it, and is a great stepping stone to work on future goals that are even bigger." Fellow competitor Laurel Kerner agreed. "The most special part about this show is that it gives us a chance to shine," she said. "It's the only competition here where it's exclusively youth exhibitors riding in it, and it is also the only show where everyone at any level can ride on a team together and collectively work towards the goal of becoming champions."

For more information about the CDS Junior Young Rider Program, visit the California Dressage Society website, and see photo galleries and more news from the shows on the CDS Juniors & Young Riders Facebook page. CDS extends special thanks to sponsors Equine Insurance, Margo Bell Hoagland, Western Saddlery, Schleese Saddlery, Stat! Spray, Dressage Extensions, and Fairwinds Farm for their support of the CDS Junior Young Rider Championships.