

2006 USEA/Spalding Labs Young Event Horse Series Kicks Off

By Julia Urbanski

The 2006 USEA/Spalding Labs Young Event Horse Series is well under way. With the first seven competitions completed, hopefuls for the championships still have ten more qualifiers between now and the Championships, which will be held October 5 at the Morven Park Three-Day Event and Horse Trials in Leesburg, Virginia.

Three events were held over the weekend of June 3-4, resulting in four horses qualifying for the Championships (achieving two scores of 70 or higher) and seven others earning one qualifying score and getting one step closer to Leesburg. At the Indiana Eventing Association Horse Trials, held at the Hoosier Horse Park in Edinburg, Indiana, Something Special took top honors in the four-year-old division with Awe Kitty Kitty the winning five-year-old.

Pam Kimmel of Versailles, Kentucky owns and rides Something Special, a 16.3-hand chestnut gelding Sport Horse by Aberjack and out of Special Event, Kimmel's former eventing mount. Kimmel competed through intermediate on the Oldenburg mare before changing her career—from event horse to broodmare. Her search for the perfect stallion led her to Aberjack, a New Zealand Sport Horse owned at the time by Denny Emerson of Tamarack Hill Farm. Aberjack seemed to be the obvious choice because of his excellent competition record and the stellar references she got from friends who were familiar with him.

While Kimmel felt that some of the obstacles in the jumping section of the competition were pretty tough, she said that she was happy with Something Special's performance, and his final score 71.2, and feels like she's got a real upper-level prospect on her hands. She has set her sights on the Championships in the fall and will be working to earn a final 70+ score to qualify. She's aiming the gelding for his horse trials debut at beginner novice this summer, and is hoping to end the season going novice, with the goal of moving up to training and possibly preliminary next year. After that, she's aiming for the top, hoping that he'll



Photo courtesy of El Everett-Bechtold.

Music's Edge and owner/rider El Everett-Bechtold training for the USEA/Spalding Labs Young Event Horse Series.

take her all the way through advanced.

Awe Kitty Kitty, a chestnut Thoroughbred gelding owned and ridden by Erin Sanchez of Bloomington, Illinois, was bred for the track, but like many prospective race horses, he showed potential to excel in eventing. Sanchez has an exciting future planned for them. They are currently competing in horse trials at the novice level, and she is hoping to move up to training by the end of this season or early in 2007.

Sanchez was especially pleased with the show jumping phase because the organizers had set it up in an open field, and utilized a few solid fences to mimic cross-country obstacles. She complimented the organizers on their foresight of having this phase of the competition during the competitors' party, making it a spectator event and giving the Series some good exposure.

Several states westwards in Worland, Wyoming, Moonrock Horse Trials was also holding a Young Event Horse division. Skywalker, a bay Oldenburg gelding, took the blue in the four-year-old division, with rider/owner Wendy Hickox of Larkspur, Colorado aboard. While Skywalker (Stetson-Ballerina) was bred to be a hunter/jumper by Nancy Gooding at

Plum Creek Hollow, eventing has turned out to be his forte. Gooding breeds for disposition above all else, making Skywalker a fabulous mount for Hickox, who said she appreciates that her gelding is very sane and sensible.

Hickox mentioned that she worries that many people aren't yet aware of the Young Event Horse Series' existence, but also commented that she was happy to see more competitors at Moonrock's second year of running the Young Event Horse divisions. She felt the course was tough but appropriate, really helping to highlight the young eventing prospects' talents—and weaknesses. The camaraderie among competitors made for a terrific overall atmosphere, and she was very pleased to see that it wasn't about competition so much as it was about allowing the young horses to show off their natural ability and get some competition experience and exposure to the public. With plans to send Skywalker off to Plum Creek for more training in the near future, they have been competing at horse trials in beginner novice and novice divisions. Having shown promise over a few preliminary fences, she's hoping they'll go far together.

Music's Edge (Standing On Edge-Traveling Treat) took home the blue in the Moonrock five-year-old division. Owner/rider El Everett-Bechtold of Colorado Springs, Colorado purchased him as an event prospect, although he was bred for racing, and feels the chestnut gelding has found his niche in eventing. Everett-Bechtold is very happy with her gelding, saying that the competition seemed almost too easy for him, considering his talent, although some of the fences seemed rather intimidating with a five-year-old. She is considering offering Music's Edge for sale, but in the meantime plans to enjoy her time with this talented creature. She also expressed appreciation for the sponsors and the prizes they have provided, which included a six-month supply of fly predators from title sponsor Spalding Labs, and a complete saddle pad set from Fleeceworks. The winners of the championships in October will also each win a Stackhouse saddle.

Waredaca Horse Trials in Unity, Maryland proved a very successful weekend for owner/breeder Lisa Reid of Union Bridge, Maryland and her gray mare BFF Peppermint (BFF Incognito-Voice of Spring) and bay stallion BFF In Disguise (BFF Incognito-Transferencia) who won the four- and five-year-old-divisions with scores of 75.63 and 86.86 respectively. The two are three-quarter Thoroughbred and one-quarter Clydesdale, a combination Reid has found to be quite successful in eventing. Colleen Rutledge rode BFF Peppermint to victory, while Reid showed BFF In Disguise. Both horses were specifically bred for eventing and foxhunting at Black Fox Farm in Maryland and Lisa will be competing BFF In Disguise to promote him as a breeding stallion. He is currently at training level, is schooling at preliminary, and she is hoping to take him through the levels and may possibly be standing him at stud next year. BFF Peppermint is for sale, but in the meantime is competing at novice and schooling at training level. Their Thoroughbred/Clydesdale sire (also standing at her farm), BFF Incognito, successfully competed through preliminary.

As a breeder, Reid is very excited about the possibilities the USEA/Spalding Labs Young Event Horse Series provides for small breeders like her. It is a country-wide showcase of the best young horses, and it provides some distinction for these prospective top level eventers, judging them on their potential to be the next Rolex winner or Olympic medalist. She says that her young horses are, "just another horse with an average score. No one knows the horse is young," in the regular horse trials divisions, while the Young Event Horse divisions give the horses a place to



At the CDCTA Young Event Horse Test four-year-old Oreo du Lavender, owned by Sheryl Van Gundy, placed third at his very first outing, with trainer Jan Byyny aboard.

shine on equal footing. She is very excited by the concept and applauds the development of the Series, saying it gets better and better every year. Both of her horses have qualified for the championships and she plans on taking them this fall.

Over the weekend of June 24-25, a Young Event Horse division was held at the CDCTA Horse Trials at Locust Hill in Culpeper, Virginia. London Grove (Shadow Show-Rewarding Date) dominated the four-year-old division with Will Coleman in the irons, winning on a score of 83.68. London Grove's owner, Nina Gardner, was very pleased with his performance and appreciates the opportunity the Series gives her young horses to get early experience. Coleman said that the competition was a good one and the organizers were very accommodating. He was also very grateful to the sponsors, saying "the prizes were outstanding!"

London Grove, a 16.1-hand bay Thoroughbred gelding, was bred by Welcome Here Farm specifically for eventing. His sire is a homebred and his dam, who was bred for steeplechasing, has competed through the one-star level. Gardner and Coleman are hoping to get him to the Championships, and in the meantime they are going to give him time to grow and mature. Having ridden many talented mounts, Coleman said that he is very impressed with this young prospect and thinks he has upper level event horse written all over him. This sounds like one to keep an eye on!

Allison Springer rode London Calling (Feiner Stern-Duellsa) to the first place position in the five-year-old division with a score of 75.02, just beating the second place

finisher by little more than one tenth of a point. Springer thought the competition was fantastic and she "thoroughly enjoyed taking the young horses to it. It's encouraging breeding in our country." She mentioned that the judging was fair and they did a good job organizing the competition.

London Calling's owner, Samantha O'Connell, from Wenham, Massachusetts, is planning on trying for the Championships. The flashy 16.2-hand chestnut Hanoverian mare is currently on the market, and Springer and O'Connell have plans to compete her at training level until she sells. The young mare won a novice division at the Virginia Horse Trials this year, and will also be heading to the 2006 American Eventing Championships at the Carolina Horse Park in September.

As of the weekend of June 24-25, 20 horses have earned one 70+ score in the Series, with some planning on pursuing a second to compete at the Championships. Six others have already qualified, three in previous competitions this year: Amberjack (Aberjack-Chestnut Lady) owned/ridden by Jacqueline Naugler from Aiken, South Carolina; Unbelievable (Hideaway's Erin Go Bragh-Gold Rock) owned/ridden by Cindy Wood from Newark, Maryland; and Ganymedes (Sea Salute-Graceful Glory) owned by Shannon Stimson in Berkeley, California; with London Grove, BFF Peppermint, and BFF In Disguise qualified also as previously mentioned.

The USEA Young Event Horse Series could not be possible without the support of its sponsors: Spalding Labs, Stackhouse Saddles, Fleeceworks, Acorn Hill Farm, and Dunlavin Horses. 