

# NAJYRC MENTORSHIP PROGRAM REFLECTIONS

BY MIRANDA LOSEY

*This past summer Miranda Losey, a young rider from Area VIII, participated in the annual NAJYRC Mentorship Program. Spearheaded by Vicki Fine, this program gives young riders the opportunity to shadow officials throughout the week of the North American Junior/Young Rider Championships.*



The 2015 mentorship program participants pose with the NAJYRC ground jury before the start of show jumping. VICKI FINE PHOTO

After spending an amazing, knowledge-filled, beyond my expectations, week at the Kentucky Horse Park for the North American Junior/Young Riders Championships 2015 Mentorship Program, I was excited to be back home with my horse to apply all that I had learned. I am very appreciative and grateful to have been chosen as a participant in the mentorship program this year. This was a once in a lifetime learning opportunity for me. I went into this program ready to absorb as much information and knowledge that I could about putting on a championship show. Weeks later, I was still processing all of it.

The mentorship program allows for young riders to shadow technical delegates, members of the ground

jury, vets, Event organizers and FEI stewards that are working at the Event. I had the privilege of shadowing Andy Bowles, the technical delegate (TD). We did a lot of work to the cross-country course due to the abundance of rain the Kentucky Horse Park received that week. I learned firsthand how and why trees, flowers and other decorations are strategically placed in front, around and on the cross-country jumps. Another thing I got to experience was placing/ designing cross-country jumps and the questions the designers are asking of the horse and rider. This was due to the fact that the original jumps were under water! I attended the daily chefs' meetings with Andy, where he would communicate with the coaches about the course conditions, discuss the next day's

activities and answer any questions.

I was also fortunate to work alongside the ground jury: Les Smith, Jane Hamlin and JoYoung. As proteges, we were able to stand behind them for the horse inspections and to see all of the horses and riders up close. I now know what the ground jury looks for in the jog-ups that happen before dressage and show jumping.

The ground jury was also kind enough to let us (myself, Jane Cook from Area V and Sam Laurel from Area VIII) sit inside the judges' boxes with them on Thursday and Friday for dressage. This experience brought a whole new perspective on what judges are looking for with each movement, how they score a test and the encouraging comments they leave on tests. We got to sit in all three of

the different judges' boxes located at H, C and E of the dressage ring. It was incredible to see what a difference an angle can make when viewing the movements of the horse as well as the accuracy of the test. Usually when I am competing, I can only watch a few dressage tests. Yet while I was sitting in the box, I could not wait for the next horse to come in so I could hear what the judges had to say. We were also given a chance to score alongside the ground jury and compare our scores and comments with how they scored each test. The ground jury asked us what we saw and pointed out what we might have missed. This was a great learning opportunity.

In addition to our daily activities, we got to sit in on the safety meeting. This was a huge eye-opener for me. There are so many things that must be considered. There is not only a plan A when it comes to safety situations, but there is B, C, and D. Vicki Fine (the head of the mentorship program) introduced us to the chief medical officer, Jerry Clemmons, who is in charge of the safety of the entire Kentucky Horse Park. He is one busy guy, especially the week of the NAJYRC. It is his job, along with his team, to ensure that all of the spectators, riders, vendors and everyone in attendance at the Horse Park has a safe and enjoyable experience. In addition to NAJYRC, Breyer Fest was going on so that brought in even more people to keep safe! He was nice enough to take some time to talk to us about safety and the most common injuries that require medical attention.

Vicki exposed us to endurance riding, and we were able to talk with some of the riders and even one of their vets. Their vet checks are very similar to the Eventing vet boxes or 10 minute box. The vet told us strategies to improve our horses' conditioning, so when they cross through the finish line our horses will still have a lot left in them. When the endurance horses crossed through the finish line, most of the horses looked like they were just about to get started and not like they →



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## Eventing Team





Show jumping course designer, Richard Jeffery, walks the course with the mentorship program participants and ground jury. VICKI FINE PHOTO

had just run 76 miles!

Saturday was cross-country day and I was able to see the work Andy, the ground jury and I had done all play out. I rode around with Andy and we continuously checked out how the course was riding, how the vet box was running and how the horses were coming in after their cross-country round. We also responded to all the jump judges that had questions about a fall or refusal. Additionally I had the opportunity to stand in the control tower while Andy and Les, the President of the ground jury, discussed various issues which occurred during the day. In the control tower you can look over almost the entire cross-country course. It's an amazing view. The day was very eventful and action packed.

Another awesome thing we got to do was walk the show jumping course with the course designer, Richard Jeffery. We learned his take on the course and why he designed the course the way he did. We were able to meter out the course with Richard, Andy and the ground jury to see what the optimum time would be. Since it was a championship course, it was set at the maximum allowed height and technical difficulty. The in-and-outs and triple were placed strategically within the course and it was a nice forward turning course. After walking the course we went up into the Rolex arena tower with the ground jury and Andy to see how they score and time the riders.

Sadly, most of the ground jury and TDs had to leave shortly after the conclusion of the show jumping. We gave them our gifts of appreciation and thanked each of them for this amazing experience and for letting us shadow them all week while we tried not to get in their way.

The ground jury and Andy were a blast to be around. They were so professional, friendly and willing to teach us everything they know. We all worked well together and even joked around quite a bit with one another. They were constantly asking us questions and we were constantly asking them questions as well. They all took the time to educate us as much as possible, which made us really feel like we were a part of a decision or discussion. I have much more respect for all technical delegates and ground juries after completing the mentorship program. They do a lot in order for riders to have a fun, safe, learning experience at horse shows, regardless of the level. I can see now that this is not just a job to the officials, they are on the horse and riders' side. They truly want to educate riders to be safe and learn about the sport of Eventing instead of just saddling up and riding. They are more than happy and willing to answer any questions you might have, whether it is something to do with your dressage test, a question on the cross-country course, the placement of the jumps for show jumping or anything else that you might want to

know.

Going into this program, I never thought I would want to become a licensed official. Yet after completing it I can potentially see myself becoming a technical delegate and trying to make a difference in the sport of Eventing. Thank you to Andy for showing me what it takes to become a technical delegate, and what a technical delegate does. It's a lot of responsibility and so much rests on your shoulders. However, after the show, knowing that the courses ran smoothly and that the Event was a success for both the officials and the riders, makes it all worth it.

I recommend all young riders who are very passionate about the sport of Eventing and interested in one day becoming an official to sign up for the mentorship program. The amount of information, experience and the relationships I established throughout the week is incredible. I never knew what really happened behind the scenes of a show. Now I have the utmost respect for the officials and all of the volunteers that it takes to run a show. When I step foot into the dressage arena, I know what the judges want to see and hopefully I can deliver this to them. I also have a totally different perspective when I walk my cross-country and show jumping courses. I am truly thankful to have been picked for this program. It is definitely an experience I will cherish forever. 🐾