

Southern California Region Wins at USPC West Coast Championships.

by Lindsey Allen

"All regions line up on the east side of the arena for opening ceremonies in alphabetical order!"

My sister and I were among the first to reach the designated area, but we hesitated to form a line. As the organizer proceeded to recite the names of the United States Pony Club regions present, we exchanged amused smiles with the other girl from our region. Southern California was indeed to the rear of the line as we had thought. But it wasn't just near the end. It was the end. Thus began our 2018 Pony Club Championships West experience at Donida Farm Equestrian Center in Auburn, WA, Aug. 6-10.

Because my sister and I were in a different division than our SoCal colleague, we would combine with two girls from Oregon region to compete. These multi-region teams are called "scramble" teams. While they are more unpredictable competitively, we loved the opportunity they gave to get to know Pony Clubbers from across the

Soon a woman over a megaphone began announcing the regions to the audience. The snake of Pony Clubbers began to inch its way forward. While we waited, we recognized other regions from California. We chatted a bit with Sierra Pacific, also a group of three, and we hailed Middle California as it went past. There were only a few regions at Championships West, and I was pleased that I had brought more than enough Southern California pins to trade. I wondered how many other regions' pins I could get onto my hat.

Finally we heard our region's name over the megaphone, and we marched proudly into the covered arena. I waved and smiled like there were 20 of us instead of three. We took our place facing the crowd and accepted the applause of families, friends, and volunteers. After a quick round of acknowledgements and a recitation of the Pony Club Pledge, the ceremonies concluded. We posed for a Southern California group picture before heading into town for the night.

The Kick-Off Quiz

The competition started the next morning. We competed in Quiz, a sport that tests knowledge of Horse Management in five phases that cater to different learning styles. The first phase of the day, Classroom, was our favorite. Competitors stand individually and answer a question provided by a judge. They can ask for questions at their current certification levels or up to two levels above by the end of the phase. This is usually voluntary, but this time the judges required us to participate at least one level above in the second round and two above in the final round. This kept the scores more equitable in such a small division, but it made the phase more challenging. Our team triumphed over a few missed questions and finished with a good score.



The next phase did not start until the afternoon, so our team got to know each other while we watched other Pony Clubbers compete in Showjumping. It was so exciting to watch the riders and their horses.

Each partnership was unique in appearance and style. We cheered extra loudly when one teammate's best friend was on course. We watched a foxhunting demonstration by a local hunt club and met the hounds, who adored the attention smothered on them by dozens of kids. We also learned about hunting etiquette (the Hunt master wears the red coat) and how modern hunts progress (they drag a scent beforehand instead of chasing live foxes).

Our final phase of the day, Megaroom, began after lunch. This phase has competitors match horse-related objects on a table to names on a sheet of paper within a certain time limit. It often has an obscure item or two that becomes controversial, but Quiz has an inquiry process for that very purpose. It allows competitors to defend their opinions on incorrect answers. If they can support their answer with Pony Club resources and convince the judge, they receive the points for that question. Each member on our team got at least half of the items on each table correct, so we went to our hotels satisfied with our performance.

Day-Two

Stations, the first phase on day two, is done as a group. Teams work together to answer questions at five different stations. The topics in Stations can get very creative, giving an equestrian flair to everything from Pictionary and charades to Velcro labels and Taboo. Our team loved Stations, not only because it was fun, but also because we got a perfect score. It also gave us a chance to strengthen our team bond, which had already grown in leaps and bounds. We had time to watch some Dressage before our next phase, and we enjoyed watching a girl compete in Western Dressage, a new discipline in Pony Club.

That afternoon we took the Written Test. Each competitor receives a test with multiple choice and true-false questions covering many Horse Management topics. We also had to work as a team on the tiebreaker, available in case anyone tied on the test. All of us did very well. My sister and I won an inquiry on the same question, which filled our whole team with pride. The next day we competed in the final phase called Barn, which is a hands-on application of Horse Management individually and as a team. We helped each other through our team question, and our individual scores were pretty good. We were a tight-knit group by the competition's end, and we exchanged contact information while we waited for awards to begin.

Our division went first in awards, and with only three teams to place, it went very quickly. When the other two teams received third and second place, our team stared at each other in disbelief. We had won! Our faces shone brighter than our medals as we posed for team pictures. Our goodbyes were bittersweet when the four of us parted ways. Our team had disbanded, but we had memories of an amazing three days that kept us united. Those memories did not just include us competing together. We had become champions together.

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