

SHOW REPORTS & PHOTOS

Zone 10 repeats golden performance.

USHJA Zone 10 riders went to the 2018 USEF National Pony Jumper Championships in Lexington, KY, hoping to return West with gold medal titles for the second year in a row. After strong performances in both the team and individual competition, they got their wish.



New to the championships, Zacko Hardin, 12, of New Cuyama, rode Patty Arnett's The Girl Next Door to a gold medal finish with no faults over the three days of competition. "Dinky" (A P Jet—Brookserendade) as she's known at the barn was born as a twin and is a 14.1-hand Thoroughbred registered with the Jockey Club.

"I'm so overwhelmed and excited. I honestly thought I was going to cry," said Hardin after the win on Saturday evening, August 11. "All my friends came from Utah to support me. Everything

September 2018 - Pony Jumper Championships

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just felt great. I didn't have a doubt about a distance to any jump, anything at all. I felt like it was the best round I have ever had on her. This was the most amazing experience I've ever had."



Zone 10 teammate Sydney Flashman, 16, of Pasadena earned silver with just two time faults in the final round aboard Focalize Dew Drop, owned by Finley Hamilton.

"It feels amazing, unreal," said Flashman of her silver medal finish. "I have come here to do the jumpers for two years. The first year I stopped out in two of the four rounds, and last year I came hoping to get over the triple. This year it is an amazing feeling to have a pony that is so wonderful. I am just so lucky and overwhelmed."

In bronze, Taylor Brinsfield, 14, of White Hall, Maryland, rode Kathleen Anderson's Sprite to a four-fault finish.

The team Championships on Friday night brought great camaraderie and competition. With two returning team gold medalists and two new recruits, the Zone 10 team Zacko, Sydney, Hannah Attar and Tabitha Okitsu, led by Chef d'Equipe Caroline Sterckx, overcame the tension and excitement of the USEF National Pony Jumper Championships to defend their golden title from last year. David and Caroline Sterckx of Sterckx Stables train Sydney, Hannah and Tabitha, and top jumper rider Kristin Hardin coaches her son Zacko.

Tabitha Okitsu and Sydney Flashman participated on the gold medal team in 2017, and Okitsu went on to earn the gold individual as well. Okitsu recently participated in a Lindsay Maxwell Charitable Fund/USHJA Emerging Athletes Program Regional Training Session at the Los Angeles Equestrian Center with lead clinician Kip Rosenthal, which she felt helped prepare her for the Championships. Flashman noted that the Zone 10 team had chemistry right from the beginning.

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“We all became friends really quickly. We all met at a show previously about a month ago, and we got along really well there,” said Flashman. “We all met again at the rider’s meeting, and we just really get along well together. We were all wishing each other good luck and congratulating each other. There’s definitely a really big bond between us and so that made winning really cool.”

The Championships courses were designed by Jasen Shelley. USEF Youth Chef d’Equipe and USHJA Show Jumping Technical Adviser DiAnn Langer presented awards throughout the championships and provided guidance to the riders on the new Show Jumping Athlete Pathway, a joint USHJA-US Equestrian effort that identifies and nurtures Jumping athletes as they advance through the sport to enhance future success for Olympic and international teams representing the United States. USHJA extends special thanks to the chefs d’equipe for all the teams.

“It feels great. It was really fun!” said Attar. “I’m really happy for the experience.”

This report is an edited version of a USHJA press release.