

***Riders celebrated Valentine's Day weekend doing what they love and pursuing their passion in the show ring.***



The 2015 Gold Coast Show Series, sponsored by LEGISequine.com, got off to an exciting start Feb. 13-15 with the promise of points toward fabulous year-end awards, and the LEGIS Hunter Derby Rider Bonus is also up for grabs.

After winning the LEGIS Hunter Rider Bonus last year with Freedom (Anna Sophia Lotman, owner), Michael Leon started off the year with another victory in the \$1,000 USHJA Hunter Derby, this time aboard C Coast Z (Anna Sophia Lotman, owner). "We just purchased C Coast Z for Anna Sophia to do the Junior Hunters and hunter derbies," Michael shared. "He won the 2011 International Hunter Derby Final in Kentucky. He's very easy and experienced for Anna Sophia to learn on."

Michael will also go for the bonus on his Carrera. "After the first round, C Coast Z had about a nine point lead with a score of 89 and Carrera was in seventh place after a minor mistake on course," Michael recalled. "So in the handy round, I just kept it simple with C Coast Z and showed off his big stride and jumping style." In the handy round, Michael's horse, Carrera nearly edged out C Coast Z, scoring 85 and 87 respectively. When the final scores were tallied, Michael won the class with C Coast Z and placed fourth on Carrera.

Michelle Beaton-Kent (Stephanie Haney, trainer), won the SFHJA Medal Class and earned the championship in the Long Stirrup Division aboard Cosmo (Michelle Beaton-Kent, owner). "Cosmo is just fantastic," she said with a smile. "I just got him last March for my elementary school graduation. I just stayed out in my corners and tried to stay over when landing from the jumps. I was excited to qualify for this medal final because I've been working really hard to practice my riding every day." Seventh grader Michelle is currently the leader in the 2' Novice Division in the Interscholastic Equestrian League (IEL) shows for her middle school, Sierra

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Vista.

Fifth grader Emma Fabbri (Abriana Frith, trainer) celebrated her twelfth birthday by winning the Carousel Hunter Derby with an overall score of 80. “Winning was so meaningful for me because not only was it my twelfth birthday, but also the one year anniversary of owning my horse,” Emma explained with a smile. “Over the past year, he has given me a lot of confidence. He won a Carousel Derby class last year with Saige Bryan, but this was my first time winning. It felt just so great.”



Local high school teacher Julie Knoop (Kim Tasker, trainer) and Zeraton (Victoria Johnson, owner) had a great show in the 90M Low Children’s/Adult Amateur Jumpers. “I just wanted to have a good flow to each fence,” she said. “He’s a really solid jumper and has been helping me gain more confidence. Unfortunately, my own horse has retired, but I’ve made the most out of it by learning to ride as many different horses as possible.”

Animal lover and small animal veterinarian Shelly Wilson (Beth Cadwallader, trainer) made a clean sweep in the 1.20M Jumpers aboard her own Pharaoh, thus earning the championship as well. Shelly rode when she was younger, but after taking time off to attend college and veterinary school, she jumped into the show ring for the first time at the age of 33 and has been there ever since. “I work really hard most of the week—12 and 14 hour days—to be able to have weekends off to ride,” Shelly explained. “I didn’t start competitively riding until I was in my 30s. This was my first time ever winning every single class that I rode in, which was very exciting me for me.”

As for her horse, Shelly added, “Pharaoh is 14 now, but my fiancé bought him when the horse was six months old and my trainer Beth was actually the one who started training him from the very beginning.”

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Richard Zappala (Mark Farndale, trainer) piloted his new horse, Contessa, in the 1.00m Jumpers. “We found her in Europe and imported her last July,” Richard explained. “This is only her third show ever and my first time showing her at the 1.00M level. She’s 6 years old and has the best head on her shoulders.”

Richard, who is a retired equine veterinarian and now director of the UCLA Pre-medical Sciences Program, went into the ring with a solid plan that proved successful. “In the first round, I wanted to get her over all the jumps and only take a couple tight turns,” he explained “If she felt good, like she was in front of my leg, I planned to be really bold and take all the tight turns in the jump-off. I stuck to the plan exactly how Mark suggested and my horse went around beautifully. She can really turn on a dime, so we used that to our advantage.”

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*Report provided by LEG Up News. For complete results visit [www.langershows.com](http://www.langershows.com).*