

### ***Sydney Hutchins adds another medal finals to her impressive resume.***

*photos by McCool Photography*

Sydney Hutchins rode her way to the top of yet another medal finals podium when Blenheim EquiSports hosted the ASPCA Maclay Regional Championships for Region 8 on Saturday night, Sept. 17. It was one of six regional championships held around the country that day.



The top placing riders from these classes, along with two Regionals to be held the following weekend, generate the list of over 150 qualified junior riders that will compete for the highly-anticipated ASPCA Maclay Medal Finals held at the CP National Horse Show in Lexington, KY, on Nov. 5-6.

After 39 ASPCA Finals candidates jumped a challenging course, then performed on the flat, a select group of five riders was asked to work-off. More than three hours after the class began, it was Sydney Hutchins and Gaudi who emerged as the top of the Region 8 ASPCA Maclay Regional Championships. Held in the Blenheim Farms indoor arena, the honorable Brian Lenehan and Chance Arakelian judged the multi-phase event.

Scott Starnes set a track that tested the riders from start to finish, including option jumps that showcased the ability to focus and execute the questions asked. With a bending line heading towards the top of the ring as the first two jumps, a single oxer across the middle led to a turn away from the in-gate to a skinny hay bale combination direct to a forward four stride line.

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Fan jumps were placed at the end of the next two lines, plus an option for fence 8. The final bending line ended with an option at fence 10 to a combination at 11ab.

After the jumping phase, 30 riders returned in three groups for the flat phase. Along with the walk, trot and canter, all three groups were asked to demonstrate a lengthening of stride at the trot and canter, a canter departure from the sitting trot and a counter-canter in both directions.



Judges Lenehan and Arakelian required a work-off of the top five riders. Returning in reverse order of preference were a group of top West Coast competitors: Eli Yeager, winner of the 2016 CPHA Foundation 14 & Under Equitation Championships; Peyton Warren, the first recipient of the Shelby Drazan Memorial Award; Emma Marlowe, 2015 WCE Medal Finals Champion; Sydney Hutchins, winner of the 2014 Platinum Performance/USEF Show Jumping Talent Search Finals West; and Kayla Lott, winner of the 2016 USHJA Hunterdon Cup Classic.

The test included a canter directly to 4a, 9, counter-canter rider option at fence 10, canter 7, trot rider option at fence 8, canter 5 and return to the line. Fence 10 proved to be the biggest

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challenge of the work-off. Yeager had a rail at fence 10, while Warren had two lead swaps on the way to that same fence.

Marlowe executed a good work-off, with no errors and held on to her third place spot. Hutchins was stylish and smooth, choosing a walk transition into the counter-canter, and the more difficult option jumps, illustrating a command of the test and her horse. Lott also performed well, but had a brick come off the wall at fence 10, ultimately bumping her down to second overall.

"I really liked the course. I thought the jumps were definitely set very spooky," Hutchins said. "Something where the horses went out and woke up a little bit. But I think the course had a really nice rhythm to it."

She also spoke about the bond with her mount, Gaudi, who is owned by barnmate Taylor Harris. "This is my fourth time doing the Regionals, each time on him. He is amazing. He has taken me so far," she explained. "We do get into a little bit of a fight sometimes. He's very opinionated. But I think that's what makes great horses. They have to have a little bit of an opinion about what they want to do, and because we've been together so long we're able to connect. He pulls through for me for sure."

A talented group of riders, including Hutchins, will head East for the Pennsylvania National, Washington International and The CP National Horse Show. Sydney plans to continue riding in the jumper ring as well.

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