

Written by Marnye Langer
Thursday, 01 December 2016 23:17

Rollin, Renee & Morgan rock LAHJA Junior, Senior & Pony Medal Finals.

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Despite the challenges brought about because of the EHV outbreak at Los Angeles Equestrian Center, causing Langer Equestrian Group to move the LA Season Finale to Hansen Dam Equestrian Center only 14 days before the start of the Nov. 17-20 show, the competition and the LAHJA Junior, Senior, and Pony Finals came off beautifully.



With the afternoon format of the LAHJA Junior and Senior Medal Finals, a large audience was on hand to cheer for the top riders and those riders did not disappoint.

The Los Angeles Hunter Jumper Association Medal Finals tests riders over three rounds that require them to show mastery of their riding skills and consistency under pressure. After three rounds, the top four juniors were all within four points of one another. The championship was going to come down to the work-off, and the judges had high expectations. Andie Aviv, Breanna Bunvacz, Jessica Sanders and Rollin Sykes faced off, and in the end Rollin emerged victorious.

“The riders rode well,” commented Laurie Grayson, who judged with Chance Arakelian, “but our winner set herself apart. She was accurate and smooth.” The final part of the test required the riders to execute two changes of lead down the length of the arena in front of the judges. Rollin chose to do one simple change through the walk and one flying change. “I do changes a lot at home, so I was comfortable. Everyone in the work-off was close (in points) and no one else did flying changes so I chose to show both.” The judges were fine with the decision and Rollin moved into the lead.

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“When they called my name as the winner I was so happy. This is my first medal final win,” said the high school freshman who trains with Nicole Husky. “I have ridden for years and this was my second time in the LAHJA Junior Finals. I was able to prove to myself that I could do this. I got nervous in the first round and had a deep fence, but then I was really smooth in the second round. My third round was solid and I really liked the work off.”

Rollin hopes to build on her success and go indoors next year to ride in the Maclay and USEF Medal Finals, and her LAHJA Junior Medal Finals win will go a long way to helping her achieve her riding goals.

Renee’s Roll Continues



Amateur rider Renee Rodda had her own goals. After riding as a junior, Renee did what many young adults do and took a step back from horses and the show ring. “I returned to riding five years ago after a 16 year gap. I wasn’t riding when I was dating my husband, yet he is so supportive. In fact, both he and Renee’s mother were on hand to watch her clinch the LAHJA Senior Medal Finals.

“Mary (Gatti) and Kim (Tasker) are like family,” explained Renee of her trainers. “They are super supportive and they keep my horses set up for me. I usually only ride twice a week and it helps me ride well knowing my horses are well cared for.”

With support from her friends and family on hand, and confidence in her horse and trainers, Renee rode solidly throughout the competition. She headed into the work-off with a commanding lead and executed a smooth, polished test. “We were really impressed with her riding,” said Laurie Grayson after the work-off.

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Renee has had a tremendous year, and winning the LAHJA Senior Medal Finals capped it off. She and her hunter, Elusive, have moved up to the 3'3" Amateur Owner Hunters and have put in strong performances throughout the year, and Renee credits her equitation horse, Notable, as a horse of a lifetime. "We got him about three years ago from Europe where he was a 1.30M jumper. I think he likes his job, and he has tons of stride and scope. Plus, he covers up some of my mistakes," laughed Renee. Fortunately there weren't any mistakes Notable needed to cover up.

"I was nervous going into the third round of the top 10," said Renee. She was solid enough to hold on to her lead, and Susan Krieg, Andrea Litz, and Jessica Smith joined Renee in the work-off. Renee did a beautiful job with negotiating the bending turn while holding the counter canter; it was the trot fence that followed that had her concerned. "I counter canter a lot when I am home, but the monkey on my back has been the trot fence. When I was over the trot jump I finally exhaled!"



When Renee's name was called as champion she smiled. "I felt great and was so happy," said Renee. She has had an amazing year in medal finals having finished second in the PCHA Adult, first in the Foxfield, and now the winner of the LAHJA Senior Medal Finals. "Next year I hope to qualify for the CPHA Senior which is a challenging 3'6" medal. She also hopes to show in some 3'6" Amateur Owner Hunter classes with Elusive.

Morgan Makes Her Day

In the LAHJA Pony Medal Final, Morgan Yorlano got off to a rough start before the second round, but she did not let it affect her performance. "I saw a long distance in the warm-up and my pony didn't. I slipped off over his neck, but I decided that was good luck." The sixth grader from Simi Valley walked into the second round and laid down a great trip. "I got all my distances and was smooth and consistent." The judges rewarded her with an 81 score, which put her into the lead for the work-off.

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Morgan held on to the lead and stood in the winner's circle. "I thought I might be first or second, and when I realized I won I was really happy. I can't believe I get to have my name engraved on the trophy." She credits her pony, Kapalua with helping her with her successes. Morgan's family leased the Large Pony for the year. "Next year my trainer Heatherly Davis is helping me find a horse. Kapalua has been pretty perfect," and Morgan was pretty perfect in the LAHJA Pony Medal Finals, her final time showing a pony.

The LAHJA Medal Finals are one of the most challenging and prestigious local area medal finals and regularly recognize excellent riders, many of whom go on to do really well.

Author Marnye Langer is president of the Los Angeles Hunter Jumper Association and partner in the Langer Equestrian Group family of companies.

Beware: Bees On Course

Sometimes the most unpredictable things happen at horse shows. Saturday afternoon at the LA Season Finale, a swarm of honey bees decided that the jumper ring would make a good home. The bees took up residence in a bush beside an oxer. Course designer Peter Grant made a quick modification to the course and fence 7 disappeared.

"I thought it was kind of weird that after I learned the course my trainer told me there was no more fence seven, said Grace Carson who was riding LEGIS Adele in the .90 Child/Adult Jumpers. "I thought maybe it was a new way of counting, six then eight, then later on someone told me about the bees!"

That evening the ring crew carefully relocated the plant far away from the ring and the Sunday

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morning jumper classes got underway. Only the bees returned. They took up residence in a new bush right next to the same green and tan oxer.

Show Manager Charlotte Skinner-Robson made a few calls and a short while later a beekeeper came to the horse show. "Clearly we wanted to keep horses and riders safe, but we also wanted to try to find a safe home for the bees." The beekeeper quickly found the queen, placed her in a box, and the rest of the hive followed. The jumper ring was back up and running, Grace Carson didn't have to worry about weird numbering, and the bees found a new home on the beekeeper's ranch.