

### ***Zone 10 Chef Morley Abey sets a “one for all, all for one” tone.***

*with Morley Abey*

High-energy hunter/jumper trainer Morley Abey finally found something that exhausted him: being chef d’equipe for the USHJA Zone 10 NAJYRC teams. After guiding them to Young Rider team bronze and Junior Rider team silver, he returned home ready to sleep for two straight days, but the excitement wasn’t over yet. That’s when the many-time NAJYRC trainer but first-time chef got word that he had received the Caristo Cup, a very proud feather in Morley’s career cap.



Even without the impressive team medals and the Caristo Cup, Morley would have accomplished what he set out to do as chef. “I really wanted to lead the kids in uniting them as a team,” he explains. The last few years have seen smaller fields of contenders from Zone 10 and the dwindling results and esprit de corps that can accompany that. This year, spots for both teams were hotly contested by many contenders and the time was ripe to stress that aspect of the experience.

With the likes of Olympians Will Simpson and Harley Brown among the individual members’ personal coaches, Morley explains that teaching these kids how to ride or navigate a course

Written by Morley Abey

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was not part of the chef's job description. When Zone 10's Karen Healey and Fred Bauer asked him to take the position, "I knew that I couldn't guarantee results but what I could try very hard to do is get some unity in our zone. These kids are the next wave and we wanted them to really know what it means to be part of a team."

From the first team dinner on, Morley emphasized to all – riders, parents, trainers – "that we are not just representing ourselves, we are representing our entire zone. We have to give it our best, win or lose, and we need to control the things we can control: how we conduct and present ourselves." That meant everything from looking sharp in the FEI jogs to maintaining winning horsemanship and sportsmanship regardless of results. Although the Championship format allows a drop score, Morley emphasized the importance of everybody's contribution to the final result.

It was clear all involved had bought into Morley's mission when it came time to announce the orders of go for each round. That's the chef's decision and sometimes one that is not well received by all. "Not one rider, trainer or parent came to me with a complaint. Every one was like, 'Yes, that makes sense, let's do this!'"

With Mackenzie Drazan, Chandler Meadows, Uma O'Neill and Hannah Von Heidegger, plus alternate Jodie Camberg, comprising the Young Rider team, Morley knew Zone 10 had a highly competitive crew. After round one, three riders were in the top 10, with gold well within reach. The next day, the medal color came down to Zone 10's very last ride, when a single rail led to their bronze finish. "I thought the kids were great," Morley says, of their riding, and moreover, their reaction. "No one said, 'We could have been silver.' Instead, it was "Oh my god, we're bronze!" Two of the kids had tears streaming down their faces standing on the medal podium."



There were friendships gained, too. “No one knew each other that well at the beginning, but they left knowing each other very well.”

He had another super competent squad in the Junior Rider team of Sarah Baz, Dalan Laughlin, Sydney Hutchins and Hunter Siebel, plus alternate Mitch Endicott. The Championship’s high level of pressure and intense atmosphere was new to most and Morley knew that calm and confidence were what they needed from him in the heat of the moment. “It was very humbling,” he says. “They were a team and were looking to me as their chef. Some might get heady with the power of that, but I got heady with the amazing feeling of their respect. I felt that I was leading them into war.”

### **Magic Moments**

As much as he had preached about team spirit and quality of effort over outcome, Morley admits he got a little caught up in the medal mania while cheffing this squad through the week. “I was a little disappointed with our first round. Standing at the backgate, I realized I was thinking about the medals and not the experience. But I caught myself. I ran across the ring and into the VIP area and got all the parents and A team riders together. I told them that when our Junior team alternate, Mitch Endicott, went into the ring, I wanted so much cheering the roof would fly off.”

Mitch had had a tough first round, but when he entered the ring to Zone 10’s roof-raising cheers, he visibly raised his game. “You just saw him elevate,” Morley recalls. And he registered a clean round, to boot, while the rest of the team rallied for the silver. “Everyone agreed it was a huge momentum change: like having a home court advantage.”

Another of Morley’s favorite Championship moments included an individual medal that slipped away. That was Junior rider Dalan Laughlin’s second clear round. “Her trainer Mariano Alario and I looked at each other once she was clear over the fifth jump,” Morley explains. “We realized a clean go would land her a silver medal, but as she came around to the last line, an oxer-vertical-oxer on an S-turn, she was on a .04 second time fault. We started screaming ‘Gallop!’ (chefs aren’t supposed to coach riders on course.)

“She came out of the ring so elated, then realized the time fault put her in fourth. You could see a half-second of disappointment cross her face, but then she was over it. It could have destroyed her, but she said she couldn’t have asked more from her horse and herself and she focused on having finished fourth.”

Morley has lots of praise for the organizers, for the host venue, the Colorado Horse Park, and for the show jumping course designer, Manuel Esparza of Mexico.

He cherishes the chance to help rekindle Zone 10’s team spirit and views the medals and his Caristo Cup to be icing on the cake of an overall “amazing experience.” He considers the riders’ medals “mine” and his Caristo Cup “theirs,” reflecting the shared responsibility for and success in making the most of the Championship’s emphasis on learning to truly be part of a team.

“Young Riders, to me, is all about exactly that: young riders,” Morley concludes. “The Championships is a place and time when these riders get our undivided attention. From the chef’s point of view, we can’t ride their horses and they don’t need us to tell them how to ride, but we can share our knowledge about being part of something bigger.”

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*Zone 10 chef Morley Abey and his wife Joie Gatlin operate a top hunter/jumper program in Orange County.*

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Zone 10 Chef d’Equipe Morley Abey was awarded the Caristo Cup, an annual award given by Susie Humes, Susie Schoellkopf, Leo Conroy, David Distler and Karen and Heather Caristo in Ralph Caristo’s honor. The award is given to the chef d’equipe who best exemplifies Caristo’s enthusiasm and professionalism. Zone 2 was lucky enough to have Caristo as their chef d’equipe for many years, and he led them to win more individual and team gold medals than any other zone. He was again Zone 2’s chef d’equipe in 2016.

## September 2016 - NAJYRC Report: Jumping

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### Jumping Medals:

#### Young Riders Team

Gold: Combined Zones 4/7

Silver: Combined Zones 3/8/9

Bronze: Zone 10

#### Junior Riders Team

Gold: Mexico North

Silver: Zone 10

Bronze: Zones 2&9

#### Individual Young Riders

Gold: Sophie Simpson/Zone 4 (Cheered for as a Zone 10 honorary member)

Silver: Delaney Flynn/Zone 8

Bronze: Jennifer Gates/Zone 9

#### Individual Junior Riders

Gold: Lucy Matz

Silver: Carlos Hank Guerrero/Mexico North

Bronze: Brian Moggre/Zone 7

Fourth: Dalan Laughlin/Zone 10