

Rider-Awards Roundup

Your guide to USDF's recognition program for riders

BY CRISTEN BROWN



The rider-awards program is one of USDF's oldest and most popular. From the single gold and silver medals awarded in 1974, the program has grown exponentially, with 946 USDF members receiving rider performance awards, rider medals, freestyle bars, and Master's Challenge awards in 2010. The medals in particular have become sought-after symbols of dressage achievement and are noted with pride on many professionals' resumes and websites.

In this article, I'll explain the criteria for the various awards. We'd love to have you join us in receiving your own rider award in person at a future USDF Salute Gala and Annual Awards Banquet!

Eligibility Prerequisites

To count toward USDF rider awards, scores must be earned at US Equestrian Federation-licensed/USDF-recognized competitions, and you must be a USDF group or participating member in good standing when scores are earned.

Horses do not need to be lifetime-registered with USDF, but they must meet minimum competition-eligibility requirements at the time scores are earned.

A rider may earn scores toward an award on any num-

ber of horses. USDF rider awards are cumulative, meaning that scores toward an award may be earned over more than one competition season.

Rider Performance Awards

USDF offers rider performance awards at Training, First, and Second Levels. Requirements are as follows:

- Four scores of 60 percent or higher at the respective level
- At two or more different competitions
- From four different judges
- From four different rides
- From any test of the level. If two or more judges score one ride, then the average of their scores counts as a single score.

Rider Medals

The USDF bronze, silver, and gold medals reward riders as they move up through the levels. The bronze medal recognizes achievement at First, Second, and Third Levels. The silver medal is for Fourth Level and Prix St. Georges. The coveted gold medal recognizes achievement at Intermediate I through Grand Prix.

A big plus for bronze-medal aspirants is that First and Second Level rider performance-awards scores do not expire and may also be applied toward the bronze medal. Gold, silver, and bronze medals may be earned in any order.

Bronze-medal requirements:

- Six scores of 60 percent or higher:
- Two scores at First Level from two different judges and two different rides
- Two scores at Second Level from two different judges and two different rides
- Two scores at Third Level from two different judges and two different rides.

Silver-medal requirements:

- Four scores of 60 percent or higher:
- Two scores at Fourth Level from two different judges and two different rides
- Two scores at Prix St. Georges from two different judges and two different rides.

Gold-medal requirements:

- Four scores of 60 percent or higher:
- Two scores at Intermediate I and/or Intermediate II from two different judges and two different rides
- Two scores at Grand Prix from two different judges and two different rides.

Freestyle Bars

Similar in structure to the rider medals are the USDF bronze, silver, and gold freestyle bars, awarded for achievement in musical freestyle.

All three freestyle bars have a minimum score requirement of 65 percent. A freestyle bar can be awarded only after a competitor has earned the respective USDF bronze, silver, or gold rider medal; however, it is permissible for a rider to earn both a freestyle bar and the corresponding rider medal in the same competition year.

Freestyle bronze bar requirements:

- Six scores of 65 percent or higher:
- Two freestyle scores at First Level from two different judges and two different rides
- Two freestyle scores at Second Level from two different judges and two different rides
- Two freestyle scores at Third Level from two different judges and two different rides.

Freestyle silver bar requirements:

- Four scores of 65 percent or higher:
- Four freestyle scores at Fourth Level from four different judges and four different rides.

Freestyle gold bar requirements:

- Four scores of 65 percent or higher:

How to Get Your Awards

After you have fulfilled all of the requirements for a USDF rider award, complete and submit the online application (on the USDF website under Awards/Performance). The USDF office no longer requires copies of test sheets. There is a \$25 processing fee per application.

- Two freestyle scores at Intermediate I from two different judges and two different rides
- Two freestyle scores at Grand Prix from two different judges and two different rides.

Master's Challenge Awards

Master's Challenge awards, which are offered at Training through Fourth Levels and as a single FEI-level award, are for riders aged 60 and older. Scores used to earn Master's Challenge awards may also be used toward rider performance awards and medals.

To be eligible for Master's Challenge awards, a rider must be age 60 or older at the time scores are earned. Submit your birth date to USDF before September 30 of the award year. Scores must have been earned after January 1, 1990.

Training, First, and Second Level award requirements:

- Four scores of 60 percent or higher:
- From four different judges
- From four different rides.

Third Level, Fourth Level, and FEI-level award requirements:

- Three scores of 55 percent or higher:

Test Equivalencies for Rider Awards

For purposes of earning USDF rider awards, the equivalencies listed below are in effect for the 2011 competition season.

- FEI Pony Team and Individual tests = Second Level
- FEI Junior Preliminary test = Third Level
- FEI Junior Team and Individual tests = Fourth Level
- FEI Young Rider Preliminary, Consolation, and Team tests = Fourth Level
- FEI Young Rider Individual test = Prix St. Georges
- FEI Pony Freestyle test = Second Level Freestyle
- FEI Junior Freestyle test = Third Level Freestyle
- FEI Young Rider Freestyle test = Fourth Level Freestyle.

- From three different judges
- From three different rides
- FEI levels are combined. Scores may be earned from one level or any combination thereof.

Get Recognized!

Rider performance award winners each receive a patch, a certificate of achievement, and a letter of recognition. All rider-awards recipients are listed on the USDF website and in the annual yearbook issue of *USDF Connection*.

Earners of rider medals, freestyle bars, and Master's Challenge awards are encouraged to attend the annual Salute Gala and Annual Awards Banquet, held during the USDF convention, to receive their awards in person. If you can't be there, then the USDF office will mail your award to you after the convention.

Medalists, freestyle-bar recipients, and Master's Challenge award winners: Don't miss the opportunity to send us a photograph for the annual yearbook issue of *USDF Connection*. Digital images, accompanied by the USDF photo-release form, must be submitted by September of the competition year in which the award was earned in order to be considered for publication.

The rider medals themselves are handsome keepsakes suitable for display. Proud recipients also may purchase lapel-pin-sized medals from the USDF store. Freestyle-bar recipients, USDF is looking into offering a lapel pin for you, too.

For more information about USDF's rider awards, contact the USDF Competitions Department. ▲

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USDF Rider Award Fun Facts

- Since 1974, more than 17,000 rider awards have been bestowed.
- **Janne Rumbough**, Palm Beach, FL, is the only person to have been awarded all six USDF Master's Challenge awards.
- Ten accomplished USDF members have earned all three medals and all three freestyle bars:
 - Stephanie Alvord**, Waterford, VA
 - Shannon Dahmer**, Aurora, CO
 - Marjolein Geven**, Columbus, GA
 - Lynn Jendrowski**, Blacksburg, VA
 - Heather Mason**, Lebanon, NJ
 - Endel Ots**, St. Charles, IL
 - Evelyn Pfoutz**, Westminster, MD
 - Christy Raisbeck**, Fulshear, TX
 - Donna Richardson**, San Marcos, CA
 - Andrea Velas**, Dillsburg, PA.
- The three youngest USDF bronze medalists:
 - Mary Herbst**, Califon, NJ (9 years, 4 months)
 - Jamie Pestana**, Livermore, CA (10 years, 10 months)
 - Frederica Crafts**, Edgartown, MA (12 years, 2 months).
- The three youngest USDF silver medalists:
 - Kristin Brownlee**, Sunnyvale, TX (9 years, 5 months)
 - Bobbie Kerr**, East Aurora, NY (12 years, 10 months)
 - Teresa Adams**, Woodland, CA (13 years, 11 months).
- The three youngest USDF gold medalists:
 - Ashlyn DeGroot**, Hanford, CT (16 years, 3 months)
 - Julia Handt**, Wylie, TX (17 years, 4 months)
 - Lindsey O'Keefe**, Roy, WA (17 years, 10 months).
- The three youngest USDF bronze freestyle bar recipients:
 - Jackson Freismuth**, Whitewater, CO (15 years, 6 months)
 - Katrin Dagge**, Bonita Springs, FL (17 years, 7 months)
 - Rachel Campbell**, Wylie, TX (17 years, 8 months).
- The three youngest USDF silver freestyle bar recipients:
 - Roxanne Strahan**, VC Highlands, NV (15 years, 4 months)
 - Courtney Massie**, Brighton, MI (15 years, 7 months)
 - Ryan Eskridge**, Charlotte, NC (16 years, 10 months).
- The three youngest USDF gold freestyle bar recipients:
 - Jennifer Schrader Williams**, Yelm, WA (24 years, 8 months)
 - Nora Batchelder**, Piermont, NH (25 years, 4 months)
 - Endel Ots**, St. Charles, IL (25 years, 6 months).