

# 2017



# US Dressage Finals

*presented by Adequan®*

# Recap and Results



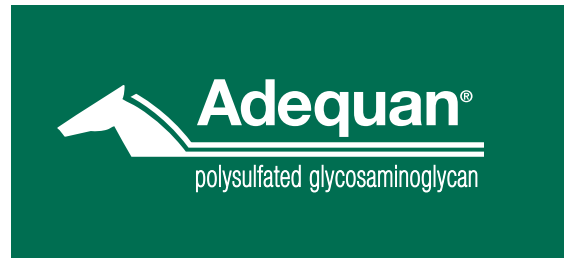
[usdressagefinals.com](http://usdressagefinals.com)





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# US Dressage Finals

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## Recap and Results

Since its inception in 2013, the US Dressage Finals, held at the picturesque Kentucky Horse Park in Lexington, continues to be the only national head-to-head competition of its kind. Made possible by the generous support of presenting sponsor Adequan®, as well as our many other supporting and contributing sponsors, the US Dressage Finals showcases adult amateur and open riders competing for top honors at all dressage levels, from Training to Grand Prix, as well as musical freestyles. The 2017 event marked the Finals' fifth year, and it continues to be heralded as a great success. Included here are some highlights of the 2017 US Dressage Finals presented by Adequan®. Congratulations to all of our competitors! We hope to see you all in 2018!

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Featured below are links to the full US Dressage Finals Results, by class, the USDF Online Store for US Dressage Finals merchandise, as well as a link to USEF Network.

## Full Results by Class

<http://results.horseshowoffice.com/Shows/Classes?sid=524&oid=22>



*get your gear from the*

**US Dressage Finals**

*presented by Adequan®*

[www.usdf.org/store](http://www.usdf.org/store)

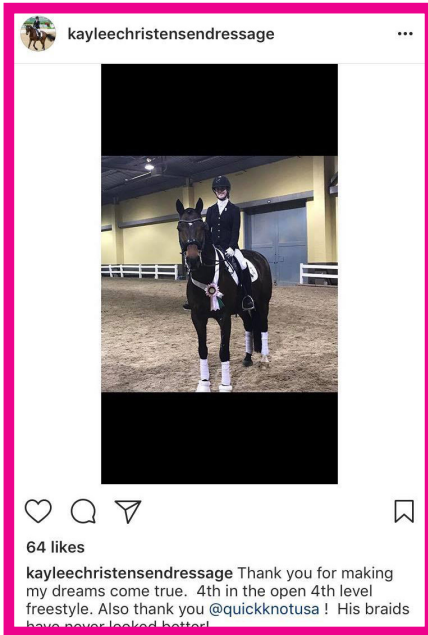


**USEF  
NETWORK**

<https://www.usef.org/network/coverage/2017USDressageFinals>

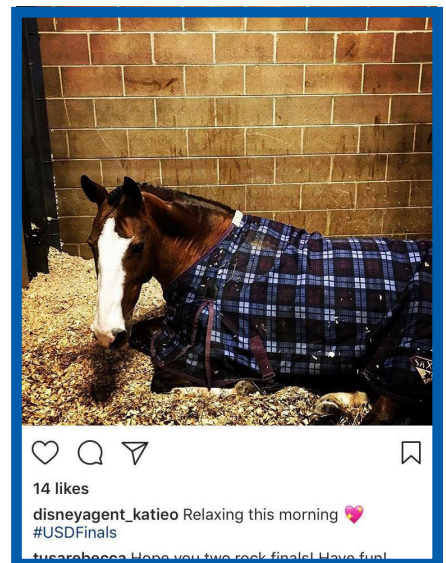
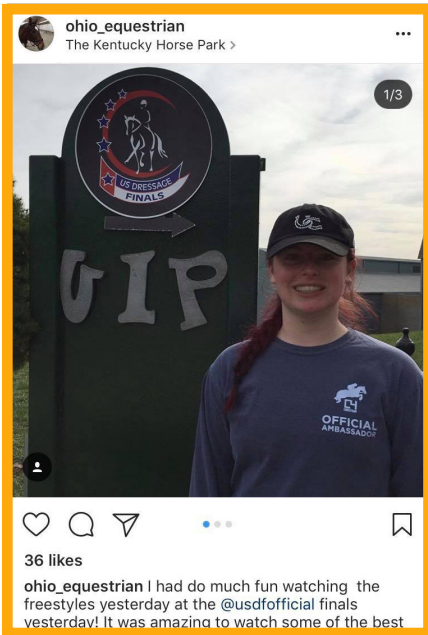
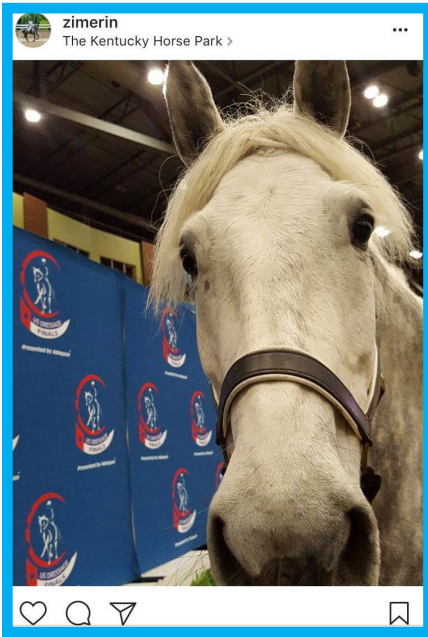
USEF Network featured rides taking place in the Alltech Arena, including many championship rides. All of this coverage is available to view online at the link above.

Competitors at the US Dressage Finals presented by Adequan® shared their experiences.





Competitors at the US Dressage Finals presented by Adequan® shared their experiences.





# REGIONS CUP

The top three scoring riders of designated divisions competed on regional teams in the US Dressage Finals Regions Cup, vying with competitors from across the country for bragging rights for their respective USDF Region.

Congratulations to our top three teams:

## CHAMPION

### Region 3

70.425%

Team Participants

- Anna Marek with Haiku, 72.843%
- Amy Swerdlin with Quileute CCW, 67.556%
- Heather Blitz with Præstemarkens Quatero, 70.877%

## RESERVE CHAMPION

### Region 8

70.314%

Team Participants

- Alexandra Krossen with Nicene, 70.985%
- Linda Currie with Frost T, 70.000%
- Emily Wyman with Chigali, 69.956%

## THIRD PLACE

### Region 9

69.939%

Team Participants

- John Mason with Savannah SWF, 75.076%
- Bonnie Canter with Fifinella GCF, 69.829%
- Amy Rippy with Harley, 64.912%

Fourth Place

Region 1  
69.688%

Sixth Place

Region 2  
68.069%

Eighth Place

Region 6  
64.473%

Fifth Place

Region 4  
68.225%

Seventh Place

Region 7  
64.674%

Ninth Place

Region 5  
44.951%\*

\*Athlete/horse combinations who compete, but are eliminated will receive a 0 (zero) as a score for the class from which they were eliminated.





# PERPETUAL TROPHIES

The US Dressage Finals has been fortunate to have received donations of perpetual trophies that recognize various aspects of the sport of dressage. This year we add another to the five existing perpetual trophies awarded at the US Dressage Finals.

**Jazzman Perpetual Trophy**  
Grand Prix Freestyle Open Champion  
*presented by Donna Richardson*  
2017 Recipient:  
*James Koford riding Adiah HP*



Jazzman was foaled in June 1991, in the Netherlands, by Amethyst by Nimmerdor, out of the star mare Eronica by Wilhelmus. Jazzman came into Donna's life as an "extra" horse on a video of sales horses, while looking for a five- or six-year-old. He was three. After seeing him, Donna purchased him without ever throwing a leg over his back.

At the age of eight, Jazzman qualified for the Festival of Champions, where he was named to the Pan American team. At the Pan Am Games, he contributed to the team's gold medal and finished sixth individually. Shortly after returning home, he suffered a twist colic, requiring emergency surgery. Six months later, he was back in the ring, competing at Intermediate II and winning reserve champion at the USDF Region 7 and CDS Championships. After moving up to Grand Prix over the next couple of years, Jazzman suffered a torn hind suspensory ligament, from which it took almost two years to fully recover. After coming back to win the 2006 Great American/USDF Region 7 Championship and qualifying for the final selection for the 2007 World Cup, Jazzman's suspensory injury recurred and he was retired from competition.

Donna says of Jazzman, "Because of his recurrent illnesses and injuries, we may never know how truly extraordinary Jazz was. In spite of his successes, I think we only caught glimpses of what he could really do. There is no question in my mind that he was my 'once in a lifetime' horse. Jazz will be with me, happily gorging himself on green pastures, until he dies. And then, I hope this trophy will keep his memory alive."



**Janine Westmoreland Malone Perpetual Trophy**  
 Adult Amateur Prix St. Georges Champion  
*presented by USDF*  
 2017 Recipient:  
*Elma Garcia riding Wenesa*



**Lloyd Landkamer Perpetual Trophy**  
 FEI Highest Scoring Mare  
*presented by Janet Foy*  
 2017 Recipient:  
*Fifi MLW*  
 Owner/rider, *Nora Batchelder*



**Calaveras County Perpetual Trophy**  
 Grand Prix Freestyle Adult Amateur Champion  
*presented by Olva Stewart Pharo*  
 2017 Recipient:  
*Lynnette Wadsworth riding Wietze G*



**Veronica Holt Perpetual Trophy**  
 Grand Prix Open Champion  
*presented by USDF Region 5 and Friends*  
 2017 Recipient:  
*Melanie Montagano riding Ga Deva*



**Miki Christophersen Perpetual Trophy**  
 Prix St. Georges Open Champion  
*presented by USDF Region 4*  
 2017 Recipient:  
*Nora Batchelder riding Faro SQF*

# HIGH SCORE BREED AWARDS

2017

## US Dressage Finals

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### **American Connemara Pony Society**

National Levels, Adult Amateur Division – Fifinella GCF; Bonnie Canter, owner/rider

### **American Hanoverian Society**

National Levels, Adult Amateur Division – Freudentänzer; Christine Malpartida, owner/rider

FEI Levels, Adult Amateur Division - Gentleman; Kristin Herzing owner/rider

National Levels, Open Division – Fifi MLW; Nora Batchelder, owner/rider

FEI Levels, Open Division – Faro SQF; Nora Batchelder & Andrea Whitcomb, owners; Nora Batchelder, rider

### **American Morgan Horse Association**

National Levels, Adult Amateur Division – Matton Majestic; Tonya Bruno, owner/rider

FEI Levels, Adult Amateur Division – Blue and White Raven; Jennifer Drescher owner/rider

### **American Saddlebred Registry**

FEI Levels, Adult Amateur Division – New York City Slicker; Jody Swimmer, owner/rider

### **American Warmblood Society and Sporthorse Registry**

National Levels, Adult Amateur Division – Gotham; Sara Stone, owner/rider

### **Arabian Horse Association**

National Levels, Adult Amateur Division – Pik Andromeda; Joanne Dadd, owner/rider

FEI Levels, Adult Amateur Division – Trifecta; Betty Horst & Courtney Cutright, owners; Courtney Cutright, rider

### **Draft Cross Breeders & Owners Association**

National Levels, Adult Amateur Division – Benjamin Blue; Kerry Rose, owner/rider

### **Friesian Horse Association of North America**

National Levels, Open Division – Eagle Fan Bosksicht; Julie Roche, owner; Linda Strine, rider

FEI Levels, Open Division – Sijmen fon LaClar; Barbara Hanus, owner; Heather McCarthy, rider

### **Friesian Sporthorse Association**

FEI Levels, Open Division – Celtic Grace; Bobbi Wojtowicz, owner; Jonni Allen, rider

## **International Andalusian and Lusitano Horse Association**

National Levels, Adult Amateur Division – Chaman; Olivia Banyon, owner/rider  
National Levels, Open Division – Bernardo OSF; Barbara Ward, owner; Emily Donaldson, rider  
FEI Levels, Open Division – Madrono XXXVI; Ida Knoll, owner; Kathryn Fleming-Kuhn, rider

## **International Georgian Grande Horse Registry**

National Levels, Open Division – FWF Princess Juliana; Mary Adams, owner; Jonni Allen, rider

## **International Sporthorse Registry/Oldenburg NA**

National Levels, Adult Amateur Division – Nicene; Heather Mason, owner; Alexandra Krossen, rider  
National Levels, Open Division – Santa Barbara DASH; Katie Bryant, owner; Lauren Chumley, rider

## **KWPN of North America**

National Levels, Adult Amateur Division – Eschaton; Casey Blum, owner/rider  
FEI Levels, Adult Amateur Division – Wynnona; Michelle Freels, owner/rider  
National Levels, Open Division – F.J. Ramzes; Wendy Sasser, owner; Lehua Custer, rider  
FEI Levels, Open Division – Caymus; Beth Godwin, owner; Jodie Kelly-Baxley, rider

## **North American Danish Warmblood Association**

National Levels, Adult Amateur Division – Hampton; Ashlee Watts, owner/rider  
National Levels, Open Division – Savannah SWF; Mary Nuttall, owner; John Mason, rider  
FEI Levels, Open Division – Galveston; Whispering Pines LLC, owner; Laura Noyes Putnam, rider

## **Oldenburg Horse Breeders Society NA Division of GOV**

National Levels, Adult Amateur Division – Barolo Boy; Amy Richwine, owner/rider  
FEI Levels, Adult Amateur Division – D'Angel; Jessica Morgan, owner/rider  
National Levels, Open Division – Au Reservoir; Sandi Chohany, owner; Heather McCarthy, rider  
FEI Levels, Open Division – Wynston; Tricia Veley, owner; Eva Oldenbroek-Tabor, rider

## **Rheinland Pfalz-Saar International**

National Levels, Adult Amateur Division – Willow SF; Dana Peterson, owner/rider  
FEI Levels, Adult Amateur Division – Walk of Fame; Birgitt Dagge, owner/rider

## **Swedish Warmblood Association of North America**

National Levels, Adult Amateur Division – Amadeus; Malena Brisbois, owner/rider  
National Levels, Open Division – My Second Fling; Ella Fruchterman, owner; Kari Schmitt, rider

## **The Foundation for the Pure Spanish Horse**

National Levels, Open Division – Califa; Laura Abner, owner/rider

## **United States Lipizzan Federation**

FEI Levels, Adult Amateur Division – Siglavy Aga; Stephanie Mussmann, owner/rider

## **Westfalen Horse Association**

National Levels, Adult Amateur Division – Freestyler HRH; Stephanie McNutt, owner/rider  
FEI Levels, Adult Amateur Division – Finestep HW; Lisa Rush, owner/rider  
National Levels, Open Division – Venivici; Elizabeth Cronin, owner; Martin Kuhn, rider





# US Dressage Finals

presented by Adequan®

November 9-12, 2017 • Kentucky Horse Park

For Immediate Release

MEDIA CONTACT: JENNIFER M. KEELER, YELLOW HORSE MARKETING,  
jennifer@yellowhorsemarketing.com

Monday, September

11, 2017

## Riders Dare To Dream as Regional Qualifying Starts This Weekend for the 2017 US Dressage Finals Presented By Adequan®

Source: Yellow Horse Marketing for the US Dressage Finals

Last year, Julie Forman of Franktown, Colo. traveled to Kentucky to attend the US Dressage Finals presented by Adequan® as a spectator with her long-time friend, coach, and FEI 5\* judge Janet Foy. The trip left quite an impression.

“It was unlike any event I had seen before,” Forman remembered. “What a treat to watch all the wonderful horses and riders in that amazing venue, which was much larger than I am used to. All I could think was that it would be such an honor to ride there.”

Forman may get her chance to qualify for this year's US Dressage Finals as she and more than 500 other competitors prepare to ride down center line during this week's first round of Great American Insurance Group/United States Dressage Federation (USDF) Regional Championships, being held in Parker, Colo. for Region 5 exhibitors and in Batavia, Ohio for Region 2. Additional championships are scheduled across the country in the coming weeks, including Regions 6, 7 and 8 on September 21-24; Region 4 on September 28-October 1; and wrapping up with Regions 1, 3, and 9 on October 5-8. Besides pursuing qualification for November's US Dressage Finals, Regional Championship competitors will be vying for a portion of more than \$180,000 in prize money and awards.

“I have to admit that I am super excited yet nervous about Regionals this year because I really want to do well,” said Forman, who will compete in the Second Level Adult Amateur and Second Level Freestyle championship divisions. Her partner will be Prince Berimba, her nine-year-old Hanoverian gelding (Pablo x Berimba by Banter) bred in South Carolina by Middlefield Farm. “The Colorado Horse Park is a wonderful venue, and it looks like it will be a big show as we are scheduled to compete in classes over four days in a row.”

Forman and Prince already know what Regional Championship success feels like: the talented pair was crowned Region 5 Reserve Champions at First Level in 2016, and actually received a wild card invitation to go to the Finals. At the time, Forman made the tough decision to turn it down – but she won't if given the chance again this year.



*Julie Forman and her Hanoverian gelding Prince Berimba will look to leave the sidelines and get into the ring at this year's US Dressage Finals by competing at this week's Great American/USDF Region 5 Championships. Photo courtesy of Julie Forman.*

“Last fall it was a complete surprise – I actually didn’t know there was such a thing as a wild card, and I was very excited and honored to suddenly get a letter inviting me to attend the Finals,” Forman explained. “But after talking with Janet Foy we decided that I should just go and watch and see what this whole thing was about before I decided if I should go with my horse. I wanted to be sure that both Prince and I would have the necessary confidence and be ready for a big trip like that. Janet also thought I should do a freestyle for the level so if I drove the distance to Kentucky I would be entered in two divisions instead of just one, which is why we added a freestyle when moving up to Second Level this year.”

In order to ensure she wouldn’t miss another opportunity to compete at the Finals, Forman submitted an easy, online Declaration of Intent form long before packing her trailer for the Regional Championships. As a reminder for all competitors, **a horse/rider combination must declare their intention to participate in the US Dressage Finals by completing the Declaration of Intent form by midnight on the day prior to the first day of their Regional Championship competition** (including any open class day before the start of championship classes). There is no fee to declare, but horse/rider combinations must declare at the level(s) and eligible division(s) they intend to compete in at the US Dressage Finals. Declarations may be submitted at this link:

<https://www.usdf.org/usdressagefinals/competitors/eiq.asp>.

Don’t miss your chance to compete! The US Dressage Finals presented by Adequan<sup>®</sup> is a unique national head-to-head competition which offers a wealth of championship titles and over \$75,000 in prize money, all while showcasing adult amateur and open riders from across the country in Training Level to Grand Prix. To learn more about the US Dressage Finals presented by Adequan<sup>®</sup>, download competition information, declare and nominate for the Finals, and sign up to receive news and updates, visit the official event website at [www.usdressagefinals.com](http://www.usdressagefinals.com).



# US Dressage Finals

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For Immediate Release

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jennifer@yellowhorsemarketing.com

Tuesday, October

24, 2017

## More Than 620 Nominations Reported for This Year's US Dressage Finals Presented By Adequan®

Source: Yellow Horse Marketing for the US Dressage Finals

With all nine Great American Insurance Group/United States Dressage Federation (USDF) Regional Championships now concluded, the stage is being set for the fifth annual US Dressage Finals presented by Adequan®, being held November 9-12, 2017 in Lexington, Ky. More than 620 nominations are reported by USDF for this year's event, and with final entries due on October 26<sup>th</sup> one of the riders most surprised to find herself submitting final paperwork for entry is Lehua Custer of North Hollywood, California.

The entire 2017 show season has been full of surprises for Custer, who hadn't even planned on competing this year with Wendy Sasser's young but talented KWPN gelding F.J. Ramzes. "My original plan was just to focus on training him this year, but Wendy kept encouraging us to get out there and show," Custer noted. "So after a couple of shows we find ourselves qualified for Regionals. Before I know it, Wendy's submitted that entry too, so off we went."

The eight-hour drive to Northern California for September's Great American/USDF Region 7 Championships (held in conjunction with the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary California Dressage Society Championship Show) proved worthwhile as Custer and Ramzes impressed the judges with a dominant victory over 20 competitors in the Region 7 Third Level Open Championship on a score of 76.282%.

"Of course we were thrilled," said Custer. "And then after we got home, I got my letter from USDF notifying us that we were eligible for the Finals. It's an honor, and I posted on Facebook showing my appreciation and how one day it would be great to attend. I've heard year after year about what an incredible event it is, but our team works on a budget so we hadn't given much thought to actually going."

Custer was completely unprepared for the modern power of social media. "I got an insane response from friends on Facebook with at least 200 people commenting that I should set up a GoFundMe account to raise money to go," she explained. "At first I was reluctant because there are so many crazy things happening in the world right now, but people were relentless in messaging, calling and encouraging me, so I talked to Wendy and we decided to try it. We threw out a bit of a crazy number as a goal and raised \$6,000 in the first day! Before we knew it people had donated enough money to not only do it but also enough to actually fly him to Kentucky."



California's Lehua Custer and Ramzes celebrate their Region 7 victory, and are now preparing for the trip of a lifetime to the US Dressage Finals presented by Adequan. Photo by Jennifer M. Keeler.

“It was completely unexpected and amazing how everyone has stepped up and made this possible when they certainly didn’t have to. It has made us feel so special – there’s been a lot of happy tears,” Custer continued. “We got so much support from my sponsors and our friends and family, and even the Hawaii State Dressage Society donated money because I grew up in Maui and still give clinics there regularly. Everything came together in a way that we never anticipated, and now that we’ve reached our goal we’ve pledged to donate any extra money raised (and any prize money possibly won) to natural disaster victims.”

As a young professional, Custer is embracing her upcoming Finals experience as a valuable opportunity to prepare herself and her mount for the future, including international competition. After arriving in Kentucky, the pair will participate in a warm-up class in the Dressage in the Bluegrass open competition (running in conjunction with the Finals) before contesting the Third Level Open Championship on Friday, November 10<sup>th</sup>.

“I’ve never been to Kentucky or the Finals, and I am telling myself that I should just be proud to be there, but I know how competitive I am,” Custer laughed. “I just want to do right by my horse and not put too much pressure on us because we’ve never done a trip like this, but I also plan to do our best and have fun. I’m also looking forward to meeting a lot of new friends that up until now I’ve only known through social media, as we’ve experienced firsthand how Facebook has a way of connecting people from everywhere.”



*Through social media, Lehua Custer, Wendy Susser and F.J. Ramzes raised money to help fund their trip to the 2017 US Dressage Finals presented by Adequan. Photo courtesy of Lehua Custer.*

As she and Ramzes step onto the plane bound for Lexington’s Blue Grass Airport, they will join hundreds of other competitors making their journeys to Kentucky to chase their dreams on the hallowed ground of the Kentucky Horse Park for a week of dressage competition unlike any other in the country. This year’s Finals will offer over \$75,000 in prize money and showcase adult amateur and open riders from across the country in 30 championship divisions from Training Level to Grand Prix.

“Thank you to everyone who is making a dream become a reality for me and Lehua,” said Ramzes’ owner, Wendy Susser. “Six years ago I never would have thought the wide-eyed scruffy yearling that arrived at Hilda Gurney’s in the middle of the night would make two little horse-crazy girls’ dreams become a reality, and this would never have happened without all of your help and support. From the bottom of my heart thank you, and we hope to make you proud.”

Don’t miss your chance to chase your dreams at the US Dressage Finals presented by Adequan®! **All entries must be received by midnight Eastern Time on Thursday, October 26<sup>th</sup>** ([click HERE to learn more about the entry process](#)). Remember, competitors looking for assistance in making transportation arrangements to Kentucky are encouraged to utilize the [US Dressage Finals Transportation Resources webpage](#) which includes links to horse transportation vendors, as well as a Horse Transport Share Forum where competitors can connect with others in their areas to organize group transportation.

In addition, the USDF is making up to \$50,000 in travel grant funds available to eligible competitors who apply and fall into one of two groups based on the rider’s address of record as associated with their USDF membership. Competitors from **Group 1** (which includes Washington, Oregon, California, Hawaii, Alaska, Montana, Idaho, Arizona, Nevada and Utah) are eligible to apply for grants of up to \$1,200 per horse/rider combination, while competitors from **Group 2** (Wyoming, New Mexico, and Colorado) are eligible to apply for grants of up to \$900.





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jennifer@yellowhorsemarketing.com

Wednesday, November

08, 2017

## An Eventing Champion Takes on the Dressage World at This Week's 2017 US Dressage Finals Presented By Adequan® - Watch Live!

Source: Yellow Horse Marketing for the US Dressage Finals

Just two months ago, Sandra Holden of Pleasantville, New York experienced the thrills of competing in the national spotlight as she and her 14-year-old Hanoverian gelding Cano Cristales galloped to a top-three finish in the Training division of the American Eventing Championships (AEC's) in Tryon, N.C. Now the talented pair will once again seek top honors on the national championship stage at this week's **US Dressage Finals presented by Adequan®**, with more than 390 entries representing all nine United States Dressage Federation (USDF) regions and 38 states plus the District of Columbia in head-to-head competition for national titles across 30 different Open and Adult Amateur divisions.



*When not competing in eventing, adult amateur rider Sandra Holden of New York pursues her passion for dressage and will now compete at this week's US Dressage Finals presented by Adequan®. Photos courtesy of Sandra Holden.*

Holden found her equine superstar seven years ago in Texas. "My daughters were part of Pony Club and were focused on eventing, so I wanted to be involved in what they were doing," she explained. "He was the very first horse I looked at and I felt a special connection with him right from the start. He is the most amazing horse ever born who never hesitates to try so hard to do everything I ask. He's my horse of a lifetime, and I could talk all day about him."

After more than 20 years in real estate, Holden now devotes her time to running her own boarding stable in New York State and pursues a blossoming eventing career aboard Cano Cristales, which paid off with a victory in the Beginner Novice national championship at the AEC's in their third outing together in 2011. The pair also embarked on their pursuit of dressage at First Level, and currently compete at Fourth Level and Prix St. Georges. On Saturday, Holden and Cano Cristales will compete for the Fourth Level Adult Amateur Championship at the US Dressage Finals after earning an invitation by placing at the Great American/USDF Region 8 Championship in Saugerties.

"I love the thrill of eventing, but dressage is the most intense and precise thing you can do with a horse. We take it very seriously and when it comes to the Finals, I'm a 'repeat customer'," laughed Holden, who once again drove herself and her horse more than 15 hours to Lexington for their third trip to the Finals. "I am very goal-oriented. Two of my goals every year are to try to make it to the AEC's and the US Dressage Finals as they represent the top of each sport and are what I set my sights on. It is an honor to be here competing at the Kentucky Horse Park, and the surrounding area is breathtakingly beautiful and inspiring."

Holden will also be rooting for fellow Region 8 riders Alexandra Krossen, Linda Currie and Emily Wyman as they participate on the Region 8 Team in the **Third Annual Regions Cup Team Competition**. With a regional team of three athlete/horse combinations representing each USDF region, competitors can show their regional pride and compete for

bragging rights as the top scoring eligible rider/horse combination from Training/First Level and FEI-level Regional Championships classes as well as the highest scoring eligible adult amateur rider/horse combination from the Second through Fourth Level Regional Championship classes make up each regional team. The winning team is determined by averaging the highest final scores achieved by each athlete/horse combination in their US Dressage Finals class.

Like many other riders, Holden's friends and family at home will be able to follow the action from the US Dressage Finals via **live-streaming on the USEF Network at [www.usefnetwork.com](http://www.usefnetwork.com), with coverage beginning Thursday, November 9** with the first round of national titles presented in the Alltech Arena (see the entire live streaming schedule [here](#)).

Complete daily schedules and ride times are now available! To learn more about the US Dressage Finals presented by Adequan®, download competition information, review entry lists, purchase tickets to special events, and sign up to receive news and updates, visit the official event website at <http://www.usdressagefinals.com>.



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jennifer@yellowhorsemarketing.com

Friday, November  
10, 2017

## Rides of Redemption Bring Victory for Lund and Bragdell on First Day of 2017 US Dressage Finals Presented By Adequan®

Source: Yellow Horse Marketing for the US Dressage Finals

Last year, Kristy Truebenbach Lund's trip to the US Dressage Finals presented by Adequan® did not get off to a good start with her mount Akvavit in the Intermediate II Adult Amateur Championship.

"My horse doesn't particularly like indoor venues anyway, and last year when we came into the Alltech Arena someone was using a camera with a flash throughout our entire test," said Lund. "It completely unnerved my horse and ruined our ride. So I was determined to come back this year and win."

Mission accomplished for Lund, a small animal veterinarian from Wellington, Fla., as she rode Blue Marlin Farm, Inc.'s 14-year-old Spanish Warmblood gelding (Silvester x Onni by Jazz) to finally claim the coveted championship with 65.088% in the Intermediate II Adult Amateur division, the first of 30 national titles to be awarded over the next three days across all levels from Training to Grand Prix for both Open and Adult Amateur competitors at this year's fifth-annual Finals, being held November 9-12 in Lexington, Ky. Finishing in reserve was Selena Wilson of nearby LaGrange, Ky. with her 12-year-old Holsteiner mare Vanity (Cotopaxi x Silvershulace) on 64.298%.

Lund took an initial leap of faith when purchasing Akvavit off a video from a bankruptcy auction in Spain years ago, but it's been her continued patience that has finally allowed her mount to blossom in the show ring. "He's hot, and while it's nice to have a horse with a lot of go, the trick is controlling it," Lund explained. "Even today when he tried to bolt on our first trot extension on the diagonal, I just have to take a deep breath, remember it's only one bad movement, and go on to the next. I pride myself on having a special connection with my horses, and this is the first year I finally feel like we've achieved that together – trusting each other enough for me to let go and allow him to show what he can do."

Lund and her fiery gelding will have two more chances to return to the winner's circle this week as they compete in the Adult Amateur Grand Prix and Freestyle divisions, and if victorious the pair will once again join other Region 3 competitors in proudly sporting pink polo wraps during awards ceremonies in honor of cancer awareness. "This event is the only show that really feels like a national show – it's like the Olympics for us," said Lund. "I always said that adult



*Faith in her mount paid off for Kristy Truebenbach Lund at the 2017 US Dressage Finals presented by Adequan® as she rode to victory in the Intermediate II Adult Amateur division. Photo by Susan J. Stickle*

amateurs are the backbone of USDF but sometimes we felt a bit forgotten. There are plenty of programs for juniors and young riders, and professionals of course have Gladstone and their national championships. Finally we have something that recognizes the adult amateurs on this kind of scale. It's wonderful that after all the years of talking about creating an event like this that USDF finally got it done and it's going so well, and it means so much to so many competitors."



*Michael Bragdell and Qredit Hilltop were crowned Intermediate II Open Champions at the 2017 US Dressage Finals presented by Adequan®. Photo by Susan J. Stickle*

Michael Bragdell of Colora, Md. (Region 8) is no stranger to the winner's circle at the US Dressage Finals, and he found his way back to victory lane with his first ride down centerline at this year's competition aboard Hilltop Farm, Inc.'s nine-year-old Oldenburg stallion Qredit Hilltop (Quarterback x Dream Rubina by Dream of Glory, bred in the U.S. by Judy Yancey). An impressive ride for a score of 71.535% earned the pair the unanimous win under all three judges in the Intermediate II Open Championship.

"He came here last year and caught me a little by surprise by being a bit 'big-eyed' in the Alltech Arena," said Bragdell of his young mount. "So this year I took my time to focus on him being comfortable in there, and he seemed much more laid-back this time around and I think that made a big difference. He schooled really well yesterday, and my game plan was to keep him happy, relaxed, and comfortable with the arena, and it worked out because he felt super in the ring. I was very excited about our performance."

After a sixth-place finish at the Markel/USEF Developing Horse Grand Prix Championship in August, Bragdell felt like Qredit Hilltop brought his A-game to Lexington. "At Lamplight I think I didn't have as much horse by the last day as I would have liked to have, but as the season has progressed he's gotten better and better and I feel like he really peaked here. It's such a nice finish to the year in coming to the Finals because it

really feels like a national championship. You hear the announcer saying riders' names from all over the country, and it's definitely something special to be a part of."

Also pleased with her performance was Reserve Champion Judy Kelly of Clarkston, Mich. (Region 2) riding her 13-year-old Hanoverian mare Benise (Breitling W x Rubina by Rubinstein) to a score of 68.509%. "This is our first year at this level – we rode here at the inaugural Finals in 2013 at Prix St. Georges, so as we continue to progress I was delighted to qualify to come back here as well as with our ride today. I was very happy with her piaffe and passage, and she tries so hard and has the best temperament. This is such a special event and I'd like to thank everyone who helps to support it, especially sponsors like Adequan which have been there from the start."

Wrapping up a busy first day of championship action and open classes in the Dressage in the Bluegrass competition, exhibitors enjoyed a Competitor Welcome Party and Trade Fair Kick-Off on the concourse of the Alltech Arena. Championship competition resumes Friday at 8:00am ET – follow the action through updates on the [USDF Facebook page](#) and the [US Dressage Finals website](#), as well as watch live online streaming on the popular USEF Network at this link: <https://www.usef.org/network/coverage/2017usdressagefinals/>. To learn more about the US Dressage Finals presented by Adequan®, download competition information, review day sheets and results, and read daily news releases, visit the official event website at <http://www.usdressagefinals.com>.





# US Dressage Finals

presented by Adequan®

November 9-12, 2017 • Kentucky Horse Park

For Immediate Release

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Saturday, November  
11, 2017

## Fairy Tale Endings on Second Day of 2017 US Dressage Finals Presented By Adequan®

Source: Yellow Horse Marketing for the US Dressage Finals

Lehua Custer of North Hollywood, Cal. felt like she's been living in a fairy tale at the US Dressage Finals presented by Adequan®. She and her mount F.J. Ramzes traveled more than 2,000 miles to Lexington from the West Coast on a plane filled with Thoroughbreds returning from last weekend's Breeders' Cup for just one championship class. And they won it.

Custer and Wendy Sasser's seven-year-old Dutch Warmblood gelding (Juventus x J. Rambiance by Rampal, bred in the U.S. by Cornell University) have been on a roll all season, and after earning victory at the Great American/USDF Region 7 Championships in September the pair were ready to relax at home and enjoy their success. But there was more to come.

In a matter of days, a whirlwind fundraising campaign organized at the urging of friends raised the funds needed to fly Ramzes to Kentucky. Before she knew it, Custer found herself a long way from her home in sunny California and shivering on a frigid November morning at the Kentucky Horse Park as she prepared for the ride of her life in the Third Level Open Championship, which she and her mount won decisively with a top score of 72.991%.

"We think anything under 65 degrees is cold in southern California, so the temperature this morning was a bit of a shock," Custer laughed. "My hands were frozen and I have no idea if I was actually doing my half halts, but Ramzes came through for me. He loves to show, and once we were in the ring he knew his job and was just amazing. This whole event is bigger than anything I've ever seen, and it's been an incredible and unforgettable experience."

Reserve Champion Kelsey Broecker of Celina, Texas (Region 9) echoed Custer's sentiment, describing her first Finals experience as "shock and awe," she noted. "This year was my first year going to Regionals and now I'm super excited to be here as well and finish where we did." Broecker rode Molly Huie's seven-year-old Oldenburg gelding Dreamcatcher (Desperados x Taenzerin) to a score of 69.444% for second place. "He was fresh at first but he really came through for me," she explained. "He came to the States as a three-year-old and we had a bit of a rough start, but he's been such a great horse for me to learn on and bring up through the levels. I'm excited to see where we go from here."



*A long trip from California to the 2017 US Dressage Finals presented by Adequan® paid off with a victory for Leahua Custer and F.J. Ramzes in the Third Level Open Championship. Photo by Susan J. Stickle*

In 2016, Elma Garcia also made a long journey to Lexington from her home in California which proved worthwhile as she earned reserve honors in the Prix St. Georges Adult Amateur division. After moving to Mill Spring, N.C. this year and now representing Region 1, Garcia returned to the Finals in victorious fashion by earning the unanimous win with 68.991% in the Intermediate I Adult Amateur Championship aboard her trusted partner and 15-year-old Hanoverian mare Wenesa (Westernhagen x Dancing Girl by Davignon). “Wenesa and I have really kicked it up a notch this season, and our test felt great today,” said Garcia. “Now that we’re looking to move on to the Grand Prix, I really wanted to finish strong and get the win today for her.”

As a youth, Region 9’s Terri Sue Wensinger of Dallas, Texas earned a national title for American Horse Shows Association (AHSA) stock seat equitation in Kentucky. Now as an adult, she returned to the Bluegrass State in a very different saddle and earned yet another national honor as she was crowned Reserve Champion in the Intermediate I Adult Amateur division with her 15-year-old Dutch Warmblood gelding Valentino (Riverman-ISF x Jiovette by Flemming) on a score of 66.667%. With this being her fourth trip to the Finals, Wensinger felt that confidence was a key to her success. “Today was super fun – I felt like I knew the ring and knew the test, and I was so happy just to be here again,” she noted.



*Region 9’s John Mason and U.S.-bred Savannah SWF celebrate their victory in the Training Level Open Championship. Photo by Susan J. Stickle*

Two exciting young U.S.-bred horses topped the leaderboard in the Training Level Open Championship, with John Mason of Conroe, Texas (Region 9) earning the highest score of 75.076% with the five-year-old Danish Warmblood mare Savannah SWF (Blue Hors Soprano x Nicolette by Diamant) to win the title for owner/breeder Mary Nuttall. “This is only the second time Savannah has left Texas and everything’s still a little bit new for her. She’s somewhat delicate and a late bloomer, so we’ve taken our time with her and it’s paid off – even though she was a little bit tense today, she still felt great and we had a clean test,” Mason explained. “We have an 18-hour drive to Lexington so it’s a big commitment to come here, but it’s our fourth time coming and in my mind you can’t beat this facility for a national event like this. It’s unbelievable going into the Alltech Arena for awards and makes for a special moment.”

Reserve Champion with 71.515% was Martin Kuhn of New Berlin, Ill. (representing Region 4) who was also pleased with his mount Washburn SW, a five-year-old Swedish Warmblood gelding (Wolkentanz II x Opal by Opus) owned and bred by Kuhn’s wife, Kathryn. “We went to Regionals for the heck of it and here we are,” he chuckled. “I definitely had a little more juice in the tank than perhaps we needed – one canter depart was a little interesting – but I just smiled and it worked out.”

Just two years ago, Maia Barnes of Ringoes, N.J. (Region 8) had never ridden dressage when she purchased her now 11-year-old Dutch Warmblood gelding Benvica (Sandro x Renieta by Jazz), but the pair started at Training Level and moved up together, and on Friday claimed the Fourth Level Adult Amateur Championship with a score of 69.889%. “It’s come together really well, really fast. I never thought I’d be here like this, but it’s been a lot of fun and a terrific learning experience for both of us,” Barnes said. “My horse has been a little sluggish lately, so we went into the warmup with the hopes that he would be a little more ‘up’ and ready to go with the cold and the wind. Luckily he was, so he was very good in the ring and we didn’t have any mistakes.”

Last year’s Second Level Adult Amateur champion Bonnie Canter of Hockley, Texas (Region 9) and her 15.1-hand Connemara/Hanoverian cross mare Ffinella GCF (Fred Astaire x South Ridge Bliss by South Ridge Duncan’s Honor, bred in the U.S. by Sharon Garner) made the jump up to Fourth Level look easy as they claimed reserve honors with 69.519%. “It’s usually hot in Houston so it’s kind of wonderful to be a little cold,” she laughed. “I dread Fourth Level because it’s a long and involved test with so many things that can go wrong, but she was super. I’ve really enjoyed bringing her along.”

Casey Blum of Lincoln, Neb. (Region 4) has a lot going on in her life: newly engaged, she also recently graduated from college and will soon be moving to a new state to embark on a career as a sales representative for an equine feed

company. But the 22-year-old made time to come to Lexington for her very first US Dressage Finals, and the effort paid off when she rode her eight-year-old Dutch Warmblood gelding Eschaton (Sir Sinclair x Melisande by Carpaccio, bred in the U.S. by Linda J. Smith) to a unanimous win under all three judges in the Second Level Adult Amateur Championship with 70.894%. “It’s such a beautiful place and you couldn’t pick a better time of year with all the fall colors – it’s a great backdrop for such a perfect show,” she explained. “Even though it was cold, I think it actually worked to our advantage. We took the comments from yesterday’s warm-up test to heart, and my horse felt easy to move forward and was right there with me the whole ride. I’ve had him since he was a yearling and he’s been a blast to bring along. This has been the first year that I really feel like he’s a ‘grown-up’, and he’s certainly made me the person and the rider I am today.”

Region 9’s roster of winners continued to expand as veterinarian and equine orthopedic surgeon Ashlee Watts of College Station, Texas rode her nine-year-old Danish Warmblood gelding Hampton (Blue Hors Hotline x Madigan L by Maraton) to reserve honors with 68.618%. The talented pair have previously claimed Training and First Level Adult Amateur titles at the Finals in 2015 and 2016, respectively, and now continue their success at Second Level. “He was a little wild in the warmup but he was perfect in the test,” Watts explained. “As he’s matured, he’s really become a show horse who seems to love his job and knows when it’s time to go to work.”

A field of 27 horse/rider combinations battled for the win in the Intermediate I Open Championship, but it was Heather Blitz of Wellington, Fla. (Region 3) who ultimately emerged victorious as she rode her promising eight-year-old Danish Warmblood gelding Praestemarkens Quatero (Quarterback x Rohvia Hojris by Rohdiamant) to a top score of 70.877%. “These Finals have the same type of atmosphere as the indoor shows in Europe, and it’s right here in the States,” said Blitz. “This is the biggest thing my horse has done to date, and I’m super pleased with him. He’s a trouper who keeps learning and developing more and more all the time, so I’m very excited about him. I’ve taken some extra time bringing him along – he has a strong personality and is a passionate horse, and that works in my favor as long as he really understands his job. Today we had a supple, flowing and confident test and I was very proud with how he handled the atmosphere here in the Alltech Arena.”

Finishing in reserve was hometown girl Kathy Priest of Versailles, Ky. (Region 2) riding her nine-year-old Danish Warmblood gelding Fredensdals Zig Zag (Blue Hors Zack x Kristiansminders Elektra by Don Schufro) to 69.912%. “It was fun – he felt really good in there, and he likes a big atmosphere,” Priest noted. “He was a little behind in his training when I imported him but he had great presence and was a really nice ride, so the biggest thing we’ve worked on is developing his strength. He’s very confident in the ring and is a real trier who always wants to please you.”

Kristy Truebenbach Lund (Wellington, Fla.) is off to a successful start at this year’s Finals as she and Akvavit (14-year-old Spanish Warmblood gelding [Silvester x Onni by Jazz] owned by Blue Marlin Farm, Inc.) are now two-for-two in championship competition, having won Thursday’s Intermediate II Adult Amateur title and returning to the Alltech Arena on Friday morning to also claim top honors in the Grand Prix Adult Amateur division (64.800%). “I changed my plan a little bit today and took him out for a short ride really early this morning, and that seemed to take a little bit of the edge off so we had better focus in the test,” she explained. “I think our changes were a highlight, and he was phenomenal today.”

Lund’s Region 3 teammate Heather Boo works the overnight shift as a neuroradiologist in Loxahatchee, Fla. in order to make time to ride and compete, and her dedication paid off with reserve championship honors earned with her 15-year-old Westfalen gelding Divertimento (Di Versaci x Fatima by Ferragamo) with 63.600%. “He’s a lot of horse so I have a lot of work to do to keep things consistent in the test, but this was a great experience for us as we look forward to competing in CDI’s this winter season.”



*Casey Blum of Nebraska and Eschaton trotted to a unanimous win in the Second Level Adult Amateur Championship. Photo by Susan J. Stickle*





*With one of their "best rides ever," Melanie Montagano and Ga Deva claimed the Grand Prix Open Championship. Photo by Susan J. Stickle*

With a joyful piaffe/passage tour that impressed both the judges and the evening crowd, young professional Melanie Montagano of Wellington, Fla. (qualified in Region 1) rode her 17-year-old Dutch Warmblood mare Ga Deva (by Gambol) to take the Grand Prix Open Championship and the Veronica Holt Perpetual Trophy (presented by USDF Region 5 and Friends) with 65.300%. Partners for more than a decade, the pair has progressed through the junior/young rider and under-25 ranks to now find success at the Grand Prix level. "This was one of my best rides ever – she was laser-focused from the moment she walked down here. She has quite the game face!" Montagano laughed. "It's been quite a journey for us to get here and certainly it's never a smooth ride, but I wouldn't change anything about it. The difficult times only make moments like this even more special."

Montagano just edged out Laura Noyes Putnam of Cumberland, Maine (Region 8) aboard Whispering Pine Farm's 14-year-old Danish Warmblood gelding Galveston (Solos Landtinus x Geneva by Rambo, bred by Oak Hill Ranch), who finished just one-tenth of a point behind the leader with 65.200%. "We had a couple little mistakes that I'm kicking myself for but overall I'm really happy with how relaxed he was in there," said Noyes of her mount, which she's brought along herself since getting him as a five-year-old. "We had a really good year and each time we went in the ring it just got better and better. This is our third season at Grand Prix and I have a good feeling that now it's all coming together."

Competition resumes Saturday at 8:00am ET with 12 additional championship divisions – follow the action through updates on the [USDF Facebook page](#) and the [US Dressage Finals website](#), as well as watch live online streaming on the popular USEF Network at this link: <https://www.usef.org/network/coverage/2017usdressagefinals/>. To learn more about the US Dressage Finals presented by Adequan®, download competition information, review day sheets and results, and read daily news releases, visit the official event website at <http://www.usdressagefinals.com>.



# US Dressage Finals

presented by Adequan®

November 9-12, 2017 • Kentucky Horse Park

For Immediate Release

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Sunday, November  
12, 2017

## Festive Freestyles Featured on Third Day of 2017 US Dressage Finals Presented By Adequan®

Source: Yellow Horse Marketing for the US Dressage Finals

"I wasn't looking for another Friesian when I got the call about Wietze, so at first I said I wasn't interested. But then I tried him and after 10 minutes I said, 'I have to have this horse!'"

Little did retired dance teacher Lynnette Wadsworth of Hastings, Fla. (Region 3) know that her now 18-year-old Friesian gelding Wietze G (Rypke x Wijke by Reitse) would carry her to back-to-back victories in the **Grand Prix Freestyle Adult Amateur Championship** division at the US Dressage Finals presented by Adequan®, being held November 9-12 in Lexington, Ky. The pair claimed the Calaveras County Perpetual Trophy (presented by Olva Stewart Pharo) in 2016, and came back to the Alltech Arena to reclaim the title with a top score of 66.417% for their classic rock-themed performance.

"He was actually quite tense today but I was able to pull him together and make a decent ride out of it. I wanted to have a good time because it's new music for us and it was all about having fun this year," said Hastings. "Nine years ago when I bought Wietze, he had all of the upper-level movements already on him but I was barely a Third Level rider. So I get this big horse and he can piaffe and passage but I couldn't get basic movements out of him, so I had to rise to the occasion – he's really taught me how to ride. We started together at Third Level and with lots of help from my trainers I've been able to get to his level. He's so willing, safe, and fun – I couldn't ask for a better dance partner."

Finishing in reserve was Jennifer Drescher of Frederick, Md. (Region 1) riding her 16-year-old Morgan gelding Blue and White Raven (Night Hawk of Rocking M x Four-L Black Magic by Goldenaire Senator G, bred in the U.S. by Joanna Kelly) with 66.058%. "We've also come through the levels together and I'm so lucky to have him," Drescher noted. "He was a superstar and so willing today and I couldn't be happier."

A tough field of horses and riders competed for **Intermediate I Freestyle Open Championship** honors, and in her first trip to the US Dressage Finals Melissa Taylor of Wellington, Fla. (Region 3) rode the 12-year-old Dutch Warmblood Ansgar (Special D x Diona by Formateur) to a decisive victory with 74.058% as owner Nicole Polaski watched her gelding earn the win from New York City via livestreaming on the USEF Network. "I'd always heard great things about this show, and this year the timing worked out for us to come. I love the facility and it's an amazing event," Taylor explained. "When



Lynnette Wadsworth and Wietze G claimed their second straight Grand Prix Freestyle Adult Amateur Championship at the 2017 US Dressage Finals presented by Adequan®. Photo by Susan J. Stickle

I got Ansgar, we needed to work on trusting each other in the show ring, and it really took me all season to develop that. Just now I felt like he really stepped up at Regionals, and again here at the Finals. I was super proud of him today – he's a hot little tamale who definitely has an opinion of his own, so I was pleased that we came together in such a good way."

Nicole Levy (Georgetown, Ky. Region 2) was also pleased with her partnership with Kate Sanders' nine-year-old Hanoverian mare Floratina (Fidertanz x Rubina by Rubin-Royal) as they claimed reserve honors with 71.817% for their final Intermediate freestyle performance before moving up to the large tour next year. "It took a while to gain her trust and get her to *want* to work for me, not feel like she *had* to," said Levy. "So my goal for her is to always come out and feel confident in what she does, and she was really good today."

For **Adult Amateurs** in the **Intermediate I Freestyle Championship**, 2016 reserve champions Alexandra Krossen of Basking Ridge, N.J. (Region 8) and Heather Mason's 11-year-old Hanoverian cross mare Damani (Duvall x Godiva by Gesandt, bred in the U.S. by Virginia Godfrey) came back to Kentucky to claim the top title with 70.842%. "She was amazing – she was very calm and collected, which isn't always the way she is so it was a nice surprise," Krossen noted. "She was totally with me and did everything I could have asked. She has really good flying changes, so I did my 3's on a circle and my 2's down centerline to really show them off, and our pirouettes have gotten a lot better this year as well."

Friday's Intermediate I Adult Amateur Champions Elma Garcia of Mill Spring, N.C. (Region 1) padded her resume even further by earning reserve in today's freestyle with her 15-year-old Hanoverian mare Wenesa (Westernhagen x Dancing Girl by Davignon) on 68.792%. "We're fairly new to freestyles, but I was inspired by Mongolian music at a film festival so I decided to try it for our performance," said Garcia.



*Susan Jones of Kentucky and her Oldenburg gelding Reliance celebrate their win in the Fourth Level Freestyle Adult Amateur Championship. Photo by Susan J. Stickle*

The top placings for the **Fourth Level Freestyle Adult Amateur Championship** could hardly have been closer as less than one-tenth of a point separated champion from reserve, but it was Susan Jones of Walton, Ky. (Region 2) who claimed the top spot with her 14-year-old Oldenburg gelding Reliance (Rohdiamant x Gesstine by Classiker) on 71.067% for their Beach Boys-themed performance. "We've been together almost eight years – I got him to build my confidence and learn to be the best dressage rider I could be, and he's lived up to his name," Jones explained. "He's always very calm, but today six mounted police officers went by the warm-up 10 minutes before my ride, and I thought I was going to get bucked off. I went into the ring thinking it was going to be the best ride I've ever had or it would be a disaster. I was able to use everything I'd learned to harness that feistiness and he was awesome. Now I should thank those officers! It was the best we've ever done so it was a bit of a surprise in a nice way and very special."

Lisa Rush's 17-hour drive from Dell Rapids, S.D. (Region 4) almost ended in disaster after arriving at the Kentucky Horse Park, but she and her eight-year-old Westfalen gelding Finestep HW (Florenciano x Merana by Medici) rebounded to claim reserve championship honors with 70.989%. "After we arrived here on Wednesday, he fell in the lunging ring and hurt his stifle and I wasn't sure we'd even be able to ride," said Rush. "So I'm very grateful that he recovered so quickly and end up being able to be here today – he felt great! He works so hard for

me and I've really enjoyed being with him, and we'd like to try for the Developing Prix St. Georges Championship next year."

Adult amateurs from across the country also competed Saturday for the **Second Level Freestyle Adult Amateur Championship**, where Sara Stone of Lake in the Hills, Ill. (qualified in Region 2) rode her six-year-old American Warmblood gelding Gotham (Gabriel x Mystic bred in the U.S. by Indian Hills Sport Horses) to the win with 72.844%. This was the pair's third trip to the Finals, but their first attempt at a freestyle which featured music from One Republic. "He was very relaxed – actually it was the most relaxed he's been all weekend. He came out ready to work today," said Stone, who works in commercial insurance when not in the saddle. "Every year he just gets better and better and I learn more



and more. I was actually quite nervous, and to be sitting here as the champion is just unreal. I love this horse show, and to be fortunate enough to come back year after year is just incredible.”

Family nurse practitioner Ashley Miller of Fort Myers, Fla. (Region 3) rode her 15-year-old off-the-track Thoroughbred gelding Hickeys Creek (Afternoon Deelites x Slewadore by Seattle Slew, bred in the U.S. by Wild Ride LLC) to reserve honors with 69.833% for their Madonna-themed performance. “I like to pick music that makes people stop and want to watch, that’s easily recognizable and which people can relate to,” Miller explained. “We had some training setbacks due to Hurricane Irma and shoeing issues, but we made it to Regionals and then here to the Finals. He’s a very steady Eddie kind of guy who’s taught me so much, and he really ‘brought it’ today.”

In the **Second Level Freestyle Open Championship**, Hailey Guard of Huntersville, N.C. (Region 1) with her nine-year-old Dutch Warmblood mare Dalwhinney (UB 40 x Windsor CA by Warkanson, bred in the U.S. by Susen Shumaker) cruised to the unanimous win under all three judges with 74.556% for their Tchaikovsky-themed performance which Guard put together herself. “I originally wanted to use Swan Lake but it didn’t quite suit her, but then stumbled on the Nutcracker and it matched her gaits so well so that’s what I went with,” said Guard. “DW’ has been phenomenal this week and I couldn’t be prouder. I actually started her under saddle as a four-year-old for a client in Minnesota, but she was bred the next year and then I moved away so I didn’t see her for three years. A year ago the owner got in touch with me and said they didn’t really have a use for her anymore and asked if I wanted her because I had loved her so much, so a big thank you to her previous owner for bringing her back into my life. Since then we’ve taken our time and went back to basics for this year – I’m enjoying bringing her along and now look forward to moving up together.”

Also looking forward to great things to come is reserve champion Kristen Becker of Lemont, Ill. (qualified in Region 2) who earned 71.544% with her six-year-old Oldenburg gelding Amadeus (by Ampere bred by Tricia Veley). “Our freestyle uses Lou Bega’s ‘Mambo No. 5’, and it’s really fun and suits his personality. He’s such a great competition horse and I’m really excited about the future with him.”

Angela Jackson of Henderson, Ky. (Region 2) had her hands full juggling four rides on Saturday morning, but her hard work paid off in spades as she claimed both Champion and Reserve honors in the **Third Level Freestyle Open division**. As the first pair down centerline, Jackson topped the leaderboard with Jane Lineberry’s seven-year-old Dutch Warmblood mare Femke Zarma TF (Contucci x Allure S by Rousseau, bred in the U.S. by KC Dunn) on the strength of a score of 74.100%, a mark which could not be caught for the duration of the class. Jackson’s own home-bred seven-year-old RPSI gelding Figaro H (Fantasmic x Romina H by River H) finished a close second with 72.211% for reserve honors.

“Both horses had lovely tests and I’m so proud of them. Yesterday Femke was a little distracted outside, but today she really focused and it was the best freestyle we’ve had all year, so it was great to have that kind of ride here at the Finals,” said Jackson, who interestingly also found success at this event in previous years with Femke Zarma TF’s dam, Allure S. “I’d like to say a huge thank you to breeders like KC Dunn who breed amazing horses like this right here in the U.S., as well as everyone who makes this event a reality, including Adequan, whose support helps to make all of this possible. It’s a dream for us to be here.”

In outside rings, Anna Marek (Williston, Fla., Region 3) rode Diane Morrison’s five-year-old Dutch Warmblood mare Haiku (Sir Sinclair x Melvira by Gentleman) to win the **First Level Open Championship** with 72.843%. “I’ve ridden her since she was three and she has endless energy and loves to have all attention on her,” Marek laughed. “She’s young and sometimes it can be a little bit ‘hit or miss’ with her, but we had a great ride today. She does have a little bit of an ego, but I like that about her because she goes in the ring and tries so hard, and I think that will eventually help make her a really good upper-level horse.”



*First down centerline, Angela Jackson and U.S.-bred Femke Zarma TF posted a score that could not be topped in the Third Level Freestyle Open Championship. Photo by Susan J. Stickle*

Martin Kuhn of New Berlin, Ill. (Region 4) was also pleased with Elizabeth Cronin's six-year-old Westfalen gelding Venivici (Vitalis x Sabrina by Sherlock Holmes) as they earned 71.324% for reserve. "Venivici hasn't had a lot of show experience, but he's eager and wants to do a good job," said Kuhn, who earned his second Reserve Championship title of the weekend. "He tries really hard – sometimes too hard – but I was very proud of him and as his confidence grows, I think his good qualities are really going to blossom."

Despite frigid morning temperatures, Stephanie McNutt of Mechanicsville, Md. (Region 1) rode her five-year-old Westfalen gelding Freestyler HRH (Furst Fugger x Dolce Vita HRH by Don Bosco) straight to the winner's circle in the **First Level Adult Amateur Championship** with 72.598%. "A little chilly would be an understatement, but I do have to say that brisk is good – it keeps the horses motivated," McNutt noted. "I was super happy with him – he's had a long season and was feeling a little unmotivated, but he really pulled it together for me today and gave me good energy, so I couldn't ask for more than that. He's a really good egg. I'm excited to be back for my fourth Finals – this is the pinnacle event for adult amateurs, and to make it here again is really thrilling."

Bonnie Canter of Hocksley, Texas (Region 9) has had a great week at this year's Finals, and a "rear-and-spin move" just before entering the arena did not deter Canter from earning reserve with her youngster Shakira 467 (five-year-old Hanoverian mare, Sporcken x Waluga by Weltmeyer) with 71.176%. "She's definitely a hot red-head," Canter laughed. "She's still young so can be a bit unreliable, but once she's in the ring she's great and I was pleased that she kept it together today."



*Despite frigid morning temperatures, Linda Currie and Frost T heated up the dressage ring for a winning score in the Third Level Adult Amateur Championship.  
Photo by Susan J. Stickle*

Drawing the day's first ride time of 8am, Linda Currie of Holliston, Mass. (Region 8) had to deal with some of the worst of the sub-freezing temperatures as she prepared for her championship ride. But 25 degrees did not stop her and her appropriately-named seven-year-old Dutch Warmblood gelding Frost T (San Remo x Alona by Jazz) from posting the best score of 70.000% in a huge field of 35 competitors in the **Third Level Adult Amateur Championship**, ahead of Bonnie Canter of Hockley, Texas (Region 9) and her Connemara/Hanoverian cross mare Fifinella GCF (Fred Astaire x South Ridge Bliss by South Ridge Duncan's Honor, bred in the U.S. by Sharon Garner) who finished in reserve with 69.829%. "I hope someone out there appreciated the irony of my horse's name," she laughed. "Fortunately I live in New England so I'm used to riding in cold weather. Frost T is young but knows his job and has never let me down. Some say it was karma that I got him – I had lost my previous horse to a tragedy and found Frost T just ten days later. He had just been imported and all this weird stuff happened that just seemed meant to be. We have just clicked ever since. He's very talented and is a cool character but he does have an electric side to him that comes out sometimes. Everything seems to come easy to him and he's so willing, he thinks everything is fun and he hasn't had a bad day in his life."

With multiple titles already to her credit, Heather Mason of Lebanon, N.J. (Region 8) knows her way around victory lane at the US Dressage Finals and once again had no problem finding her way there with her 12-year-old Oldenburg gelding RTF Lincoln on a top score of 72.852% to win the **Fourth Level Open Championship**. "I've known this horse since he was born," said Mason. "He was reserve champion at Third Level at the inaugural Finals in 2013, but the next year he hurt himself and was out of competition for two years. But now he's back in the ring and better than ever. His amateur owner sold him to me for a dollar last year because she had to have hip replacement surgery, and she knew he wouldn't be the right fit for her after that. But she felt like he'd be in good hands with me, and she's even here cheering us on. It's a great situation for everyone. This is such an exciting show to come to – we love this show and come every year, and I have a bunch of clients who also like to come. It's challenging, but everyone gets a lot out of the experience and I look forward to bringing Lincoln back for the small tour next year."

Mason just edged out Region 3's Nora Batchelder (Williston, Fla.), who rode her eight-year-old Hanoverian mare Fifi MLW (Fidertanz x Wolkenstanza MLW by Wolkentanz I, bred in the U.S. by Mary Winn) to reserve with 72.593%. The pair



earned a reserve championship at Third Level last year and had no trouble now succeeding at Fourth. “She was a little tight when we first started and there’s a lot to look at out there, but she loosened up well and was a really good girl in the ring. I was especially happy with our trot work,” Batchelder added.

The highlight of the evening was the **Grand Prix Freestyle Open Championship** and the presentation of the new Jazzman Perpetual Trophy (presented by Donna Richardson), where fan-favorite and hometown hero

James Koford of Lexington, Ky. (Region 2) rode the eye-catching chestnut tobiano 10-year-old Friesian Sporthorse mare Adiah HP (by Nico, owned and bred by Sherry Koella) to a victorious score of 71.133% for the debut performance of their brand new cowboy-themed freestyle. “She’s just starting Grand Prix so I was actually feeling guilty this week thinking ‘what am I doing?’ because I wasn’t sure I had her ready,” Koford explained. “When you’re this visible and this different, you don’t want to not be ready or seem unpolished, but then I thought, ‘bring it on’.



*James Koford and Adiah HP earned the new Jazzman Perpetual Trophy for their win in the Grand Prix Open Freestyle Championship. Photo by Susan J. Stickle*

“She has so much talent but there’s nowhere to school for these types of conditions – it doesn’t matter how much you practice at home or go to regular shows, it’s not the same,” Koford continued. “So win, lose or draw I felt like I had to expose her to this and see if she wants to go ‘bright lights, big city’. She literally heard the applause from the horse before her and charged down the tunnel to go in the ring, like ‘hang on Jim, I’ve got this’ and I said ‘game on sister, let’s go!’ I could feel that the crowd was so into it. I love riding her and she makes me laugh every day – she’s bigger than life.”

Also enjoying success in their first season at the Grand Prix level were reserve champions Nicole Harrington of Amelia, Ohio (Region 2) and Three Oaks Farm LLC’s 11-year-old Hanoverian gelding Wizard of Oz (Weltmeyer x Vadella by Landacel), earning 70.617% for their appropriately-themed Wizard of Oz freestyle. “The music just seemed to suit him to a ‘T’. He’s still a little green but it’s all coming along,” said Harrington. “He’s such a hard worker and is a character in the barn. Has only been to maybe six shows in his life and this was the biggest environment he’s been in, but he handled this atmosphere fantastically.”

The US Dressage Finals presented by Adequan® will conclude on Sunday as the last group of eight champions for 2017 are crowned. Follow the action through updates on the [USDF Facebook page](#) and the [US Dressage Finals website](#), as well as watch live online streaming on the popular USEF Network at this link: <https://www.usef.org/network/coverage/2017usdressagefinals/>. To learn more about the US Dressage Finals presented by Adequan®, download competition information, review day sheets and results, and read daily news releases, visit the official event website at <http://www.usdressagefinals.com>.



# US Dressage Finals

presented by Adequan®

November 9-12, 2017 • Kentucky Horse Park

For Immediate Release

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## Riders Realize Their Dream of Competing on the National Stage at 2017 US Dressage Finals Presented By Adequan®

Source: Yellow Horse Marketing for the US Dressage Finals

For the last two years, 28-year-old Adult Amateur competitor Taryn Anderson of Erie, Colo. has successfully qualified to represent Region 5 at the **US Dressage Finals presented by Adequan®**. And for both of those years, she also had to make the gut-wrenching decision not to go simply because she couldn't afford it.

But this year she was determined to save enough money to take advantage of the opportunity, and thanks to plenty of hard work and some help from a new USDF travel grant program, her efforts paid off in spades as she earned Championship titles with both of her mounts on the final day of the 2017 US Dressage Finals presented by Adequan®, being held November 9-12 in Lexington, Ky.

Aboard her nine-year-old Dutch Warmblood gelding Romulus (R. Johnson x Starlight by Incognito, bred in the U.S. by Hearts Meadow Farm), Anderson claimed the **First Level Freestyle Adult Amateur Championship** with 72.556% for their performance featuring music from Lady Gaga's "The Edge of Glory" and The Script's "Hall of Fame", which Anderson described as "feeling like they tell a little story about the two of us." Not to be outdone, her second ride aboard her mother Tammy Anderson's 10-year-old Oldenburg mare Addison (Allerhand x Felicia by Falkland, bred in the U.S. by Kim Weindel & Zacrossed Farm) earned 70.011% to win the **Third Level Freestyle Adult Amateur Championship** in the Alltech Arena. "For Addison, we chose Katy Perry's 'Firework' song because it fits her perfectly – she really is a firework," Anderson laughed. "We also use American Authors' 'Best Day of My Life' for our canter work, which seemed especially appropriate today."

In finally achieving her goal of competing at the Kentucky Horse Park, Anderson said her Finals experience turned out to be everything she dreamed of. "The anticipation of wanting to come for three years and not being able to, but then finally being here...it's even more than I expected," she explained. "The competition is really tough, and coming from a smaller region I was like, 'whoa'. But I love it – the huge atmosphere, the arenas, and everything going on...it's all just awesome, and it surprised me a little in that the horses really took to it as well. Even though it took a couple of days for



Colorado's Taryn Anderson found a way to finally get to the US Dressage Finals presented by Adequan®, and her efforts paid off with two Championship titles in the First and Third Level Adult Amateur Freestyle divisions. Photo by Susan J. Stickle

all of us to settle in, I felt like we really hit our stride today. Both of the horses love their music and were really expressive in their tests and gave me great rides. We'll be back!"

Finishing in reserve in the Third Level Freestyle Adult Amateur Championship was the 2016 Third Level Freestyle champion Birgitt Dagge of Region 3 on her eight-year-old Oldenburg gelding Laxwell (Lingh x Dessous by Donnerhall) with 68.389%. "I rode in six classes here this year with my three horses and got a ribbon in all of them, so it's been a great show for us," said Dagge, a realtor in Bonita Springs, Fla. "With this horse we took six months off after last year's Finals and restarted in time to come back here this year, but now there will be no more time off for us because we're looking to move up for next season."



*Nineteen-year-old Callie Jones topped a tough field of professional riders in the Fourth Level Freestyle Open Championship with her partner Don Philippo. Photo by Susan J. Stickle*

For the last two years, Callie Jones of Region 2 has competed with her nine-year-old Hanoverian gelding Don Philippo (Dancier x Wildnight by Warkant) at top FEI Junior and Young Rider competitions, including the North American Junior & Young Rider Championships (NAJYRC) and the USEF Festival of Champions. And at just 19 years old, Jones had to draw upon all of that experience to successfully top a field full of adults and professionals and win the **Fourth Level Freestyle Open Championship** with 74.078%. "I think it was the best freestyle we've ever done – it was so consistent and flowing and he was with me the whole time. I even cried at the end because I was so happy," said Jones, a college sophomore in Henderson, Ky.

"I tried to keep the choreography relatively simple and have really solid rides, and I think that's what really helped me," Jones continued. "Phil' and I have been together for about a year and a half, but I feel like we bonded immediately and I love this horse with everything I have. He's not an easy horse to ride, but it just seems like we 'get' each other. We give each other confidence and he's always there for me. These Finals are a big show for someone young like me, and being here is exciting and such an honor."

Heather Mason of Lebanon, N.J. (Region 8) and 12-year-old Oldenburg gelding RTF Lincoln followed up on their previous day's Fourth Level Open Championship win to claim reserve freestyle honors at this level on

a score of 72.767%. "He was a bit spooky going around the outside of the ring, but he was great once we started," said Mason. "His changes were great and he got his pirouettes – he's just a happy horse."

But Mason wasn't done quite yet – she also added the **First Level Freestyle Open Championship** to her roster of successes from the 2017 US Dressage Finals. Riding Anne St. Martin's five-year-old Canadian Warmblood gelding Enlighteningh (Polansky x Flemmingo 777 by Flemmingh), Mason scored 73.467% for yet another national title. "I thought he was super today – he was more relaxed, we were right with the music and he rode really well," Mason explained. "This is a freestyle I got about 15 years ago, and it's tried and true and has worked well with various horses I've had over the years. It has a high degree of difficulty with a change of lead through trot to counter canter, and it suited this horse. He belongs to a client for whom I recommended that she buy this horse sight unseen, and she did. He's recovered from colic surgery about two years ago and the owner became pregnant this year, so I have the ride for now. Hopefully she'll have him back here herself in the adult amateur division next year, where I think she'll do really well."

Earning their second reserve championship title of the weekend with 70.989% was Martin Kuhn of New Berlin, Ill. (representing Region 4) and Washburn SW, a five-year-old Swedish Warmblood gelding (Wolkentanz II x Opal by Opus) owned and bred by Kuhn's wife, Kathryn. "Washburn seems to love his music – my wife picked it out, and the first time I heard it I said 'no way' but it grew on me. Everyone seems to like it and it works for him," said Kuhn. "I would like to mention that he is our 'second-born' and we were looking for a name for him. A very dear friend of ours provided the name, and she wanted to be here but due to some unfortunate reasons could not come. So I wanted her to know that our thoughts are with her."





*Christine Malpartida also had a big day at the Finals, earning champion honors for Training Level Adult Amateur and reserve for her First Level Adult Amateur Freestyle. Photo by Susan J. Stickle*

Christine Malpartida of Region 3 also had a big weekend with Freudentänzer (Fürst Nymphenburg x Design-RA by Donnerhall) as the pair earned a score of 75.909% for the unanimous win under all three judges in the **Training Level Adult Amateur Championship**, ahead of Stephanie McNutt of Mechanicsville, Md. (Region 1) and her five-year-old Westfalen gelding Freestyler HRH (Fürst Fugger x Dolce Vita HRH by Don Bosco) who, after being crowned as First Level Adult Amateur champions on Saturday, returned to the ring to claim reserve honors in the Training Level division (72.727%). Malpartida and her six-year-old Hanoverian gelding also claimed reserve honors in the First Level Freestyle Adult Amateur Championship with 71.911% for their Madonna/George Michael medley.

“My horse has been super all weekend – he always seems to step up to the plate and do the job that needs to be done. To be in this environment is very exciting, but he trusted me and nailed it,” said Malpartida, who owns real estate and rental properties in her hometown of St. Petersburg, Fla. and also works part time as a groom in order to spend more time with horses. “I imported him as a three-year-old from Germany, which was an exciting journey in itself to find him after a year and a half of looking for my ‘perfect mount’. We were reserve champions here at this level two years ago, so it’s extremely sweet to come back and win it this time. It’s exhilarating and an honor to be here.”

Nora Batchelder of Williston, Fla. (Region 3) had her hands full with three mounts scheduled to go down centerline for the **Prix St. Georges Open Championship**, but it was her ride aboard Andrea Whitcomb’s nine-year-old Hanoverian gelding Faro SQF (Fidertanz x SPS Rose by Rotsporn, bred in the U.S. by Jill Peterson) that would ultimately claim the Miki Christophersen Perpetual Trophy (presented by USDF Region 4) with a top score of 71.974%. “I’m ecstatic! I wanted to take home a championship and I didn’t think it would happen in this class, but I’m really happy about it,” said Batchelder. “This was Faro’s only class this week, but he was very brave and never put a foot wrong. I’m so proud of him. I think his extended trots and half-passes were really good, and overall he stayed really relaxed. He’s such a fun horse to ride – easy to sit and light in the bridle, and every moment is a pleasure. I’m looking to showing him in the small tour this winter in Wellington.”

Also finishing just a point behind for reserve was Batchelder with her eight-year-old Hanoverian mare Fifi MLW (Fidertanz x Wolkenstanza MLW by Wolkentanz I, bred in the U.S. by Mary Winn), who had previously claimed reserve championship honors in Saturday’s Fourth Level Open division. Fifi MLW’s score of 70.921% also earned her the Lloyd Landkamer Perpetual Trophy for FEI Highest Scoring Mare (presented by Janet Foy). “I was little nervous about going first, and initially she was a little backed off in the Alltech Arena because it’s a big venue,” Batchelder noted. “But she was such a good girl. I want to say that Lloyd [Landkamer] was such a great presence at the shows. He always gave my Corgis treats and was so nice to me. I miss seeing him and it means a lot for me to receive that award and remember him this way.”

Throughout the week, Elma Garcia (Mill Spring, N.C., Region 1) has remained at the top of the adult amateur small tour ranks at this year’s Finals with her 15-year-old Hanoverian mare Wenesa (Westernhagen x Dancing Girl by Davignon), and the elegant pair wrapped up their winning weekend with a score of 68.904% to earn victory in the **Prix St. Georges Adult Amateur Championship** and be presented with the Janine Westmoreland Malone Perpetual Trophy (presented by USDF). Garcia, a filmmaker who specializes in television commercials, credited newfound confidence on the part of both her and her horse for their success. “I always say I have two passions in life: filmmaking and photography, and horses. I make money in one to spend it on the other,” she laughed. “Wenesa and I have been working really hard since we moved to North Carolina this spring, and I also think that doing some of the CDI adult amateur classes has really made a difference for me confidence-wise as it has pushed me to be better. Despite three days of showing here, she was still fresh today and I had plenty of horse. She’s becoming stronger and fitter and just really seems to be coming into her own, and that’s an incredible feeling.”

Reserve champion with 65.789% was Pam Heglund, a company president and new mom with a nine-month-old son at home in Ada, Mich. (Region 2). She found time to travel to Kentucky with her 14-year-old Westfalen mare Letizia (Laomedon x Pagenia by Paradox I) for just one ride and found herself on the podium. “She knows her job, and generally the first time she goes in the ring is the best so that strategy paid off again,” said Heglund of her mare. “We’ve been together for about six years, and we’re really a team. We have a lot of confidence in each other and all season it’s been easy and smooth, so I was hoping to be in the top three here. It really clicked and worked out for us today.”

Heather McCarthy of Prairie Grove, Ill. (qualified in Region 2) considers the Finals to be a “can’t miss event” on her yearly competition calendar, and after she rode Sandy Chohany’s six-year-old Oldenburg gelding Au Revoir (Ampere x Lara by Liberty M) to win last year’s First Level Open title, the pair returned to Kentucky to easily move up a level to also claim the **Second Level Open Championship** with 71.829%. “He was fifth in the Third Level championship earlier this weekend and I was delighted to have a great ride on him today and get the win,” said McCarthy. “After Regionals I really focused on more precision with the Second Level movements, and that work really paid off today. He’s a very sensitive horse and shows a lot of talent for collection, so we’ll spend the winter really focusing on making him an FEI horse and will start looking towards the Developing Horse classes if he says he’s ready.”

After working in Denmark for four years, Ali Potasky of Versailles, Ky. (Region 2) found herself in a very different environment at her first US Dressage Finals as she rode Kathy Priest’s homebred six-year-old Oldenburg mare Damons Fantasy (Damon Hill x Frascaya by Florencio) to reserve honors with 70.244%. “I took over the ride when her owner had knee surgery, and she said ‘take her out and put some miles on her,’” Potasky explained. “We ended up at Regionals and now here, and it’s been such an impressive experience. It was lucky for me to get to show her because she’s such a lovely mare to ride.”

Adding to the excitement of the final day, the top-scoring riders in various divisions from each of the Great American/USDF Regional Championships competed on regional teams in the third-annual **US Dressage Finals Regions Cup**, vying with competitors from across the country for awards and bragging rights for their respective USDF Region in which they qualified to attend the Finals. Coming out on top for the third year in a row after four days of championship competition was the Region 3 team comprised of Anna Marek and Haiku in First Level Open; Amy Swerdlin with Quileute CCW for Fourth Level Adult Amateur; and Heather Blitz and Praestemarkens Quatero in the Open Prix St. Georges. Their winning average score of 69.943% just edged out reserve champions Region 1 with 69.688%, and Region 8 finishing in third on 69.299%.

More information including final results, photo galleries, and news archives from the 2017 US Dressage Finals presented by Adequan® are available on the official event website [www.usdressagefinals.com](http://www.usdressagefinals.com). Video on-demand from select championship performances is also available on the USEF Network at [www.usefnetwork.com](http://www.usefnetwork.com).



*Elma Garcia believes her Hanoverian mare Wenesa is “really coming into her own”, and the pair added the Prix St. Georges Adult Amateur title to their awards collection from this year’s Finals. Photo by Susan J. Stickle*



# Road To The Finals

By Jennifer M. Keeler

*Every year when riders and horses from across the country gather in Lexington, KY, for the US Dressage Finals presented by Adequan®, they not only bring top performances to the Alltech Arena – they also bring amazing stories. From overcoming tough odds, facing life’s daily challenges, healing from medical and veterinary conditions, or simply being the unlikely underdog, the tales which unfold at the Finals are nothing short of inspiring.*

*Back by popular demand, USDF’s exclusive series titled “Road to the Finals” will once again share competitors’ stories as they try to earn a ticket to the Kentucky Horse Park on November 9-12, 2017. Each month, a different rider from across the country will allow readers behind-the-scenes access as they pursue their dreams of competing with the best of the best at the Finals.*





# Third Time's a Charm

Taryn Anderson with Addison & Romulus, Erie, Colorado Region 5

For the last two years, 28-year-old Adult Amateur competitor Taryn Anderson of Colorado has successfully qualified for the US Dressage Finals. And for both of those years, she also had to make the gut-wrenching decision not to simply because she couldn't afford it.

"I have desperately wanted to go to the Finals every year I've qualified, but it just never worked out for me and I've always been so disappointed," said Anderson. "But this year I've been saving money and have set my mind to do it, so I have no excuses if I'm lucky enough to qualify once again."

Anderson hopes to double her chances for finally achieving her dream thanks to having the ride on two talented mounts.



*Taryn with Romulus (left) and Addison (right)*

Her accomplished Third Level partner, Addison, is a nine-year-old Oldenburg mare and Anderson's most experienced competition partner. "Addison always makes me feel very confident because she's exactly the same at home as she is at shows and not spooky at all," Anderson noted. "I know we'll get a good score for every test – as long as she's in a good mood. She is a mare after all."

She also has high hopes for Romulus, an eight-year-old Dutch Warmblood gelding who has been affectionately nicknamed "Pig Pen" for his messy habits in the barn. "My mom and I found Romulus barely broke in a pasture in 2015 when we honestly had no idea what we were looking for," Anderson admitted. "I got on him after being told he hadn't been ridden in months, and surprisingly he didn't buck me off (unlike the horse I had looked at before him). He seemed so kind and sweet so I bought him, and now here we are, my 'diamond in the rough', scoring pretty consistently in the 70's at First Level. Who would have thought!"

Anderson knows what it takes to be competitive at a championship level when given the opportunity. She began riding at just nine years old, and after first stepping into the dressage arena at eleven, she quickly found herself as an accomplished Junior/Young Rider at the elite levels. Despite her blossoming talent, other aspects of life were about to get in the way of her equestrian dreams.



*Taryn and Addison get congratulations for their reserve championship in third level freestyle at the 2016 Regional Championship at Estes Park, CO.*





*Taryn getting coached by Scott Hassler at a symposium at Colorado Horse Park.*

“I fell out of riding for ten years because my horse at the time developed some ongoing physical issues, and I felt so discouraged that I didn’t ride much at all and other things ended up being more important to me,” Anderson explained. “I was a teenager, still in high school, who had just gotten a car and I was kind of burned out by the horses taking all of my time away from other activities. So I started choosing my friends over my horse, so my mom sold him and all my riding stuff. It was actually a great move for the horse who went to a great home with a girl who loves him, and he even went on to Grand Prix!”

“But for me, it was probably the biggest mistake I’ve ever made,” Anderson continued. “I was a pretty good little rider with great coaches behind me, so who knows but I think I could have gone somewhere. One of my best friends from that time stayed with the horses, and now she’s competing internationally for the U.S. Team. But you make your mistakes, and the important thing is that I came to realize how much I really loved riding and found my way back. So if I have any advice for a young rider in high school, it would be to STICK with it! You get so much knowledge from the young rider program and if you really want it, you can make it happen. The love for horses will always be there and having a special horse is worth the time away from your friends!”

Now as an adult, Anderson’s focus and determination are hopefully paving the way to the Kentucky Horse Park in November. In addition to working extra hours at work to save extra

money for the trip, she depends upon the critical support of family and friends to help her get there.

“I work full-time at a framing company owned by my dad, and he lets me take off work early to head to a show, or just rolls his eyes when I show up a few minutes late for work while still wearing my riding gear because my lesson went too long,” Anderson laughed. “My boyfriend drives semis for a living, so he and my dad trailer me around and help with everything when it comes to the ‘heavy lifting,’ while my mom is the best horse show mom/groom ever! I also try to help my trainer Greta Vowell with things at the barn and in return that reduces coaching expense at shows. It’s a challenge competing two horses at two different levels and both with freestyles, so it definitely takes a village to get it all done. My whole family is very into it and comes to all my shows and really is the best support system you could ask for.”

Anderson has a busy roster of shows scheduled over the summer in preparation for the Great American/USDF Region 5 Championships in mid-September, and she hopes every competition will bring her one step closer to finally achieving her goal of bringing her charges to Kentucky. “I mainly want to go to the Finals to compete with the best and see where I stand,” she said. “Since we don’t compete at CDI’s yet, the Finals is the best experience I can get right now with that type of atmosphere in a big venue. And I’m even looking forward to the travel because I want to get the long trip followed by competition under the horses’ belts, so one day when we do hit the FEI levels we can be more ready for the demands of a CDI. Overall, I really think that the Finals would be an amazing experience for me and the horses, and I can’t wait to just get out there and do it.”



*Taryn and Romulus at the Colorado Horse Park.*



# Age is Just a Number

Patricia McVary & Aureo, Springfield, Illinois  
Region 4

I am an older rider – let’s just say I qualify for Vintage Cup awards,” said Patricia McVary with a laugh. But age is just a number when it comes to the US Dressage Finals, and McVary wasn’t going to let that stand in the way of her dreams. Last November she traveled to Kentucky for the first time, placing 10<sup>th</sup> in the Adult Amateur Third Level Freestyle aboard her 14-year-old PRE gelding, Aureo.

McVary will never forget the feeling of riding in the Alltech Arena. “At the beginning of the 2016 show season, if I had been asked if I planned on going to the Finals, I would have chuckled at the thought,” she explained. “How amazing it was to be there! Despite a terrible case of show nerves, when we trotted around waiting for the judge’s bell I took a moment to appreciate the opportunity to ride there. My horse Rio is not intimidated by large venues and he loves his music, so we had so much fun. As we waited to re-enter the arena for our victory lap with our baby blue ribbon, I felt so proud and leaned over to give Rio a hug and whisper a thank you to him for being my partner in this thrilling adventure.”

That unforgettable ride hooked McVary on the Finals experience, and now she can’t wait to go back. This year, she and Rio have worked every day with one goal in mind: to perfect their Spanish music-themed freestyle, attend the Great American/



*Patricia riding Aureo at last year's Finals*

USDF Region 4 Championships, and earn a ticket back to Lexington with even more confidence.

Despite a life-long love affair with horses, it’s only recently that McVary has had the opportunity to come such a long way in a short amount of time in dressage. “As a child, my parents couldn’t really afford lessons for me so I rode whenever the opportunity arose,” McVary remembered. “I started around age seven in a summer program, and then when I was around nine or ten I rode at a barn that introduced me to dressage. The trainers at the barn were the Pawlenkos, and it wasn’t until recently that I realized that judges Natalie Lamping and Fatima Kranz are the Pawlenko daughters who I admired so much as a teenager. With them I was exposed to many facets of riding: jumping, dressage, vaulting and Pony Club, and we would spend our entire Saturdays at the barn riding, and doing chores, and cleaning tack. I loved it and it was a wonderful, albeit short-lived experience because their family moved to a new barn further away and my lessons came to an end.”

But even as she grew up and began a career in neonatal and pediatric intensive care, horses were never far from McVary’s mind. “I would ride whenever I was able to afford a lesson or two, and when I started working as a nurse, I started riding weekly. But then marriage and my son Peter came along...”





After her daughter Meghan was born McVary found her passion for riding was still simmering, so she did something about it. “I never forgot my introduction to dressage, so I started riding again in earnest,” she said. “I took lessons for a bit and gradually became more and more involved at the barn. I worked for a while as a groom (when the kids were in school) to pay for lessons. I took a hiatus when Meghan started riding hunters, and returned to riding when she left for college. But I didn’t progress very much and did very limited showing until we moved to Springfield and I started with Kate Fleming-Kuhn and Martin Kuhn at StarWest.”

With the help of the Kuhns, McVary’s hard work began to pay off in the arena: she earned her USDF Bronze Medal, and is now working towards her Silver. “When I started with them I was barely Training Level, and Kate would tactfully tell me I had ‘gaps in my education’ – a polite way of saying I didn’t even know what I didn’t know!” she laughed. “They are patient and very knowledgeable, and train every student as if they will be at Grand Prix one day.”

Perhaps just as importantly, Fleming-Kuhn found the perfect partner for McVary in Aureo. “I had owned a couple of horses before him and they were not suitable for me at all. There definitely is truth to the saying that an amateur should never buy a horse without a trainer,” McVary noted. “So in the fall of 2014, I gave all my trust to Kate to help me and she found the perfect horse in Rio. He is the ultimate schoolmaster with a stellar temperament. But for me the learning curve was steep, and I think of the torture he must have gone through while I was learning to ride better and the worst he has done is flip his tail and maybe hop a little bit. He’s a saint and also a barn favorite with everyone.”

Even with the right horse, as an older rider McVary faces some hurdles as she works to keep up a rigorous program of riding five times a week, taking lessons, and competing regularly. “For instance, as I’ve gotten older I have noticed that the heat affects me more, and I take Pilates weekly to help with core



*StarWest trainer Martin Kuhn with his son Malcolm*

strength and flexibility,” said McVary. “But I am not as quick with my aids as a younger rider would be, and that is a problem when you need to catch something right away. I notice I take a bit longer to process something before reacting. I am fortunate that I am able-bodied, but for the first time ever I hurt my back during a clinic a few months ago, and had to take time off from riding to give it a break. I’ve also noticed that as I move up the levels, it seems to take a physical toll.”

Despite the challenges, McVary is determined to qualify for Regionals and the Finals in the Adult Amateur divisions at Third Level, Third Level Freestyle, and Fourth Level, and she’s got a strategy in place to make it happen. “My personal philosophy is that for best results you need to ride in the ring at an actual show, because at home there is a false sense of security that goes right out the window at a competition,” she explained. “So this year I know I have to just keep going in the ring and doing the best I can. As last year proved for me, it gets better the more times you do it. Of course there is some strategy and planning involved depending on your goals, along with juggling family obligations, but I try to go to as many shows as possible. This year I’ve concentrated mainly on challenging myself and getting a better ride, and even if my scores suffer a little in the short term, I believe moving forward in the big picture.”

McVary and Rio hope to continue to “move forward”, right back to the in-gate at the US Dressage Finals in November where she plans to relish the experience even more than before. “When I qualified for the Finals last year I could not believe it,” she noted. “I went because who knows what the future will bring, but honestly I was terrified and overwhelmed at the prospect. But as I said, the more times you do something the less scary it becomes, so if we make it this year I hope to go with more confidence and do even better, but most importantly, savor those special moments so much more.”





# Small but Mighty

Ana DiGironimo & Anna Mariah C, Pilesgrove, New Jersey  
Region 8

**A**na DiGironimo first sat in the saddle at the tender age of three and never looked back. As a child, she had an avid desire to learn and succeed and became involved in her local Fox and Hounds Pony Club (for which now, as an adult, DiGironimo is the dressage coordinator). By age 10, Ana participated in her first North East Junior Young Rider championship, now known as Lendon Gray's Youth Dressage Festival, where she met Gray and a special journey began. As a huge pony advocate, Gray prepared a young DiGironimo to participate in the first ever CDI FEI Pony competition held at Port Jarvis, NY.

As a diminutive rider, DiGironimo felt right at home on ponies from the beginning. She continued to develop as a rider under the watchful eye of Gray with her mounts including Orion, Cadanz and Gray's own Ballywhim Arden Mor. Throughout a stellar junior/young rider career, DiGironimo was undefeated in the Great American/USDF Regional Championships from 2000-2008 from Training Level through Intermediaire I. She participated in national championships and FEI competitions and was a member of the Region 1 team at the NAYRC from 2006-2007, and was crowned as champion of the 13 & under Dressage Seat Medal Final and reserve champion the following year for the 14-18 division.

After earning college degrees in psychology and speech language pathology, DiGironimo (now 27) returned to the competition ring as an adult and has been equally successful: as a Grand Prix rider and trainer and USDF Bronze, Silver and Gold Medal-



*Ana and Anna Mariah, Dressage level champion at NJHANA All Arabian Horse Show*

ist, she owns and operates DQ Performance Horses, a full-service training facility in southern New Jersey with a variety of clients from beginners of dressage to Grand Prix.

"We have a bit of everything including our token hunter rider," DiGironimo laughed. "We cater to each rider's goals, and our number one priority is for everyone to learn and enjoy her horse. It's been such a blessing and wonderful experience; and when my students succeed, I feel like I succeed. I truly enjoy helping to bring out the best in each rider, and just having fun."

In addition to training and coaching, DiGironimo still finds time to ride and compete herself, and one of her most charismatic mounts is her eight-year-old, 14.2-hand black roan Arabian mare Anna Mariah C++. At first, it was an unlikely pairing. "When I first saw 'AM' in a field, I could see that she was beautiful but was told that she could be quite difficult," DiGironimo explained. "I said, 'I'll ride her!' They were right –she was very strong and opinionated, but I felt like we had a connection from the start. I was her last chance as a rider – if it didn't work she was going to get bred, and when I heard that I was even more determined to make her into a dressage horse!"

As DiGironimo embraced her new training project, she realized it would be a slow road to the winner's circle. "We spent the first three months just walking and trotting around, getting her to relax, developing a feel for one another, and working to correct past





issues she had in her training,” she said. “Only when AM trusted me were we able to move ahead.” DiGironimo’s patience paid off: after showing their first year at Intro, Training and First Level, the pair took home a Top Ten placing for First Level at Arabian Nationals in Raleigh, NC. “By that time I was hooked on this feisty little mare,” DiGironimo noted. “I continued to train her, and had the opportunity in October of last year to purchase her from her previous owner. I jumped at the chance.”

With big plans for her small mount, DiGironimo had her new mare officially measured and discovered she not only had a super partner, but a super PONY on her hands, so next stop was a road trip to the National Dressage Pony Cup Championship Show in Lexington, KY, in July. “We whipped together a Third Level musical freestyle in 10 days and off we went,” DiGironimo explained. “I still work with Lendon, so she prepped us just as we left for our journey to the Kentucky Horse Park. We made quite an impression with our Wizard of Oz freestyle and WON! I was so proud of her – with such little practice she danced into the judges’ hearts like I always hoped she could.”

While at the Pony Cup, a friend encouraged DiGironimo to think bigger: pursue qualifying for the US Dressage Finals in November. “I thought it would be cool to compete there as one of the only professionals on a pony, but also on a non-warmblood,” said

DiGironimo. “But of course we had to earn an invitation through Regionals where I knew the competition would be tough. With vigorous preparation and seeing Lendon [Gray] just two weeks before Regionals, I knew we were ready. We’d come so far in just a few months with this insane goal of going ‘all the way,’ but I had to try.”

So DiGironimo and AM joined the nearly 700 horses in attendance at the Great American/USDF Region 8 Championships and NEDA Fall Festival in Saugerties, NY, on September 21-14, hoping to punch their ticket for the trip of a lifetime. “We got to Regionals and had super warm ups, and I had changed our freestyle before the show thinking I could gain points on the technical side and degree of difficulty,” she explained. “But I was wrong: our warmup freestyle test was five points below our average for our old one. So with less than 24 hours until our championship ride, I went back to the drawing board.”

DiGironimo trusted her gut and went with what she knew would work, and her decision paid off: despite stiff competition and being the only Arabian pony in the class, the magic of their charming Wizard of Oz music and the elegant pair’s talent paid off as they were rewarded with a score of 68.300% and fifth place – less than one point from the reserve championship and successfully earning a coveted wild card invitation to the Finals.

“To say I was thrilled is an understatement,” said DiGironimo. “I rode my best and left it all in the ring for the judges to decide where we stand. Now ‘we’re off to see the wizard’ in Kentucky and I am so proud to be representing not only Arabians, but also ponies at US Dressage Finals next month; and if we’re lucky and click our heels three times, we may just be able to pull off a miracle.”





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