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United States Para-Equestrian Association



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Great American Insurance Group/ United States Dressage Federation Region 9 Dressage Championships Hosted by the Houston Dressage Society Showcases Region's Talent

Houston, Texas-November 27, 2012- The Great American Insurance Group/ United States Dressage Federation Region 9 Dressage Championships brought forward the highest caliber of riders November 1-4, 2012. The Houston Dressage Society proudly hosted the USDF Region 9 equestrians at the Great Southwest Equestrian Center in Katy, Texas where the weather maintained warmer than average temperatures over the weekend except for a Saturday afternoon thunderstorm that disrupted the outdoor classes. Among the top performing riders were Professional rider Claire Darnell of Georgetown, Texas, junior rider Anna Campbell of Wylie, Texas, and Elizabeth "Bit" Fingerhut of Houston, Texas. In addition to the championship presentations, multiple riders were recognized for their

accomplishments in 2011-2012. Para-equestrian Jonathan Wentz, who passed away at the end of September, was also recognized for the highest Region 9 honor. Wentz was recognized for his achievements during the year and his outstanding performance at the 2012 London Paralympics.

Over four days Region 9 riders competed for 2012 year-end championships and multiple 2013 qualifying opportunities including:

-Official qualifying competition for the 2013 Great American Insurance Group (GAIG)/USDF Regional Dressage Championships and the 2013 Southwest Dressage Championships

-Official qualifying competition for the 2013 FEI North American Junior and Young Riders' Championships and Collecting Gaits Farm/USEF National Junior, Young Rider & Brentina Cup Championships

-Official qualifying competition for the 2013 Dover/USDF Adult Amateur Medal Program.

Eight dressage judges were on hand to score the competition including: Janet Foy, USEF "S", FEI "4*" from Colorado Springs, Colorado; Lorraine McDonald, USEF "S", FEI "4", from Caledon, Ontario, Canada; Lilo Fore, USEF "S", FEI "4*" of Santa Rosa, California; Bill Solyntjes, USEF "S", from Hamel, Minnesota; Mike Osinski, USEF "S", Lacey, Washington; Sue Mandas, USEF "S", of Dayton, Ohio; and Dolly Hannon, USEF "S", from Arvada, Colorado; and Janine Malone, USEF "R", from Zebulon, NC.

One of the top open riders at the Region 9 championships was Claire Darnell. Claire is the professional rider for Darnell Dressage, a lesson, training and sales barn she runs with her mother, Joan Darnell, a USEF "S" Dressage Judge. Claire rode multiple horses at the show but had her greatest successes on Calimar, a 10-year-old Oldenburg gelding by Contucci, and Flintstone, a 9-year-old Oldenburg gelding. Calimar won the GAIG/USDF Intermediare II Open Championship with 66.316% and was third in the FEI Extreme Freestyle with 67.312%. Claire says Calimar is fun, but challenging. She purchased him when he was 18 months old. Her mother has helped with his training but Claire is the only rider who has shown him. Claire Darnell commented, "Calimar finally figured out how to piaffe during the show's awards ceremony. Some of his Grand Prix movements are green so getting piaffe has been hit-or-miss until now."

Flintstone was the GAIG/USDF Third Level Open Reserve Champion with 68.462% and the GAIG/USDF Third Level Freestyle Champion with a score of 73.917%. Flintstone was imported as a jumper after being purchased at the Oldenburg auction in Germany. With a height of 15.3 hands his show jumping career came to an end when the jumps became too big for him. Darnell noted, "Flintstone is a firecracker who likes to bolt and buck." Claire quickly moved him up to Third Level in 2012 to keep him busy and rides with a double bridle to help keep his enthusiasm under control. In the National (Training to Fourth Level) tests, Claire wore a purple riding coat she custom ordered in England to "have some fun." It was the first show for the purple coat and was easy to spot in the warm-up ring. In spite of

her show success, Claire had a few tense moments including a show boot mishap and a technology nightmare as she was copying her freestyle music for the horse show office.

Among the Region 9 junior dressage riders Anna Campbell made 2012 a year to remember. Anna Campbell of Wylie, Texas was a member of the first-ever Bronze medal winning Region 9 Junior Rider Team at the 2012 NAJYRC. Campbell noted, "NAJYRC was certainly a highlight for the year and it was pretty special to ride in the same arena as the greats." She continued, "However, the GAIG USDF Region 9 Championships at Great Southwest Equestrian Center are familiar and feel like home because I have shown here so often and have so many great memories here." Campbell plans on competing as a junior for one more year through 2013.



Claire Darnell and Calimar Photo (c) Susan Stickle

Over the November Championship weekend, Anna Campbell showed horses Mai and Wandango 12 winning multiple accolades. Campbell was the GAIG/USDF Championship winner of Prix St. Georges Jr/YR on Mai with 65.78% and Reserve Champion of the GAIG/USDF Junior Team Test on Wandango 12 with a score of 63.446%. Campbell also earned her USDF Rider Achievement Silver Medal at the show.

Campbell's Mai is an 11-year-old Dutch Warmblood mare born in Denmark during the month of May which is spelled "Mai" in German. She explained, "Mai is a 'love child' because no one knows who her sire is. Her dam became pregnant while pastured next to a field of young colts." Mai is sensitive and had a spook from crowd noise during the Prix St. George shoulder-in on one side but managed to recover quickly. Also, Campbell almost went off course but caught herself just in time. Wandango 12, Campbell's horse for the Junior Team Test Championship class, is usually ridden by her older sister, Rachel. However, Rachel has been busy with school, so Anna has ridden the 17.3 hand gelding in several shows during the 2012 calendar year. Wandango 12 is a 14-year-old Hanoverian imported from Germany by Kai Handt of North Texas Equestrian Center. Campbell commented, "I enjoy riding both horses but they are very different. Wandango's large size

makes him more difficult to maneuver in the arena while Mai's downhill balance can be challenging."



Anna Campbell and Mai Photo (c) Susan Stickle



Anna Campbell and Wandango Photo (c) Susan Stickle

Amateur rider Elizabeth "Bit" Fingerhut topped her division earning the GAIG/USDF First Level Adult Amateur Championship on Vanessa Mae with a score of 69.677%. Vanessa Mae is a 10 year-old Dutch mare by Ferro. Pennock Point Sport Horses in Reddick, Florida bred Vanessa Mae for the original purpose of becoming a broodmare. She had one foal and was put under saddle to earn her IBOP (mare performance test) breed score. However, when the economy slowed, Vanessa Mae's breeder decided to downsize and found it was easiest to sell the horses under saddle. Fingerhut purchased Vanessa Mae two years ago and plans to move her up to Second Level in 2013. In the First Level Championship class, Fingerhut had a "fabulous, relaxed" ride but ended up tied with another rider at the end of the class. Fingerhut and Vanessa Mae had higher collective marks for the win. In the past, Vanessa Mae has stressed at shows, stopped eating and hid her head in the stall corner. "This was the first show the mare seemed more comfortable which translated into more relaxed rides," smiled Fingerhut. A former President of the Houston Dressage Club, Fingerhut faces many of the same challenges as other amateurs trying to balance riding with family and career. She works long hours as the Controller for an independent oil and

gas company, Renaissance Offshore. Fingerhut lives with her husband, Steve, in an airpark over 50 miles from her office. This means she only has time to ride Vanessa Mae three times per week. Fingerhut's trainer, Julie McGee Harkness, rides Vanessa Mae the other days.



Elizabeth Fingerhut and Vanessa Mae Photo by Susan Stickle

The Region 9 Championships were also an opportunity to celebrate the region's rider accomplishments throughout the 2012 competition year. Over 65 USDF Rider Achievement medals were earned and three new Century Club Members were named in 2012. During the Collecting Gait/USEF National Dressage Championships, Festival of Champions held in Gladstone, NJ, Ayden Uhlir riding Sjapoer of Arlington, Texas earned the National Junior Championship. Ayden also conquered the North American Junior Young Rider Championships (NAJYRC) winning an Individual Gold Medal in Lexington, Kentucky. The Region 9 Junior Team was quite successful as well at the NAJYRC winning the Bronze team medal for the first medal in Region 9 history. Another Region 9 standout was Emma Patterson riding Wynshire's Valiant who earned the National Champion 13-and-under division at the Dressage Seat Equitation Medal Finals held in Lamplight, Illinois.

The highest Region 9 honor went to para-equestrian Jonathan Wentz, the USEF Para-Equestrian 2012 Reserve Champion and 4th placed individual Paralympian in London. Jonathan was the highest placed United States equestrian athlete at the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.



Jonathan Wentz and NTEC Richter Scale photo by Lindsay Yosay McCall

With 2013 approaching, Region 9 and the Houston Dressage Society look forward to another exciting calendar year hosting multiple dressage shows as well as clinics with world-renowned instructors.

For more information please visit the Houston Dressage Society at <http://houstondressagesociety.org>. For press inquiries please contact press@houstondressagesociety.org.

About the Houston Dressage Society:

The Houston Dressage Society (HDS) is 501 (c)(7) social non-profit organization. HDS was incorporated in November of 1977. The club is dedicated to furthering the art of dressage through education for its members and by hostingshows in order for its members to achieve their goals. HDS is a Region 9 Group Member Organization (GMO) of the United States Dressage Federation (USDF) and an Affiliate Member of the United States Equestrian Federation (USEF).

About United States Para-Equestrian Association:

The USPEA is a network of riders, judges, national federation board members, and equestrian enthusiasts. The association gives athletes the ability to get involved and expand their knowledge and experience in the Para-Equestrian sport. The USPEA encourages para-athletes to participate in all disciplines under the para-equestrian umbrella.

The USPEA is a recognized affiliate of the United States Equestrian Federation (USEF) which serves as the National Governing Body for the equestrian sport. This relationship between the USPEA and USEF is to

encourage para-equestrian competitors, leisure riders, coaches, fans and enthusiasts to network and get involved with the entire equestrian sport.

Ultimately the goal of the USPEA is to foster growth in the para-equestrian discipline. From growth in the number of participants to growth as a team, and growth in the experience and knowledge of all involved. From local horse shows to international Olympic Games, the USPEA will provide para-equestrians the knowledge of what they need to succeed. The USPEA connects with the International Olympic Committee (IOC), the Federation Equestre Internationale (FEI), the United States Dressage Federation (USDF), and USEF which provides Para-Equestrians the top equestrian resources.

In June 2010, the USPEA earned its 501 (c)(3) status which has encouraged supporters to help supply funding to the Para-Equestrian Team as a recognized affiliate of the United States Equestrian Federation(USEF).

For more information about the USPEA please visit www.USPEA.org or contact USPEA President: Hope Hand by e-mail: Wheeler966@aol.com or by phone: (610)356-6481.

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