



THIS PAGE: 2008 Spalding Labs USEA Young Event Horse Series Five-Year-Old Champions Asterion and Samantha Clark made quite a splash at this year's competition, winning their second prestigious title after claiming victory in the Canadian YEH Championships as well.

ABOVE: Clark and Asterion proudly accept their cooler and trophy from Jane Ayers during the awards ceremony.


 Spalding Labs
 Equestrian Performance

Adolescent Stars Take the Stage in the Young Event Horse Championships



By Erica Larson

Photos by Joshua A. Walker and Emily Daily

Before the horses even arrived at Lamplight Equestrian Center, the competition for the Spalding Labs USEA Young Event Horse Championships was shaping up to be fierce. The top three four-year-olds from last year's Championship were returning as five-year-olds. The horse named top Four-Year-Old in Canada last year was making his USEA Championship debut, and two Olympians brought a total of five horses to try their luck in the Championships.

How Does It Work?

According to the USEA, the Young Event Horse (YEH) program is "best described as an equine talent search." It is, in simple terms, an introduction to three-day eventing for four- and five-year-old up-and-coming event horses. In the first portion of a YEH competition, the horse is judged on the correctness of its conformation and gaits. The horse is presented to the judge in-hand, then walked and trotted up and down a straight line. The score the horse receives in this phase will account for 15 percent of its final score.

Next, each horse and rider combination performs a simple, modified dressage test that is judged, not on individual movements, but on the impression the test gives the judge as a whole. The score for this phase accounts for 35 percent of the total score.

The final phase is the jumping phase. Here, the horse and rider are asked to jump a series of jumps, including four to five cross-country jumps and six to eight show jumps.

The horse is judged on its suitability for jumping and the potential it possesses. Dropped rails are not penalized in the YEH series. Additionally, the gallop is judged at the end of the jumping phase as it is one of the event horses' most important gaits. Fifty percent of the total score is based on this phase.

Unlike classic eventing, the highest score wins in every phase and for the total score at the end.

Judging

One of the main aspects that is still improving in the YEH Series is judging.

"All players in YEH demand excellent judging and they definitely deserve it," explained Dr. Timothy Holekamp, a member of the YEH Task Force, and longtime breeder of Trakehners at his New Spring Farm in Colombia, Missouri. "With good judging comes respect for the results, trust in the uniformity and fairness, and an improved accuracy in identifying the few horses destined for the top. We are going to measure our accuracy over a decade or two, and will keep enough records to find out later what worked and what did not, so that we may remain true to our commitment to continuous improvement of the YEH program."

Some competitors have found that judging at YEH competitions is not necessarily consistent from one show to another. In order to combat this problem, Holekamp and the USEA have produced a

DVD designed to "train and standardize the judging." The DVD is currently undergoing the final editing process.

"If the DVD turns out as well as we hope, there will be a very good "primer" that covers all aspects of YEH judging, demonstrates what is being sought, and shows various score levels in well-filmed demonstration horses," he explained.

Holekamp also arranged for Martin Plewa to come from Germany to aid in the production of the DVD, and hopes that his insights will help the program become more standardized.

"Martin is generally recognized as the top young event horse judging expert in the world," Holekamp said. "He more or less originated the German program and has judged nearly all the Bundeschampionat finals for the 20 years it has existed. He is a consummate horseman, earning the top German score at Burghley CCI4* aboard Windfall's sire (Habicht) way back in 1977, coached the German eventing team for many years, and is the Master Teacher at the Westphalian Riding School in Muenster."

The Championships

The YEH Championships were held in conjunction with the Wellpride USEA American Eventing Championships for the second consecutive year at Lamplight

BELOW PHOTOS: Asterion wowed the judges in all three phases (conformation, dressage, and jumping), and took home a commendable score of 84.21.



Equestrian Center in Wayne, Illinois. The Tuesday before the AEC began, the competition featured many of the top young eventers in the country.

In the Five-Year-Old division, top honors went to Asterion, a striking Trakehner gelding, owned by Samantha Clark. Clark, a 20-year-old amateur from Cambridge, Ontario, and 'Ian' topped the leaderboard with a score of 84.21. Just behind them finishing in second was Tera MacDonald aboard the stunning Hanoverian/Thoroughbred gelding La Tee Da with a score of 83.47. Finally, rounding out the top three was the magnificent Westphalian mare Denira and Martha Lambert with a score of 81.92.

In the Four-Year-Old division, Amarna, an elegant Trakehner mare, took home the Championship. Under the guidance of Leslie Law, Amarna received a total score of 81.48 to finish more than two points ahead of the nearest challenger. Second place went to junior rider Max McManamy and her pinto Trakehner gelding Project Runway. The pair earned a total score of 79.31. Finally, finishing in third was the steady Thoroughbred gelding Foligno's Legend with William "Randy" Ward racking up a total of 78.86.

Two For Two

When Samantha Clark first met Asterion two years ago, she was looking for a horse to take her up through the levels. The minute she sat on 'Ian', she knew that he was the horse for her. She purchased the gray Trakehner from Olympian Darren Chiacchia two years ago.

Ian is by Darren's Olympic partner and Dr. Timothy and Cheryl Holekamp's famous stallion Windfall II, and out of an Amethyst mare called Astra. After Cheryl started Ian, Darren put a few finishing touches on the gelding before passing him along to Clark.

Before long, Ian had taken a liking to dressage and was cruising around cross-country courses with ears perked. Then, just over a year from the first time Clark met him, Ian took home the Four-Year-Old Championship from the Canadian Young Event Horse Finals.

"The Canadian YEH competition was a well put together event," Clark said. "One of the largest differences is the size! The USEA competition was much larger and definitely attracts a larger crowd of spectators. The amount of entries is larger in the States, but I feel that the quality of horses can be just as nice. I think it's a

great way to get your horses exposed and a great advertisement for trainers."

Clark opted to head south for the winter to continue bringing Ian along in the winter series. While the pair enjoyed great success at the Novice level, Clark decided to step Ian up to Training. A new experience for both Clark and Ian, she turned to experts for some help in making the transition.

"I trailer down to Darren's for lessons and I've started working with a dressage coach at home," she said. "He has so much movement and so much potential. He just

"Asterion came out to win. He felt like he knew exactly what he was there to do that day. From our jog, to the gallop after our last cross-country fence, he was on his game."



ABOVE: Clark jogs Asterion for the judges, who awarded him a score of 11.65 out of a possible 15.

needs to hold it all together. Sometimes he gets a little too excited and then legs are flying everywhere!"

Things got sorted out quickly and Clark and Ian were back to their winning ways. After qualifying for both the YEH Championships and the AEC at Training level, Samantha decided to take a shot and enter both competitions.

"I didn't know what I was getting into with the YEH," she admitted. "All the upper level riders, like Leslie Law and Darren, were bringing such nice horses.

"Of course, we all want to win," Clark admitted with a smile. "But I just wanted clean jumping and a nice smooth dressage test—an improvement from what my season had been."

As the saying goes, the rest is history. Ian's dressage test was smooth and steady, and his jumping was the best of the day.

"The YEH Championships at Lamplight this year was fantastic," Clark said. "Asterion came out to win. He felt like he knew exactly what he was there to do that day. From our jog, to the gallop after our last cross-country fence, he was on his game.

"I have been waiting for Ian to come into the jump ring and grab a hold of my hands and say 'Lets go! I'm ready to dig up some dirt!' That was the day it happened! He carried me around like he was a pro. I

was very impressed with the jumping course that the five-year-olds were asked to do. It was a good challenge."

In addition to his win in the YEH Championships, Ian also completed the Training Amateur division in the AEC where he finished 13th out of 34 horses.

"The YEH program is a great addition to the eventing season," Clark added. "If I were a trainer I would love to take as many horses out to compete as I could. It's a great way to advertise, and it's an ideal venue for breeders. But the best part is the end result. Once you receive your packages, it's not about the score so much as it is the comments. The more comments the judges write, the more feedback we receive."

Amarna

Asterion wasn't the only horse bred by the Holekamps to win a title at the YEH Championships this year. An attractive chestnut Trakehner mare, ridden by Olympian Leslie Law and trained by Leslie's wife Lesley Grant-Law, Amarna, galloped away with the Four-Year-Old Championship.

Amarna is by the Advanced eventing stallion Amethyst and out of the former Prix St. Georges dressage mare Actress. With these quality bloodlines, the Holekamps decided to breed Amarna before sending her to the Laws for training. Last year, she became the mother of a lovely colt by Windfall. Because she was out of training for a year to have a foal, Amarna was allowed to compete in the Four-Year-Old Championships, despite the fact that she was actually foaled in 2003.

When Amarna arrived at Law Eventing

“She has a great style over fences. I think her asset in the jumping is that she will just canter down to anything and for a young horse, she just marches down to the jumps and jumps them and doesn’t really bat an eyelid at anything.”

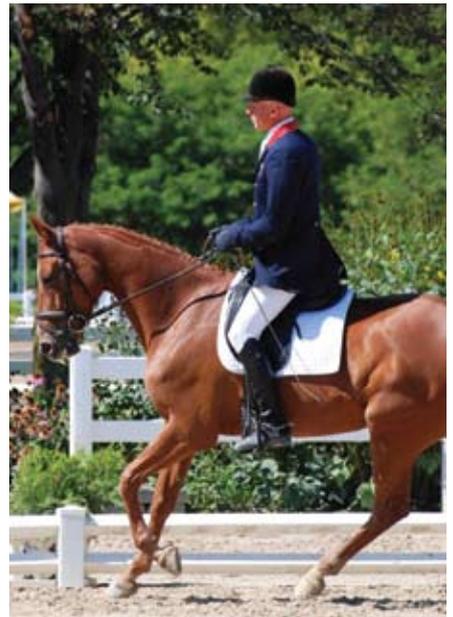
in the early months of 2008, she was an exciting prospect. After being started by Cheryl Holekamp, Grant-Law took over the mare’s training and turned the potential into polished ability. She took Amarna to several events and YEH competitions and the mare easily qualified for the Championships.

When Law entered the arena for the YEH Championship dressage competition at Lamplight, he wasn’t exactly sure what to

expect from the mare, since his wife had ridden her for most of the summer.

"She was a joy to ride 'round the dressage today," Law said after the competition. "She went in a very sweet, easy way and she felt very relaxed, very soft. She's a very quality mare and she's got good paces."

Law also said that Amarna’s jumping had improved since he last competed her, thanks both to Grant-Law’s efforts and the natural talent the mare inherited.



ABOVE: Amarna performed the best out of all the four-year-olds, scoring a 28.63 with Leslie Law in the tack. **LEFT:** The Trakehner’s snappy jumpy style once again earned her top marks, and solidified her win in the Championships.

BELOW: Law credits Amarna’s success to his wife Lesley Grant-Law who frequently rode the talented young mare during the several months leading up to the Finals.

“She has a great style over fences,” he commented. “I think her asset in the jumping is that she will just canter down to anything and for a young horse, she just marches down to the jumps and jumps them and doesn’t really bat an eyelid at anything.”

After Law won the Championship with Amarna, Grant-Law took the reins again to compete in the Training Horse division of the AEC. After posting a 31.1 in dressage, the pair was unfortunately eliminated on cross-country, perhaps due to the heavy rain that would plague the remainder of the





Project Runway

The same year junior rider Max McManamy, of Templeton, California, acquired Project Runway, she earned the Four-Year-Old Reserve Championship at the YEH Championships. She has done most of the work with the gelding herself.

'Devon' is yet another Holekamp-bred Trakehner who has great potential in the sport of eventing. Sired by Windfall and out of the Trakehner/Paint mare Polarschecke, Max purchased Devon from Darren Chiacchia last December.

"We viewed over twenty young horses in two days and I think Darren knew I would love the pinto because he saved him for last," McManamy said. "The moment we saw him we knew that he

competition and call off the cross-country phase for the remaining Preliminary through Advanced levels.

Most recently, Grant-Law and Amarna finished in second place at the Maryland Horse Trials.

La Tee Da

After winning the Reserve Championship in the 2007 Four-Year-Old YEH Championships, Tera MacDonald and La Tee Da returned to this year's Championships to compete in the Five-Year-Old division.

La Tee Da, known around the barn as 'Miro', is a Hanoverian/Thoroughbred owned by Cheryl Quick, MacDonald's mother-in-law. The pair has been together since Miro was young, and Tera has done much of his training herself.

"It's sometimes hard," admitted MacDonald, who hails from Gig Harbor, Washington. "I compete in the Open divisions, but I'm really an amateur. I'm a mom and I have a full-time job, but these guys [La Tee Da and other mount Savant] make it easy."

In addition to their Reserve Championship in the YEH competition, Tera also entered Miro in the Novice Horse division at the AEC. Miro finished second, but only to his best barn mate, Savant.

Tera plans to keep Miro moving up through the levels, but hopes that he can gain a tad more confidence.

"Today, he was like riding a ping pong ball," she laughed after cross-country day. "He didn't spook at the jumps, he spooked more at the people and the rope!"

ABOVE: Five-year-old La Tee Da poses for the judges during the conformation portion.

BELOW: The precocious Hanoverian/Thoroughbred gelding was in his element during the jumping phase, and scored a point behind Asterion with a 42.07.

RIGHT: Tera MacDonald and La Tee Da knew the routine during the awards presentation—they were runners-up in the Four-Year-Old Finals last year.





“The moment we saw him we knew that he had that ‘extra something special’ and then, when we saw him free jump, we decided right then and there.”

which he won. That was [two weeks before the Championship]. We’ll definitely be back next year.

McManamy said that Devon is the hit of the barn at home. “Everyone loves him,” she said. “He’s always in your pocket just playing around. He’s curious, well mannered, interested in everything around him, athletic, playful, and learns everything quickly.”

But the most important thing to McManamy is being sure that Devon gets the best education possible. “Our plan with him is to go slow and make sure we build his confidence with lots of playtime, long hacks, and long walks on the beach.”

had that ‘extra something special’ and then, when we saw him free jump, we decided right then and there.

“It’s definitely a learning process,” she said of her first experience competing young horses. “I’ve been training with Gina Miles and it’s been great. He’s done one Beginner Novice and one Novice event,

ABOVE LEFT: Project Runway presented a very solid and workmanlike dressage test to trot into second place with a 27.58. **ABOVE RIGHT:** Though he hasn’t been competing long, the attractive gelding performed beautifully for young rider Max McManamy over the challenging course. **BELOW:** ‘Devon,’ as he’s known to his fans, obviously inherited his ground-covering gallop from his famous eventing sire Windfall II.



Breeding

So what is it about the New Spring Farm-bred horses that make them so successful, not only in YEH competitions, but in most other competitions as well? It’s a long process that has taken years to perfect.

“Cheryl and I have been sport-specific breeding for 25 years and have finally reached a point where we have a mareband of proven producers and two stallions that are just outstanding sires of event horses,” Holekamp explained. “Windfall, in particular, represents what nearly everyone in the world has figured out, which is that it is about injecting the right kind of Thoroughbred endurance jumper into a gene pool of excellent riding horses that are extremely trainable and move well on the flat.

“Windfall is, believe it or not, only one-fourth Trakehner—as in pre-war blood from the main stud at Trakehnen in East Prussia—where the top cavalry mounts in the world were bred,” he continued. “His dam—who is still living—is 100 percent German Thoroughbred and from a line of top steeplechasers. His sire’s sire was a famous Anglo-Arab, who evented on the German international team under Reiner Klimke in his youngest days of competing. His sire’s dam—a big bruiser of a black mare—was the only Trakehner in the pedigree from the best line of actual cavalry horses rescued from East Prussia at the end of the War.

“That adds up to ‘The New Event Horse’



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formula: a mix-blooded horse with elegance, movement, extreme tractability and bravery, and the ability to do the most important things in our sport—run-and-jump. That almost needs to be one word—it is most easily found in top steeplechasers: the ones who hold up to ten years of racing and are highly rideable and are loved by their jockeys for their obedience in the heat of a long race, mainly for safety reasons. That is the formula we realized ten years ago was needed for the future, and it is what we have found in Windfall and his offspring. The German judges found it in him also, when they named him national Reserve-Champion Five-Year-Old at their Young Event Horse finals (Bundeschampionat) in 1997 and then Champion as a six-year-old in 1998.”

Holekamp said that this year’s Championship produced the best crop of young eventers that he had seen at the competition since its beginning, and he wasn’t just speaking of his own horses.

“The quality of horse is steadily improving,” he commented. “This last bunch of fifteen at the National Finals was the best yet, without a doubt. They were on par with the horses sold at elite auction sales that event barns stage in Germany. Not one bad horse in the bunch.”



Sponsors and Outstanding Prizes

A big thank you to our valuable YEH sponsors - *Title: Spalding Labs; Legacy: Stackhouse Saddles, Fleeceworks, SmartPak Equine; Elite: Acorn Hill Farm Sport Horses.*

An amazing array of prizes were made possible through our generous sponsors. Spalding Labs donated a six month supply of Fly Predators. Stackhouse Saddles again presented the champions with a custom made saddle and winners could choose between a dressage saddle or jumping saddle. Fleeceworks donated their plush saddle pads, and Saratoga Horseworks donated their very attractive coolers.





2008 Spalding Labs USEA Young Event Horse Championships Results

September 9 • Lamplight Equestrian Center • Wayne, Illinois



Five-Year-Old Division

Horse	Rider	Conformation	Dressage	Jumping	Final
1. Asterion	Samantha Clark	11.65	29.26	43.3	84.21
2. La Tee Da	Tera MacDonald	11.72	29.68	42.07	83.47
3. Denira	Martha Lambert	11.30	29.12	41.50	81.92
4. Who's A Star	Courtney Cooper	11.07	28.21	42.55	81.83
5. El Cid	Lynne Partridge	10.73	29.54	41.05	81.32
6. Dibellius	Darren Chiacchia	11.45	26.88	41.64	79.97
7. Globetrotter	Josh Barnacle	12.45	26.81	40.07	79.33
8. Super Nova	Leslie Law	11.67	27.16	40.45	79.28
9. Mad Skillz	Leslie Law	11.75	28.07	38.57	78.39
10. M-S Reddy Fox	Nicolette Merle-Smith	11.82	26.81	37.36	75.99

Four-Year-Old Division

Horse	Rider	Conformation	Dressage	Jumping	Final
1. Amarna	Leslie Law	11.70	28.63	41.15	81.48
2. Project Runway	Max McManamy	11.80	27.58	39.93	79.31
3. Foligno's Legend	William Ward	11.05	26.67	41.14	78.86
4. Star Dazzler	Courtney Cooper	11.65	26.04	40.57	78.26
5. Emilia GS	Darren Chiacchia	12.30	25.41	38.50	76.21

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