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Four Days of Splendid Sport at the NCDCTA Harvest Moon Region 1 Dressage Championships

By Carolina Boese

Television's 'Dancing with the Stars' has nothing on the well-executed, beautifully done dressage at the NCDCTA Harvest Moon USDF Region 1 Dressage Championships held at the Senator Bob Martin Agricultural Complex in Williamston, Oct 2-5. Watching horse and rider teams execute the incredibly precise and intricate tests was like watching dancers ace a routine. They made it look so easy; the hours of training and practice that went into perfecting each movement appeared effortless.

Stacey Hastings and Furst Aurum show their easy uphill balance. The pair won the Training Level Region 1 title and were ranked 3rd in the Nation in Chicago this summer. (WNCPhoto.com)

HASTINGS SCORES a "10"

Stacey Hastings of Mooresville was the star of the show, not only posting the weekend's highest score (80.5%) but leading six victory laps around the coliseum with five very different horses. With Ron Woodcock's Furst Aurum, a four-year old Oldenburg gelding imported just last winter, Hastings captured the huge Welcome Stakes class, and the open training level championship. The "position B" judge in the championship class, Fran Kehr, gave a fistful of 9's and a 10 on the trot loop. "If I didn't give that horse an 85%, I need to give up my license," Kehr remarked. "He could be the best young horse in the country." Indeed, Hastings hauled him to Chicago in August for



the National Young Horse Finals and was ranked a close 3rd in the nation.

With Brenda Duet's two talented Warmblood geldings Montana and Dakota, Hastings continued her winning ways by claiming the FEI warmup (74.6%), the PSG Open Championship (70.6%), and the Intermediate I Championship (75.7%) with the former; the 3rd level championship (78%) and the reserve 3rd level open championship (75%) with the latter. The geldings are full brothers by Rambo; Montana is 9 years old and Dakota is 8.

Then aboard Karen Guerra's Friesian gelding Trijntje v.d. Bokkefarm, Hastings won the first level musical freestyle championship (79.5%), was reserve first level champion (73.7%) and second level champion (76.5%).

A newer ride, Police, a 7 year old PRE owned by Coves Darden LLC, earned high placings at 4th and PSG as the youngest horse at that level.

Hastings the wife, mother, and busy trainer is based out of Full Circle Farm in Statesville, N.C. She declined to choose a favorite, or one horse to talk about because "each has a unique story, and they are all special in their own way." She started riding at age 12 and

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Emily Ally Robinson and Regina at their signature movement – centerlines! (WNCPhoto.com)

Champs cont'd *from cover*

migrated to dressage from barrel racing. "In barrels, once your horse gets fit and learns the pattern, that's pretty much the end of the training. But in dressage, the training never ends," Hastings said.

SOUTH CAROLINA SHINES

Our sister state to the South was well represented, and in fact fielded the entire 13 and under Dressage Seat Equitation class of six riders. The 14-18 age group boasted seven riders, with these regional winners qualifying for the 2015 Nationals.

Emily 'Ally' Robinson, 13, of Blythewood, S.C. knows what it's like to work hard and be rewarded. Robinson won the younger equitation finals (75%), the Jr/Yr training championship (73.2%), the reserve Jr/Yr first level finals (65.5%), and won two large warm up classes (77.3%, 66%) on her 16 year old Dutch mare Regina. But first she had to gain her mare's trust before she could even think about winning ribbons.

Robinson said the mare was "moved around a good bit, so trust was something my mom and I had to gain...trying to pet her again and again, just trying not to get nipped, was upsetting at first, but now you only see that mare come out of her every now and then; especially when she eats!"

"After seeing all those horses in the warm-up, I didn't even think I made the top eight!" she said. Robinson said she thought

her test went "okay... but when I saw all the scores and then looked at mine, my jaw practically dropped to the floor."

The highlight of her test was her "centerline, halt, salute." "At my first show, my dad went nuts at how cool he thought centerlines were, and to this day they have always been my favorite."

She still can't believe she won the championship. "It helped me realize that practice really does make perfect. If you set your mind to it, you can do anything," Robinson said.

Virginia King of Charleston, S.C. captured the 3rd level amateur

Virginia King and Wunderkind display their "expressive" flying changes! (WNCPhoto.com)

championship on her Wunderkind, after having been almost bucked off, twice, at the 2013 championships. King says what went right at this show is that "we had some confidence." Last year at the regional finals in Conyers, Georgia, King said, she almost got bucked off "because the change is on the centerline in front of the judge, I actually saw the whites of her eyes twice as I was holding on for dear life..." After that King says she and Wunderkind logged a lot of hours training. Confidence came from "getting in that show ring

Hannah Neimy and Bail Me Out, a Quarter Horse / Belgian Draft cross, show why they won two regional titles.(WNCPhoto.com)

multiple times coming up to regionals," King said. "I have learned never to give up in the ring. Ride for every movement. Just because he bucks sometimes during a change does not mean I stop riding. Every step

counts, every corner counts."

Having a busy life means finding time to ride is "a juggling act" for King. "It's so hard to find the time and balance your life," she says. "I feel that riding and making time for myself has made me a better mother, wife, friend and employee. I have true joy in



my heart and I do not take this championship for granted."

King has been training with Michelle Folden of John's Island, S.C. since she was 13 years old. "She is one of the best trainers to help you ride your test," King said. "Wunderkind has had tongue issues, leg issues, stiffness issues, strength issues, you name it... None of this has been easy."

Hannah Neimy, another Folden protégé, won the older Equitation finals (77%) and the Jr/Yr first level championship (65.7%) with a leased horse Bail Me Out, a 19 year old Belgian Quarter Horse cross gelding. She says what's special about him is that "he has the biggest heart of any horse I have ridden." After having surgery for a fractured coffin bone in the spring of 2014 it was "really exciting to see all of our hard work pay off," Neimy said.

NEW PERSPECTIVE FOR SILVA MARTIN

Silva Martin of Cochranville, Pa, is still coming back from an injury she suffered
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