

Sport Ponies from a Trainers Perspective

By Bailey Cook

If someone asked me "why do I ride a pony?" My answer, with absolutely no hesitation would be, "because it is the most fun that I have on a daily basis!"

I feel very lucky to have the opportunity to be the trainer of Sweet Rock Solid (a.k.a. Stibby) a 14.2 hand, 6 year old, German Riding Pony stallion. I have been working with Stibby since early 2006. He's a ton of fun! He has a wonderful personality and is always in tune with what's going on around him. He's very smart as most ponies are, but never sneaky or naughty. He takes his job very seriously and seems to really enjoy his work which makes him very easy to train. His gaits are above average, making him feel like a mini dressage horse or a mini warm blood. In other words, I don't feel as though I am riding a pony. He feels like a horse in a pony suit!

When I learned that Louise Rascoe of Bahama, N.C. had imported a pony stallion from Germany, I called and asked her who she planning to have ride and train him. At that time she was unsure of who that person would be. I went out to meet her and Stibby and later told her that I wanted to be the one to ride her pony. Being straight forward is very uncharacteristic of me

but I knew she needed a good rider to campaign him and I wanted the job. Stibby has been very competitive in open dressage classes at training and first Level. He consistently scores in the mid to high 60's with the occasional score in the 70's. We ended our 2007 show season at the GAIG/USDF Region 1 Championships placing 4th in our first level championship class, behind Chris Hickey and George Williams. Standing in line at the awards ceremony was the only time I have ever felt small with Stibby! So, it is true, ponies can hold their own!

I would love to see more adults riding ponies. There are plenty of petite adult riders like myself out there who would not be too big for ponies. I have proven that ponies can be competitive in the show arena against horses, they provide the same learning and training experiences as horses, and for me they bring back such fun childhood memories. I would love to see more super talented ponies out there for kids to be



Bailey Cook on Sweet Rock Solid photo by Arielle Perry

riding and learning on. What a great opportunity for junior riders.

So, if you are a rider of my size and stature (5'1") I would strongly encourage you to keep your eyes open for a fancy dressage type pony. I promise you will have tons of fun and you can then tell your tall, slender, 6 foot tall friends that you would love for them to have a ride on your pony but they are too tall!

For more info on Stibby's pedigree and breeding, go to www.longview-farm.us.

Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor,

Re: Mitchell's Message, Message from the President

letter was edited for space

I am not & have never been a "mover & shaker" in the NCDCTA. I have been a long time member, NCDCTA # 0046. I have volunteered at multiple shows & educational functions. I was volunteer coordinator for NCDCTA Latta shows for many, many years. I have donated money for the HOY awards for several years as well as giving high score awards at Latta. After reading Mitchell's Message in the January, 2008 Newsletter, I am concerned that the NCDCTA may be losing sight of what I understood was one of its major goals... One of the ways to promote our sport at all levels is the Horse of the Year awards.

(And I am concerned about) the volunteer card system... I assume that schooling shows as well as nationally recognized shows are considered "for profit" shows if not NCDCTA sponsored. They pay for the privilege of having their competitors' scores recognized... I suspect that a lot of the organizers put on these shows, not for profit, but for the love of the sport & the benefit of the competitors, especially the

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schooling shows. I doubt that this is a get rich quick scheme. The President's Message states that there is talk about ceasing to offer volunteer cards at "for profit" shows. It hardly seems fair to make them pay for the privilege of recognition & then undercut their volunteer base. This policy could affect several very large, important shows in NC, ie CDI Raleigh, Labor of Love & Breed Show, Dressage in the Sandhills, FENCE, Sporting Services sponsored shows... These shows require many volunteers to support the # of rings & competitors... I wonder if, as each show pays its fees, it could request & receive a predetermined # of blank cards depending upon the show size. When the scores are reported, an accounting of the cards could be supplied by show management & the unused cards returned. If a manager fails to comply, no recognition for scores would be forthcoming... In my opinion, allowing members to pay \$50.00 for horse registration...severely undercuts the volunteer base. Organizations like the NCDCTA depend upon members to step up & work for the good of the group... If HOY rewards can now be bought, why should anyone ever offer service to the organization?

A second concern is the decision not to recognize out of state shows... For those of us that live near the NC borders this seems like an unfair penalty. In these times of high fuel prices, competitors must consider roads, routes, traffic as well as distance when making decisions on where to show. For instance, I live on the NC/SC line (literally) in the western third of the state. I doubt I will ever drive to Williamston (4 recognized shows in 2008) to show or volunteer. Only rarely will I drive to Raleigh or Pinehurst/Southern Pines areas either... I will choose closer locales--Aiken & Camden, SC, Brazelton & Conyers, Ga, even Lexington, Va... This means that myself & others in similar situations will not have our efforts recognized. This certainly limits reasonable chances for HOY awards. I also wonder what lack of NCDCTA recognition will do to entries for, say, the Camden, SC shows which draw large numbers of competitors from the Charlotte area. This also means no recognition for members' achievements at Regional & BLM Finals.

I realize this may sound like criticism and the board members may tell me to step up & do the job myself if I don't like their efforts. Well, I have been a consistent & reliable volunteer for many years & will continue to work as a volunteer, regardless of the board's decisions. I will continue to support the NCDCTA sponsored shows as well as the "for profit" shows. I will be disappointed if the policy remains on the out of state shows and if the no volunteer cards for non- NCDCTA sponsored shows is adopted. I will volunteer at NCDCTA sponsored events to get my card (and will) likely volunteer my extra time at the non-NCDCTA shows... so they can continue to fulfill a need that I feel my organization has abandoned.

This year my horse & I did place in 2 levels for HOY awards, "paid" for with a volunteer card. I was delighted. The lovely picture frame for my 3rd place award plus the large ribbons are prominently displayed in my home. These NCDCTA awards are very likely the only recognition we will ever receive. As an Adult Amateur with a full time job and many other commitments, I doubt we will ever manage to win Regional or National awards, even when we qualify & compete. Thank you.

Barbara L. Nicks, DVM

Hi, Barbara. On behalf of the entire board, I'd like to say how much we appreciate the input from dedicated members of the NCDCTA, such as yourself.

Your concerns regarding the volunteer card program and the out-of-state show recognition are probably shared by other NCDCTA members, so I welcome the opportunity to give these issues further explanation.

I would like to reiterate the difference between "NCDCTA sponsored" shows and those that I referred to as "private" or "for-profit" shows in my January message. You listed several shows that you felt would be negatively affected if we discontinued the program of giving volunteer cards to workers of private (or "non-NCDCTA sponsored) shows. However, of the shows that you listed, the CDI***/Capital Dressage Classic, the Labor of Love, the Breed Show, and the FENCE show in June (NCDCTA Summer Highland Fling) are all sponsored or "licensed" by NCDCTA. This means that NCDCTA owns the dates, shoulders the financial risks and/or reaps the profits. Obviously, it makes sense to continue to give the volunteer workers of these shows an NCDCTA volunteer card. This was never in question.

The other shows you mentioned (Sporting Services shows and Dressage in the Sandhills) along with all of the other non-NCDCTA sponsored shows, are run as private businesses. Some of them recruit volunteers and others choose to pay their workers. Those who volunteer at these shows are not working to benefit NCDCTA, but to benefit that particular show's success. In other words, the profits from these shows do not go into the NCDCTA coffers.

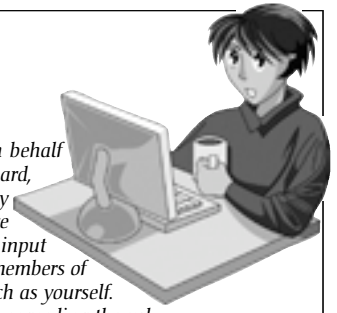
Barbara, the board must have picked up on your thoughts about this issue, because we have come up with a plan similar to what you propose...for now at least. In an effort to show support to the non-NCDCTA sponsored shows, we will be sending the show organizers of non-NCDCTA sponsored shows a limited number of cards so that they can issue them to workers at their discretion in 2008. The NCDCTA licensed/sponsored shows will continue to recruit volunteers to help with the running of our eight shows and cards will be available for all of these volunteers.

Regarding your concern about out-of-state competitions, so far in 2008, 81 shows in NC have been recognized, with more coming in daily. That's an enormous amount of administrative work for our (volunteer!) recognition chairman to track and check dates, request results, liaison between the organizer, website, and newsletter calendars, issue and mail volunteer cards. It's also an enormous amount of work for the membership / HOY chairman, who receives a small stipend for hundreds of hours of work tracking points.

But that's not to say a future board won't decide to re-open show recognition to out-of-state shows. We simply needed to get a handle on the new database, update the guidelines, and fulfill our HOY goals: Accuracy, Transparency, and increased Participation. Once we are confident that we have achieved those goals, we may re-open show recognition to bordering states and regional championships.

Once again, thanks for your input and congratulations on your 2007 HOY placings! I hope 2008 proves to be another successful year for you.

Sincerely,
Jennifer Mitchell, President, NCDCTA



My Experience at the 2007 Adequan/USDF Annual Convention

Ryan Michelle Eskridge

I am very honored to say that I was granted a scholarship to attend the 2007 Adequan/USDF Annual Convention in Orlando, Florida this past November. This was a great experience, and I learned so much. The convention was held at Disney's Coronado Springs Resort in Orlando, Florida from November 28-December 2, 2007. The convention not only consisted of numerous meetings and lectures, but there was also a trade fair, an evening Gala, dinner and dancing, and an awards banquet. I was able to meet new people, as well as reunite with old friends. It would take pages and pages to recount all that I learned at this convention, but I will do my best to give the gist!

I began attending meetings on Thursday, November 29. The first one I went to was the "Judges Committee." One of the main speakers was Lois Yukins, chair of the Judges Committee. They discussed the "L" program for judges, liability on show management and judges, equality, and judging in general. Being a competitive rider, it was very interesting to hear what the judges had to say about judging. Lois Yukins said "judges are not spiders waiting for you to come into their web and attack, [they] want you to do well." She explained how judges treat horses and riders equally. Of course it looks nice to braid and to wear the appropriate clothes, but judges try not to be prejudiced and just judge what they have in their ring at the moment. In this meeting, they also discussed the possibility of using a half point scale in the near future. Finally, they announced that the Judges Committee wants videos of good, bad, or problematic rides from anyone, to be used for judges in training. They need full rides of decent video quality, and the rider in the video must sign a release (can be found on USDF.org, education/L program).

I also attended the Region 1 meeting. This was great because I was able to interact with other Region 1 members and discuss concerns and ideas for dressage in my region and local GMOs. A major topic in this meeting was fundraising, mainly focusing on youth fundraising for the NAJYRC Region 1 Team. We discussed fundraising ideas and donations. I have been on the Region 1 Young Rider team the past two years, and it is extremely expensive and hard work to get all of the team clothing, signs, banners, and decorations. This is why we made it known through the Region 1 meeting that sponsorships are incredibly helpful and appreciated;

it is what makes our team! We also decided that we could do smaller fundraisers at local shows, like trailer washes for example.

The Youth Open Forum was presented by the FEI JR/YR Council, Intercollegiate/Interscholastic Committee, Young Rider Graduate Program, and the Youth Council. A lot of juniors and young riders, as well as "show moms" attended in order to learn more about youth programs. We discussed the Shining Star program, which is if you are caught doing a good deed, you are eligible for receiving a shining star. We also discussed the youth art contest, Pony Club for dressage, the IDA and IMO, and the NAJYRC and JR/YR clinic series. These are few among many programs available to the youth of dressage. We conversed about the upcoming 2008 NAJYRC to be held in Colorado and the 2008 USEF JR/YR/Brentina Cup Championships which will be in California.

An interesting lecture my mother and I attended on Friday was with Dr. Erin Denney-Jones on "Conformation and its Influence on Lameness in the Horse." Dr. Denney-Jones explained that a perfect horse should be as tall as it is long. She said that balance is the key from head to tail; a short neck leads to a sore back. The hooves bear almost all of a horse's weight and therefore are very important. She says to find a good farrier that you work well with and stick with them and the same schedule. She also explained how there should be a straight line from shoulder to hoof and to shy away from over at the knee horses to be used for dressage. A longer sloping shoulder equals longer and better strides. As no horse is perfect, she says that most horses are slightly cow-hocked, or hocks turned inwards. The horse's head is used as a lever arm to help lift weight off of a hurt leg. Also important in a horse's conformation is its teeth. The teeth should be aligned. Dr. Denney-Jones says you should look for a horse based on the previous conformation tips, and a gentle expression or a kind eye is important.

Saturday morning I attended the Youth Meeting, "Showing Legally; From Bits to Bute," with Lloyd Landkamer and Dr. Kent Allen. This was an extremely informative meeting and I wish that everyone could have been there. First, we discussed what is needed for a horse and rider to compete at the NAJYRC and Gladstone. We were given the USEF Hotline number (800-633-2472) that anyone can call at anytime with questions on rules or drugs. We were shown a variety of

legal and illegal bits. I learned about the Medication Rules as well. We were told that all ulcer medications are legal, and we learned about allergic reactions, tying up, and tendonitis. We were given a list of some of the medications that may cause a positive drug test and a show. Almost any pain reliever tests positive, such as the common drug Butazolidin (Phenylbutazone), more commonly known as Bute, and also Banamine, as well as many others. Corticosteroids such as Azium and Depomedrol, a joint injection, which is one of the most harmful to cartilage, will also test positive. Some substances containing valerian root will test positive, and also some nutritional supplements. Basically, almost anything that will give the rider an unfair advantage and might affect the horse's performance will interfere with drug testing. However, there are certain permitted substances. Many fall under the category of Anitmicrobial agents such as antibiotics, anti-fungal, anti-ulcer, and anti-parasitic. Also allowed are many nutrients, minerals, vitamins, electrolytes, and fluids. Dr. Allen recommends that you know the USEF and FEI rules, because they are different, and you do not want to have a positive drug test or have to withdraw from competition. He says also to ask your veterinarian about every medication because they can have different side effects and reactions on every horse. For latest FEI drug updates, go to vaequine.com and go to "What's New." For any USEF Medication questions, contact Stephen Schumacher (sschumacher@usdf.org), visit USEF.org for USEF rules, contact Frits Sluyter of the FEI Veterinarian Department at f.sluyter@horsesport.org, and go to horsesport.org for FEI rules.

All in all, this convention was an amazing learning experience. I highly recommend juniors and young riders to apply for the scholarship, or if you have the chance, everyone should attend. I took so many good notes and I feel closer to the sport. I also feel much more knowledgeable about the rules and regulations of competing. Not only was it a great opportunity to learn more, but it was a really fun time. Being with friends and a huge handful of horse folk, I felt at home. I cannot wait until next year!

Thanks again to USDF for the scholarship and the opportunity to attend the 2007 Adequan/USDF Annual Convention.

Mitchell's Message

Message from the President

Spring is on it's way, and for those of you with broodmares, this is an exciting time. As a matter of fact, our newsletter editor, Wendy, has tried to get a "brag page" going for our membership and this would be a great way to get started. How about sending in a picture for our "new arrival" page? Include the basic pertinent information: date of birth, sex, color, dam/sire, and owner/location. Who doesn't enjoy oooohing and aaaaahing over a new foal?

Not only does spring usher in foaling season, but soon our show season will be back in full swing here in North Carolina. I want to remind everyone of a couple of things. If your horse is registered for the Horse of the Year (HOY) program, please read the guidelines for the program which can be found on our website: ncdcta.org. Also, please note that NCDCTA only recognizes North Carolina shows that have applied for recognition and not all show organizers choose to do so. There may be shows that were recognized in the past but may not be recognized in 2008. Check the calendar in our newsletter and on our website (ncdcta.org) for accurate information. As a reminder, the Dressage in the Carolinas Omnibus is NOT the official publication of the NCDCTA, but is published and mailed out by Kay Whitlock

of Viewpoint Enterprises.

On another note, I want to tell you that the "powers that be" at the USEF have heard the concerns of many members who contacted the USEF Dressage subcommittee regarding the Performance Standards Proposal which I shared with you in the January newsletter. There was such an overwhelming response from members nationwide, that they have decided to go back to the drawing board to revise their proposal for this so-called "qualifying system". They are working on three systems to present to GMO and Regional representatives sometime later this summer. As soon as I hear from them, I will get the information out to you so that you can review it and let me know your thoughts.

Good luck and have fun this year! **Jennifer**

Correction to 2007 Horse of the Year awards:

Fourth Level Dressage, Sponsored by Lisa Gorsuch

1. Cardelano, Monika Schnacke
2. Galleon, Becky Blikslager, owner: Marianne Turnbull
3. Graffini Grace, Eliza Sydnor
4. tie. Indecent Proposal, Dawn Weniger
4. tie. Ladylike, Elizabeth Moore
4. tie. Windsor, Janet Sarn
- HM. Rytmik, Rebecca Nelles, owner: Diane Tauber

Self Therapy for Soft Riders

By Sue Smithson

Even though I'm a SOFT (Slow, Old, Fat, Tired) rider, and only show for fun, I do appreciate all the new sports psychology tips out there to help us. Eileen Keipper's article on goal setting in this issue is a great example of this newest trend, and so appropriate right here at the start of a new show season.

In surfing the sports psychology websites, I discovered that I could self-diagnose every phobia listed. After all, a phobia is just a fear that has been professionally diagnosed, right? A fear is an undiagnosed (and much cheaper) phobia.

Take paranoia, for example. I believe that my trainer, I call him "The Dark Force", is trying to kill me. He claims he's just pushing us beyond our comfort zone, but I think we're on the brink of the mortality zone. Perhaps I'll fall behind in payments. He won't kill me as long as I owe him money, right?

Then there is repression and memory loss. I can trot down the center line in a training level test, and seven minutes later we're

walking out and I don't remember a thing. It's all a blur. When this happens to Captain Picard, he's just passed through the space-time continuum. When it happens to me, the psychologists say my brain is repressing unpleasant memories.

And how about those delusions? I have dreams that I'm halfway through a first level test and my horse turns into a giant dachshund and I'm wearing my old junior high school gym uniform, backwards.

The problem is, entry fees are so high I really can't afford a personal sports psychologist. Too bad, because a shrink would be a whole new person to blame stuff on, especially when The Dark Force asks about the grass stains on my breeches and the sand up my nose.

The answer is self-therapy. They call it mental imaging, but it's actually just taking control of those delusions. Like when you hear "Wow, that was good!" after your ride, forget that it was the ring steward commenting on the quality of the hot dog she had for lunch. You can pretend you have a friend who

likes you well enough to lie to you.

Can't remember your ride? Just conjure up a substitute. You get extra points if you can convince The Dark Force you actually meant to canter the leg yields.

Breathing exercises? I just tell myself that if I forget to breathe, it will take six strong men to load my fat carcass onto a backboard, and I'll be having night sweats about that one for years.

Armed with all these new self therapy techniques, I'm looking forward to seeing you all at the spring shows!

Improve Performance by Setting Goals

By Eileen Keipper

Do you find yourself wanting to move forward and improve your riding, but don't know how? Do you have trouble staying motivated before you get in the saddle or while you are riding? Do you lack direction and a plan? If you answered yes to these questions, then setting goals and making a plan can help.

Maybe you want to compete at the next level, improve your scores from low sixties to high sixties, perfect your leg yields, increase your or your horse's physical fitness, or maybe you just want to have more fun. If you could do something to improve your performance that was very effective, had no negative side effects and was free, would you do it? You can do all that by setting goals! Research shows that goal setting is very effective for enhancing performance if correctly implemented. The only catch is the work involved.

In this article I will tell you why and how to set goals. I will talk about common mistakes people make when setting goals and give you some examples of how to do this.

Why set goals? Goals:

- Target important elements of technical skills
- Mobilize effort
- Prolong persistence and motivation
- Help to maintain focus during practice and competition
- Enhance resilience when facing difficult competition
- Increase confidence

Here is how to set goals. To be most effective goals should be:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Action-oriented, positive
- Realistic, but challenging
- Time specific: long-term & short-term

Frequently riders will set general goals with no time frame. For example, "I want to move up the dressage levels." This kind of goal does not provide any direction or tell you how to get there. To be really helpful the goals need to meet the SMART description from above. So an example of a smart goal would be "I want to move up to first level by next spring and get at least a 50 on test one." This outcome goal is specific, measurable, action-oriented, realistic and has a time frame.

Think about setting these three types of goals:

Process goals: how to perform a particular skill, i.e. leg yield

Performance goals: actual performance in relation to a standard of excellence, i.e. getting a "7" on your leg yields

Outcome goals: desired results, i.e. winning

Process + Performance = Outcome

Achieving process and performance goals should lead to achieving outcome goals.

Too often riders set outcome goals and let it go at that. For example, "I want to qualify for the regional championships at first level this year." But how do you get there? That is where your process and performance goals come in. You could look over your recent First level (or training level) tests and decide what is working and what needs improvement. When I looked at my tests results, I used to say that I was two halts away from a qualifying score. Suppose you decided to work on the halt and leg yields for a month before your next competition. Then some process goals might be to get a lesson on these skills, to work on them for ten extra minutes each ride, or to get to an arena with mirrors so you can see how you are doing.

Your performance goal for the competition could be to have two good halts (right at X and square with no walk steps). For the leg yield you might plan to come onto the line forward, in a nice frame, and straight before starting the leg yield. The good scores of "7" for these two moves could increase your scores enough to qualify (and maybe win the class). Check me out- were the stated goals SMART?

The language that you use is important. Always set goals using positive language. If before your right lead canter depart you say to yourself, "I will not look left" you have planted the seed of looking left. It is stronger to say, "I will look right." Now you are directing your attention to the relevant skill to perform the task. For another example, saying to yourself, "I will stay calm if I make a mistake." is better than "I will not panic if I make a mistake." Our brains are kind of funny and do not hear the word "not." So "I will not panic" can easily become "I will panic."

Common mistakes in goal setting:

Once you set your goals you cannot just forget about them. To be effective write them down and post them somewhere obvious that you will see often. I have a dry erase board in my kitchen and a peg board in my tack room. That way when I leave my house to go ride I see "Square halt." And when I am saddling up I see "Forward."

Keep it simple. Only set two or three goals. You will have enough trouble keeping up with them. If you set too many it is easy to get overwhelmed and give up.

Don't forget to revisit your goals periodically and adjust them if necessary. If the weather is bad you may not get enough practice or be able to get to your riding instructor for a lesson. So you might need to adjust your time table. Once you reach your goal you will want to set another higher goal.

Remember that you may need extra time and effort to reach your goals. Get some help from family and friends. Your riding instructor especially needs to know your plans.

Finally, remember to set some goals unrelated to technique. For example, you might decide to work on your turnout, or to improve the organization of your trailer or tack box. You might decide to have a goal of having more fun and go on a trail ride with a friend once a week instead of drilling on the dressage moves every day.

Goal setting is not the only thing that you need to be successful and have fun, but it will help you on your way.

(editor's note: for more information on sport psychology, visit www.mentaledgeconsulting.com)

Eventing Corner



Eventing Season Off To A Start With Pipe Opener

By Sue Smithson

The inaugural Pipe Opener Combined Test and Cross Country Schooling at the Carolina Horse Park, Raeford N.C. January 12-13 attracted 130 eventers to blow out their winter cobwebs.

Three dressage rings and a Marc Donovan designed stadium course kept the showgrounds hopping on Saturday. On Sunday, organizer Dana Diemer said "It was so busy, we needed a traffic cop out on the cross country

courses!"

Competitors from as far away as Maryland and Pennsylvania took advantage of the 3-phase weekend and the beautiful new stabling at the Horse Park.

Holly Hepp, a short-listed rider for the 2004 Olympics, dominated the advanced and intermediate divisions with Anne Hennessey's Benwald, and captured three wins with three other horses.

The lower levels were so large they had to be split. For complete results, visit www.CarolinaHorsePark.com

And The Winner Is...

By Annette Saunders

The Cymbrogi Haven High Score Pony award, offered by Annette Saunders of Charlotte and Cymbrogi Haven, was inaugurated in 2007 in an effort to promote more riders on ponies competing in dressage. The awards were given in two categories: High Score Senior Rider and High Score Junior Rider, and were presented privately during the 2007 NCDCTA awards banquet January 12.

The Senior Rider winner was Bailey Cook on Louise Rascoe's Sweet Rock Solid, with an average high score at the designated USDF shows of 70.9%. The Junior Rider winner was Molly Dean Paris and her Dragon's Lair Le Gacie, with an average high score of 73.86%.

These winners earned embroidered winter riding jackets from Cymbrogi Haven, \$25.00 gift certificate from Paddock Saddlery in Ohio, matching halter, lead, saddlepad set from Horseware, white pony polos from Just For Ponies, and carrots and sugarcubes from "Miss Nettie"(Annette Saunders). We would like to formally thank all those who graciously donated these prizes. It really made this year's award something special. GO PONIES!! For details on the requirements for the 2008 Cymbrogi Haven Pony Award and a list of approved shows, please contact annette.saunders@att.net.

WHY IN THE WORLD DID WE DO THIS?

We "grown-ups", responsible citizens of the universe and caretakers of our beloved equine friends that we are, are not the future of dressage. Don't get me wrong, we are all still learning, enjoying, evolving into our own dressage futures. But the future of the universe and the dressage world IS the kids, the dressage obsessed younger generation. I feel that it is our responsibility as trainers and instructors to be able to provide the best mounts possible to our young ones in order that they might safely and confidently learn the basics, develop them further and get their "feel" (a very hard concept to actually teach). In Europe (and yes, they've been at it just a bit longer than we have) children have the opportunity to learn on well-trained, very competitive ponies. I think that we could use a "few" of these. Our dressage youth need manageable, well-trained mounts. We need more ponies.

Now, kidlets aside, I would like to speak to those adults who are, like myself, small in stature and let's face it, gang, getting up there. I love riding any horse. But at 5'3" and a hundred (and something) pounds, I really have an amazing

time on my ponies. One of the first things that we are taught to look for in a horse for a client is suitability, size-wise. The reason for this is quite simple. If something should go wrong during a ride, you need to be able to get control of your mount in a hurry. This requires a certain amount of confidence and ability to leverage your restraining aides. Given my size, I would have much more influence over a 14.2 hand pony that is freaking out than I would a 17.2 hand horse behaving similarly. I don't know how many times at shows I have seen riders overmatched and having trouble. Think of how the horse would feel if you were able to use less to "get" more.

A pony usually responds to lighter aids, and therefore the rider learns to further refine their riding technique. A pony is usually easier to sit at the trot and maneuver. On a lighter note, my ponies have great feet, are barefoot, eat less, are very smart, closer to the ground for mounting and dismounting (planned or otherwise) and let us not forget the cuteness factor. What a joy it is for me to be able to share my smaller mounts with my students from 3'6" to 5'7", young and older! They all can reap the benefit of their training and build confidence without feeling overmounted and possibly out of control.

At the 2007 NCDCTA Horse of the Year awards, ponies were among the highest placed, competing right along with the horses. Molly Paris and Dragon's Lair Le Gacie took home 3rd at JR/YR Training level and 1st at JY/YR First Level. Hope Johnson and Winnifred took 5th on JR/YR Training level. Nigel and this author took 3rd at Open Training level. Bernadine Dembosky and Carousel Prince were 3rd in JR/YR First level. Golden Moment and Karen Young took top honors 1st at AA First level followed by Sweet Rock Solid and Bailey Cook 6th in the Open First division. And last but certainly not least, Alison Coyle and Stormy Weather took 4th at JR/YR Second level and 2nd in JR/YR Third level...not bad, not bad at all, gang!

Let's face it. This sport is a choice, not a requirement. This sport is one we do because we are passionate about learning to ride and competing and having fun! This sport is expensive. You should be able to enjoy what you work so hard to be able to afford to do. If that mount is a wonderful, kind, comfortable, well-trained 16.3 hand dreamboat, FANTASTIC! I just would like people not to be so quick to dismiss the little guys, they have a lot to offer. Give ponies a chance!

The Next Theodore O'Connor?

By Anita Quinn

When my youngest son got his first pony, the pony had already been going blind. Peanut held steady for two long years before his eyesight started deteriorating again, this time enough to cause some pretty big spooks while Jacob was riding. While these spooks miraculously didn't cause a fall, they were increasingly wearing on his confidence. As my oldest son does not share my love of horses with me (with the exception of driving the truck and trailer, because I guess at 18yo that's a cool thing to do...who knew?!?), I knew I had to nurture this fledgling love and not allow anything to shake it. This sent me on what could only be described as a "Texas Cheerleading Mom vengeance"...on a quest to find a new pony.

While I think most people go around searching for a new horse or pony the "normal" way. You know, by looking online, taking their time, really assessing what is out there, looking in the classifieds, talking to friends, talking to trainers, etc. For some reason this logic just eludes me. So when my best friend was over this past Saturday, I asked her if she wanted to go to a horse auction with me. "Sure", she replied, "When is it?" "Tonight", I replied, all excited, "Tack starts at 6pm, horses start at 9."

Now, before any of you start gasping at the mere thought of me searching for a pony for my son at a...um...weekly horse auction in the middle of the boon docks. Keep in mind that I wasn't searching for a

trained pony; I figured I could do that part myself. I was searching for a BROKE pony. As neither of us had actually ever been to one of these auctions, we arrived in plenty of time, thinking this would give us sufficient time to look over all the horses before the bidding began. Now, I must admit, when we first arrived, I think we must have stood at the door of this auction barn for a right good while, not really moving and not really talking...really, just gawking.

What ensued next could only be described as the most surreal experience that I've had in a right good while. We chit chatted with horse traders, learning of one's incarceration and divorce followed by his victorious custody of both girls and the kind, but rapidly declined, offer to let Jacob "just let the boy go off and play with them in my truck." We saw "cowboys" riding rather rank horses, whopping and hollering and smacking horses with reins to make them gallop off for about 20 yards, before roughly grabbing the reins and causing them to abruptly to slam on their brakes, then to have the "cowboy" spin 'em around and do it again. Apparently, that sells horses in those parts because we saw a lot of them doing that. We saw the ones that were not drugged (and for the safety of others, maybe should have been!) and the ones that were. We saw saintly souls tied, body after body in a row, some looking tired, some looking scared, some just looking dull. We saw men drinking out of plastic cups, heading out to their truck for a refill, before heading back in again. We saw tack for

sale, we saw big knives and swords for sale, we saw hot pink saddle racks and cheap wormer for sale, and oh dear me, did we see western saddle after saddle after saddle for sale. And by the time the auction actually started at 11:30 PM (!!!), a mere 3 and ? hrs later, it was lucky we could see anything for all the smoke and drunk men staggering around. I was trying hard to not fall asleep in that hard folding metal chair, with my 60 lb child sound asleep on my lap, drooling on my shoulder, and dreaming of who-only-knows-what as he was occasionally jerking and smacking me with his flailing arms, and my friend beside me looking like this was not exactly her idea of a "Saturday night out", when they finally started selling the horses.

Well, to make a really long story only slightly abbreviated. We came home with a pony. The one we spotted and kept our eye on all night that allowed 3 kids to sit on her back, bareback of course, with no helmets and only a halter and lead line to lead her, riding her around in the area while the "cowboys" were doing their riding antics. Kids screaming and running everywhere, pulling on her and poking her and jerking on her, and her not batting an eye. My son says it's his next eventing pony. At 12h, I'm not sure how far she will take him, but hey, no one thought Teddy (Theodore O'Connor) would make it very far either! Look out Rolex, here they come.....

Minutes of the NCDCTA Executive Board Meeting

February 5, 2008

The NCDCTA Board met at Dave Stuckey's office in Carrboro at 6:30 pm February 5, 2008. Present: Jennifer Mitchell, Becky Blikslager, Sue Smithson, Anita Quinn, Dave Stuckey, Donna Mitchell, Suzanne Mullen. Excused: Lynn Leath.

Jennifer called the meeting to order with a request for a proposed 2008 budget from Dave.

TREASURER'S REPORT: The Board discussed a budget proposal for 2008 and made plans to officially adopt a 2008 budget during the March meeting.

DRESSAGE REPORT: Becky presented a clinic schedule, stating that the emphasis was on camps last year; this year it will be member-subsidized clinics. Neil Ishoy is scheduled to give a clinic at Tamarack Farm in Southern Pines April 12th & 13th. Cost will be \$300/weekend for members and \$400 for non-members. Free auditing for members, \$50 for non-members. (Can join at the clinic). Other clinics are planned for the remainder of the year, to be held in locations throughout the state. The budget was examined and a discussion ensued regarding how much of the cost could be subsidized with the dressage education budget. Sue offered to help Becky with clinician contracts, and she moved the schedule be adopted. Jennifer seconded, passed unanimously.

EVENTING REPORT: The final figures on the 2007 NCDCTA Horse Trials at The Fork were discussed. Due to a significant financial loss, it was decided that the association could better support Eventing in the state by sponsoring an existing event as the NCDCTA fall championship, with double HOY points and special prizes. Four fall events were considered, and the late October event at The Ark was chosen. The board voted to award \$2K in sponsorship to The Ark, with the caveat that the NCDCTA Eventing Championships could be moved around to different events each year.

Anita reported that the jumper shows in Fuquay have been very popular, and over 30 entries have already been received for the final one Feb. 9. Proceeds are earmarked for Eventing Education.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT: Jennifer presented a request from recognition chairman Sandie Dennis that the volunteer card process be modified, due to problems with organizers not tracking and submitting information in a timely manner. After much discussion, it was decided that when results are filed, 5 cards be mailed automatically to the organizer, with an additional 2 cards for each additional ring. The next day, Sandie brought up the fact that she doesn't have access to that information, and more discussion of the volunteer card policy modifications is ongoing.

COMMUNICATIONS: Sue presented an idea from Martie Healy for a free online trainers' directory for members, including a photo, link, and short bio, modeled after the NC Hunter-Jumper Association online trainer directory. The plan was approved.

VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT: Donna presented a positive GALA report, with generous sponsorship and record attendance. One HOY correction has surfaced, which will be noted in the newsletter. Mailing awards to absent winners was expensive and time consuming, and ways to alleviate the burden on the gala organizer were discussed.

Donna reported that our current membership, over 500, is high for February. Over 200 horses have registered for HOY.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m. The next board meeting is set for March 4, venue TBA. Respectfully submitted by Suzanne Mullen