



*Amy Miller & U.S.-bred Encore won the CDS Young Horse Futurity for Six-Year-Olds. Photo: Jennifer M. Keeler*

## **An Emotional “Encore” on Third Day of Great American/USDF Region 7 & California Dressage Society Championship Show**

*By Yellow Horse Marketing for the California Dressage Society*

The Rancho Murieta Equestrian Center was teeming with riders, horses and spectators on a spectacularly sunny Saturday at the 48<sup>th</sup> Annual California Dressage Society (CDS) Annual Championship Show and Great American Insurance Group/United States Dressage Federation (USDF) Region 7 Championships, being held September 17-20, 2015 outside Sacramento, Calif.

The defending 2014 five-year-old CDS Futurity champion Encore returned to the CDS Championship Show this year in pursuit of another victory, and the elegant KWPN gelding (Jazz x Aloha by Sir Sinclair, bred in the U.S. by Lisa Dickman) did not disappoint. With two solid performances at Second Level to sweep both rounds of competition and earn a combined average score of 72.078%, Encore returned to the winner's circle with owner/rider Amy Miller of Fullerton, Cal. to accept the Paquita Parker Perpetual Trophy in the CDS Open Six-Year-Old Futurity. It was an emotional victory for Miller: she purchased Encore from her friends at DG Bar Ranch three years ago, and was riding with a heavy heart after the recent death of Tony De Groot, who was honored by CDS with a moment of silence before evening festivities. Even so, Miller was thrilled with the win and said the secret to her youngster's success is not just talent, but also his exceptional temperament. “He's so rideable and his personality is such that he likes to come out and work every day. I just try to add small elements every day to his training, and it's worked,” Miller explained. “Next year we look forward to coming back for Third and Fourth Level, and if he's ready, perhaps do the Developing Horse program in the future. But for now I'm thinking of Tony and riding for him, so this was very special.”

Also sweeping both division tests to win the CDS Open Five-Year-Old Futurity was Hilda Gurney of Moorpark with Lotta Silver, a stunning Trakehner gelding (Silver Moon x Livadia by Impressionist) she bred in California and now co-owns with Adrienne Bessey. As an Olympic medalist, Gurney knows what it takes for a horse to succeed at the international level, and she thinks Lotta Silver may have the right stuff. "Well the ultimate question will be if he can make it to Grand Prix, but I certainly enjoy the journey – the breeding, the foaling, raising and starting them," said Gurney. "He's only five and he can be mischievous, but he's incredibly elastic and so light to ride – he just springs off the ground like he doesn't even need it. I definitely have high hopes for him." In the Adult Amateur divisions of the Futurity, Ruth Shirkey from San Jose took a commanding lead in the first round of competition with her Hanoverian mare Wyleigh Princess (Weltmeyer x EM Heiress B by His Highness, bred in the U.S. by Cheryl and Eric Johnson) and held on for the win with a combined score of 71.801% to be crowned champions in the five-year-old division. In the CDS Adult Amateur Six-Year-Old Futurity, Melissa Rogers of Sonoma, Calif. rode her own Dutch gelding Empire (by Tuschinski, bred in the Netherlands) to two consistent performances at Second Level for the overall win with 67.054%.

Great American Insurance Group/USDF Region 7 Championships were presented in a multitude of divisions, including several in the Junior/Young Rider ranks. At Training Level, Lucienne Bacon of Atherton, Calif. earned a narrow victory with a score of 67.727% with the Dutch mare Serenade. Celsiana William of Trinidad, Calif. rode her own German Riding Pony gelding Heart Throb SVS into the winner's circle on a score of 66.768% in the Second Level Junior/Young Rider division, while Brianna Relucio of San Ramon, Calif. and her Hanoverian gelding Wynsum claimed the JR/YR Fourth Level Championship (66.000%). At the FEI level, Shae-Bella Lovazzano (Woodside, Calif.) rode the impressive PRE stallion Tracio in the JR/YR Intermediate I Championship to a winning score of 63.421%. Talented juniors also took center stage to show off their riding skills in the USDF Dressage Seat Medal Semi-Final classes. For riders 13 and under, Celsiana William and Heart Throb SVS earned their second blue ribbon of the day with 77.000%, while Isabella Macchioni of Livermore, Calif. rode her Hanoverian gelding Danatelo to top the 14-18 division, also on a score of 77.000%.

Topping a huge field of 26 Adult Amateurs at First Level was Eric Di Benedetto representing the CDS Sonoma Chapter, who earned a winning score of 67.059% with his own Dutch gelding Apollo. In the Open Third Level Championship, Anja Pflanz of Redwood City, Calif. had to fight for the win as the top eight competitors all scored over 70%. But she was rewarded by the judges for a solid ride on her Oldenburg gelding Digby to ultimately trot away with the victory on a score of 72.756%, while the Adult Amateur division at Third Level was topped by Akiko Yamazaki (Woodside, Calif.) who took her turn in the saddle with Four Winds Farm's stunning Dutch gelding Donovan to earn a score of 72.372% and the win.

In the FEI divisions, Olympian Jan Ebeling of Moorpark started his day off on a winning note with Ann Romney's Bakari. This pair were unbeatable at last year's championship show, winning both CDS and Region 7 titles at Fourth Level, and now made the step up to Prix St. Georges look easy as they captured the Great American/USDF Open Prix St. Georges Championship with 72.697%. Could the Hanoverian gelding be a new star for Ebeling on a future U.S. Team? "He was fabulous today, and we will be looking towards the Intermediaire I next year and then we'll see," said Ebeling. "He's so powerful with super extensions and his changes are just awesome. Even on a bad day he's a blast to ride." For Adult Amateurs, Christine Ekstrand rode her eight-year-old Hanoverian gelding Braxxton to earn a top score of 68.026% and take her division's Prix St.

Georges Region 7 Championship home to Santa Monica.

After finding herself atop the leaderboard in yesterday's Grand Prix Freestyle, Terri Rocovich (Ramona, Calif.) earned her second win in as many days with her Dutch gelding Uiver by capturing the Region 7 Grand Prix Open Championship with a score of 68.150%. Whitney Harrington's Laredo 183 has worn his share of blue ribbons at the CDS Championship Show, and this year he carried Lindsey Schulz of Burbank to the win in the Great American/USDF Region 7 Adult Amateur Grand Prix Championship with a score of 64.700% in what may have been his final performance. "He loves it, but he's 21 now," said Schulz, who is taking advantage of the charismatic Austrian gelding's experience. "He accomplished so much with Whitney, so she suggested that before he retire he teach me how to ride the Grand Prix. It was a very, very steep learning curve because I hadn't ever shown above Third Level, but honestly it was the best thing that ever happened to me."

In addition to Regional Championships, CDS Horse of the Year titles were awarded at First, Second and Fourth Levels, as well as Intermediaire I. In the Open First Level division, Lehua Custer piloted Wendy Sasser's five-year-old Dutch gelding F.J. Ramzes to confidently win the second round's First Level Test 3 for a come-from-behind overall victory, taking the McLeod Perpetual Trophy home to North Hollywood with an overall combined score of 72.429%. So far this weekend, Brian Hafner of Penngrove, Calif. and the seven-year-old Dutch gelding Dream Catcher have proven to be unbeatable at Second Level. After winning yesterday's Great American/USDF Region 7 Open Second Level title, the pair swept the \$1,000 CDS Open Second Level Horse of the Year division with an average two-test score of 71.697% to claim the Bengt Lungquist Memorial Trophy for owner Wendy Roberts.

Sandy Savage of nearby Sacramento earned the right to have her name engraved on the Pal Kemery Perpetual Trophy by riding her lovely black Hanoverian mare Releve to a combined score of 70.917% to win the \$1,000 CDS Open Fourth Level Horse of the Year title. In the \$1,000 Open Intermediaire I Horse of the Year division, Amy Miller scored her second win of the day, this time aboard Christine Stevens' Swedish Warmblood gelding Tenedos with a score of 68.487%, while the Adult Amateur division and T.D.I. Systems Perpetual Trophy was won with a big score of 73.092% by Dido, a Danish Warmblood mare owned and ridden by Adrienne Bessey of Thousand Oaks.

An impressive group of juniors and young riders also sought to earn CDS Horse of the Year awards. At First Level, McKenzie Kelley of Napa topped the competitive field riding her own five-year-old Oldenburg gelding Fuerst Hit to win both rounds for an average score of 68.231%. In the CDS Junior/Young Rider Prix St. Georges Horse of the Year Championship, D'Rey Murray (Petaluma, Calif.) was first down centerline and set a score of 68.816% which could not be caught with the Hanoverian gelding Dernier Cri.

Additional CDS Championships were awarded in the Fourth Level, Intermediaire I and Grand Prix Freestyle divisions as part of afternoon and evening entertainment, and repeat winners were the name of the game in all three divisions. Claire Darnell (Moorpark, Calif.) already won the Great American/USDF Region 7 Fourth Level Freestyle Championship on Thursday, and earned another victory today in the CDS Fourth Level Freestyle Horse of the Year class with her Dutch gelding Ayokay on an impressive score of 76.133%. The 11-year-old Hanoverian gelding Winzalot once again lived up to his name by decisively winning the Lilian Van Dahn Memorial Perpetual

Trophy for the CDS Intermediaire Freestyle on 75.813% with owner/rider Jamie Pestana of Livermore. In a fitting evening finale, Adrienne Bessey returned to the main arena one last time with Hilda Gurney's Oldenburg gelding Wintersnow and brought down the house with their Les Miserables-themed performance to claim the CDS Horse of the Year Grand Prix Freestyle title and the Lt. Col Hans Moeller Trophy on a score of 67.250%.

Championship competition concludes on Sunday with final divisions of Regional and CDS Championships. For complete Day Three results, [click here](#). For more information about the California Dressage Society Championship Show, including news, schedules, ride times, and results, visit the [CDS website](#) and follow along with behind-the-scenes updates and photos on the [CDS Facebook page](#).