

Competition Wraps Up at the 126th National Horse Show

A new equitation champion was crowned in the 2009 ASPCA Maclay National Championship.

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Zazou Hoffman and Ivy were victorious in the 2009 ASPCA Maclay National Championships. Photo © 2009 Jennifer Wood/PMG.

The 126th National Horse Show was a great success this year with top hunter and equitation competition. The highlight event, the ASPCA Maclay National Championship, was held on Saturday, October 31. The 126th National Horse Show is featured at the Syracuse Invitational Sporthorse Tournament in the War Memorial at the Oncenter Complex in Syracuse, NY.

When the 2009 ASPCA Maclay National Championships came to a close, it was 17-year-old Zazou Hoffman of Santa Monica, CA, who prevailed through three rounds to win this year's coveted equitation final.

In the first round of competition, 150 riders were tested on a course designed by the judges, Bill Moroney of Middleburg, VA, and Jack Towell of Camden, SC, in cooperation with course designer Richard Jeffery of Dorset, England. The riders who rode the first course smoothly, out-of-stride, and with style were the ones called back in the top 30 to test on the flat. Three groups of 10 were tested, and from there the judges called back the top 24 riders for a second round over fences.

The course for the second round was a unique design, with 12 jumps available for riders to make their own nine-fence course. The trot jump was required, as was a hand gallop to a fence of their choice.

After the second round, the judges made the decision to call back four riders for a test after the second round. The test included a broken line, two rollbacks to oxers, and a bending line down the long side of the ring to finish. While the test looked relatively simple, the catch was that the riders had to do this without stirrups.

The last to test was Hoffman, who had to feel the pressure of being on top. Hoffman placed third in the National Championship last year, and this was her last competition as a junior rider.

She and Ivy, the horse she rode last year, performed a smooth test and made the work without stirrups look very easy. The crowd erupted after she jumped the final fence, but she would have to wait for the awards presentation, and the countdown of the top ten riders, before she knew the outcome.

The judges rewarded Hoffman's style and consistency with the honor of winning the longest-running and most historical of the equitation finals. She said through tears, "It's unreal. It's nice to see that I've improved that much over last year. I was just so excited that it finally happened and that I finally did it."

Hoffman trains with Missy Clark, John Brennan, and Kristy McCormack at North Run and spends much of her time on the East Coast as a working student. The North Run team was in tears when Hoffman was announced as the winner. Clark said, "I'm so thrilled for Zazou. She's worked so hard. She's such a great worker and really devoted to the whole part of horsemanship. It isn't just about riding for her. It's the whole picture, which is really refreshing and unusual. She's in the barn working all day. She really deserves it, and I'm very proud of her."

Judge Bill Moroney pointed out that Hoffman made smart decisions that eventually put her to the top of their list. He commented, "She was consistent. In the second round, she created a course that suited her horse. They had a shot to show off, and it did change the order a bit. That's what we liked about her. She continued to ride forward. She didn't get overly conservative and try to play it safe."

The ASPCA President Ed Sayres spoke to the riders and brought the issues of equine and animal welfare to light. "In the past, the winners of the Maclay have been ambassadors and helped with all of the issues that horses are facing in this country. We're proud to make you part of this, and we look forward to working more with you," he remarked.

Final Results: 2009 ASPCA Maclay National Championship Zazou Hoffman, Ivy, Santa Monica, CA, Missy Clark, John Brennan, Kristy McCormack Chase Boggio, Golou II, Canton, GA, Christina Schlusemeyer, Bob Braswell Morgan

Hale, Urco, Odessa, FL, Don Stewart, Jr. Samantha Harrison, Triple Lutz, La Canada, CA, Karen Healey Laura Pfeiffer, Catwoman, Temperance, MI, Polly Howard Lucy Davis, Patrick, Los Angeles, CA, Archie Cox Lillie Keenan, New York, NY, Logan, Andre Dignelli, Kirsten Coe, Patricia Griffith Amber Henter, St. Petersburg, FL, Triumph, Christina Schlusemeyer, Bob Braswell Hasbrouck Donovan, Gainesville, FL, Almost Famous, Don Stewart Jr., Bibby Farmer Hill Molly Braswell, Ocala, FL, The General, Bob Braswell, Christina Schlusemeyer

Read more on the 2008 Maclay finals >> Hunter Competition: Wednesday through Friday

Four championships were awarded on Thursday, along with the Grand Champion Open Hunter and Leading Hunter Rider titles. Francesca, owned by Pony Lane Farm of Bluffdale, UT, and ridden by Maggie Jayne of Elgin, IL, were named the Grand Champion Open Hunter after they won two hunter division championships. Jayne was named the Leading Hunter Rider. Francesca's success also gave them the title of National Horse Show Grand Hunter Champion.

Jayne had an incredible two days with her hunters at the 126th National Horse Show. She and Francesca, an eight-year-old Dutch Warmblood mare, finished as the Green Conformation and Regular Conformation Hunter champions. The reserve champion in the division was South Beach, ridden by Jennifer Alfano for Bright Star 158 LLC.

Francesca and Jayne swept the Regular Conformation Hunter division ribbons and won the Regular Conformation championship. Jayne was reserve champion in the Regular Conformation Hunters on Early Applause, also owned by Pony Lane Farm. Jayne noted, "It's great. The horses have been really solid. I'm excited for the owners, and for the horses to go this well."

Jennifer Alfano of Buffalo, NY, also had a great day in the hunter divisions. Starting out, she won the Green Working Hunter championship on Kid Rock, owned by Bright Star 158 LLC. The reserve champion was Bengale, ridden by Jeffrey Ayers for Gerald A. Camera.

Alfano picked up the Regular Working Hunter championship on Kid Rock's "big brother," Rock Star, who is also owned by Bright Star 158 LLC. They finished the week with a win in the stake class. The reserve champion was Overseas, ridden by Hunt Tosh for Laura Wasserman.

"He just felt so great in the stake today," Alfano said of Rock Star. "I'm happy to have him, since a little over a year ago he had colic surgery and it was pretty bad. It's great just to have him back showing, and it's really special for me. He's always been a special horse, but to have him come back and be champion here is just amazing."

Special prizes and trophies were given to the winners on Friday. Caitlin Ziegler of Mequon, WI, rode Safari to the Grand Junior Hunter Championship, while Darby Toben of Princeton, NJ, and Nijinski were the Grand Amateur-Owner Hunter Champions.

Ziegler and Safari competed in the Small Junior 15 & Under Hunter division, where they were fifth over fences, second under saddle, won the handy hunter, and finished with a win in the stake class to be named champions. Their top ribbons also gave them the grand championship for the junior hunters. The reserve champion in the division was Genuine, ridden by Lillie Keenan and owned by Chansonette Farms LLC.

Darby Toben and Nijinski have been on a roll this fall and picked up their second Grand Champion title here, thanks to their championship in the Amateur-Owner 18-35 Hunters, presented in part by Virginia Fout in honor of Paul and Eve Fout. They won the same titles at the PA National Horse Show two weeks earlier. This week, they won all three over fences classes and finished second under saddle. The reserve champion in the division was Londeur, ridden and owned by Elizabeth Perry.

In the Amateur-Owner Over 35 Hunters, Ellen Toon of South Salem, NY, repeated her championship performance from last year on Invincible. They won the opening class, were second in the handy, fifth in the under saddle, and finished fourth today for the championship in the division, which is presented by Mr. and Mrs. Ernest M. Oare. The reserve champion was Fine Kiss, ridden and owned by Betty Oare.

In a presentation before the final round of the ASPCA Maclay National Championships on Saturday, Taylor Land of Alpharetta, GA, was awarded the Iris McNeil Perpetual Trophy, donated by Susie Schoellkopf, David Distler, and Walter J. Lee. The award is given to a junior rider who has made a contribution to the sport.

For more information on the National Horse Show, please visit www.nhs.org.