

Michigan Celebrates Riding Excellence at Horse Shows by the Bay

By Sarah & Emily Buchardt of Hawthorn Hill Farm

The afternoon sun, cool breeze, and blue skies set the stage perfectly for the 2009 HJAM Medal Finals at Horse Shows By the Bay in Traverse City . Riders came from all over Michigan to compete. The medal finals began the Saturday of the third and final week of the show series. Set in the Grand Prix ring, three of the five finals were to be judged by Kim Dorfman of Aiken , South Carolina . The course was the same for the three finals that day and began with an oxer leading into a six stride line and later involved two one stride in-and-outs, multiple bending lines, and a roll back. Along with their ribbons, the winners this weekend received a shipping halter, wool cooler, special Horse Show By the Bay winner hats, and the chance to sit in the sponsor tent during the dinner and Grand Prix class that followed. On Saturday, the finals were well attended by spectators watching from the tents and hill surrounding the ring.

First to go was the Limit Junior Medal Final with twelve riders competing. The Spy Coast Farm oxer was shadowy and close to the spectators so it proved difficult for many of the riders. This made the next jump, a single lighthouse, a little difficult for a few of the riders. However, most managed the trickier aspects of the course with ease. Everyone who had a clean round was then invited back for the flat phase. The top eight riders tested. The test required riders to canter the first jump in the line and trot out. They then proceeded to an in-and-out and had to halt after hand galloping the spooky Spy Coast oxer. To finish the test, they had to back up three steps and sit the trot back to the line. Rachel Kuhn's smooth round and strong performance in the flat phase landed her in at the top of the list going into the test. Rachel Kuhn was last to go and led her horse, I've Been Thinking, through the test. This final demonstration finalized her placing as the winner of the class. Second place award went to Aleena Bobich riding Imprimis and Mackenzie Hagen on Caroll Z came in third.

Next to go was the Adult Medal Final with a total of fifteen riders entered. The adults also managed to complete the course with little difficulty, although the Spy Coast Farm jump continued to unnerve some of the horses. Following the flat phase and first round, eight were asked to perform the same test as the Limit Junior Medal riders. Lindey Sibel's flawless first round and impressive flatwork led up to her winning test. Sibel was the only one to nail the three step back up. Sibel was called back in 5th place but quickly jumped up to first. Sibel was not the only one to move up in the order after testing. Both Kendra Vicary and Abigail Wujek moved up in the placings. Following Lindey Sibel's win on Caruso was Kendra Vicary riding Real in second place. Abigail Wujek placed third on Magic Man.

The Open Junior Medal was the last of the finals to compete on Saturday. The day was starting to cool off and the horses were a little more alert then in the previous classes. However, the sixteen riders managed the course with no major mishaps, especially after having seen the previous two classes complete the same course. Once again, the riders without faults were invited back to test. After the first two phases were complete, the top

eight riders continued on to the test, with Laura Pfeiffer in the lead. The test for the Open Junior Medal riders was different and much more challenging than the former medals. The riders began the same with cantering into the first line and trotting out of it but then had to halt and counter canter the lighthouse which was set on a hard bend. Finally they ended with cantering the other in and out and sitting the trot back into line. Many of the riders had difficulty with the counter canter and more than a few ended up jumping the lighthouse on the opposite lead. Laura Pfeiffer had no trouble, however, and kept her place at the top of the class. Marissa Monforton riding Petit Pierre moved up from her spot in 6th to be awarded second place, and third went to Emily Abbruzzi with Keep It Simple.

Unfortunately the fine weather didn't last. On Sunday it rained constantly and the temperature dropped significantly. The last two medal finals to go, the Pony Medal and Low Child/Adult, were significantly smaller, but the riding was just as impressive.

The Pony Medal Final was held in Ring 3 and judged by Otis Brown from Lexington, Kentucky. The course consisted of multiple roll backs, a bending line, and in and out, as well as a few singles. The final jump of the course was well decorated with barrels and flowers, but neither the ponies nor the riders balked at the extra decoration. The only jump that seemed to give a few of the riders trouble was the white single off of the short end that led into the bending line. There were five ponies to compete, and the three larges went first, followed by one medium, and ending with one small. All of the riders completed the course and were asked back for the flat phase. In the end, it was Elizabeth Stroh's handy round and strong performance on the flat that put her in first. She was riding It Takes Two. Second place went to Courtney Schwabauer on Northwind's Infatuation, and Cassie Coulter riding Matter of Heart was third.

Down in the Vankampen Ring, the Low Child/Adult Medal final was judged by Kate Geraldi from Russell, Illinois. The first round included two roll backs, a bending line, a seven stride line, and several singles. Five riders competed in the medal, bringing all five back to test. The test consisted of a trot fence to an oxer, then a single, and finished with a halt. Riders were then asked to sit the trot to the gate and exit at the walk on a loose rein. Jessica Lewis, riding Speaking Softly, proved to have the best ride by capturing first place. Elizabeth Finkelstein and her ride with Tuscan came in second place, along with Jackie Wood riding Vinsetta in third place.