

## **September 9, 2005 Danhaki Doubles in West Coast Junior Hunter Championships**

By Jackie Freundlich

Stephanie Danhaki dominated the West Coast Show Circuit Magazine/USEF National Junior Hunter Championships, Aug. 16-17 at the magnificent Oaks Blenheim facility in San Juan Capistrano, Calif.

She garnered top scores on her small junior, Galatea, as well as on her large junior, In Sync. Galatea captured the small junior, 16-17, title while In Sync won the large junior, 16-17 and the overall title.

Having owned In Sync for less than one year, Danhaki saved the 9-year-old, Thoroughbred gelding for top competitions, including Indio (Calif.), Devon (Pa.), Lake Placid (N.Y.) and this event.

"I like the format of the championships, where I can focus on each round. With only one trip per day, it's nice to have time to spend with all my friends," says Danhaki, whose horse is trained by Archie Cox III.

Neither Danhaki nor In Sync were strangers to the winners circle. She won the 2004 West Coast Championships on Gallaway, and In Sync won the 2003 East Coast Championships with Charlie Jayne.

Danhaki, 18, of Pacific Palisades, Calif., is headed to the University of Pennsylvania this fall.

With 30 percent of the cumulative score counting on the handiness of their hunter, riders had to tackle a few technicalities right from the start. Veteran California course designer Scott Starnes built a lovely hunter course on the grass with flowers, greenery and hay bales.

He designated the third effort as the trot jump off a turn, with a rollback to a forward two-stride combination, followed by a left turn and a long hand gallop to an oxer. Another difficult spot was the option in-and-out, built a little tight with poles on one side and planks on the other. The slightest rub brought a panel or pole clunking down, and few juniors rode without a bobble.

Judges Sue Ashe, Susie Schoellkopf and Frank Willard scored the over fences rounds as well as the under saddle class. Each horse received an announced numerical score along with their ribbon placing. Counting 20

percent toward the total, valuable points were awarded to handy hunter winners In Sync (large, 16-17) and Gracious Me (large, 15 & under, ridden by Mallory Olson), who both placed second in their hack classes, with scores of 85 and 86 respectively.

The challenge of the second day was a long course with a number of single jumps, combinations and two lines, one ridden across the diagonal and one bending toward home. With the classic round counting 50 percent toward the total, it was still anyone's game.

The 15 and under division was dominated by catch-ridden chestnuts. The winner hands down in the small division was Jane Frazee's Mandarin, ridden by Shelby Wakeman and trained by Archie Cox III. In the large division Mandeville Farm's Gracious Me, claimed the win.

Olson, 14, of Newport Coast, Calif., had never ridden "Gracie" before. "She was so much fun," she said. "She had never jumped anything like the panel combination before, but she didn't mind at all." Olson rides with Monarch International trainers Joe Thorpe and Keri Kampsen.

Notable second day rounds in the small juniors included Mandeville Farm's Quality Control, catch ridden by the 2005 East Coast Junior Hunter Championships winner Hardin Towell, who scored an average of 84.7 to beat Danhaki's Galatea. Towell and Quality Control were also second in the under saddle but had an unfortunate mishap on the handy course.

Mandarin and Wakeman, 15, of Westlake Village, Calif., had another beautiful winning trip to finish first in the small junior, 15 and under, division as well as reserve overall champion.

In the large juniors Ashley Stander catch rode Hot Shot, owned by the Helfrich Family, to win in the older division, narrowly beating Danhaki on In Sync by two points. And Mandeville Farm's Gracious Me and Olson topped their division again, with an average of 83.8 for the win. Scott Wilson trains Gracious Me for Mandeville Farms.

Horses and riders came to the event from Colorado, northern California and even South Carolina. Towell, from Camden, S.C., rode two of the Mandeville Farms' three entries. He had seen these horses on the East Coast but never had a chance to ride either one. "I just watched Katie Taylor on Quality Control at Lake Placid. The other one I knew as a pre-green horse from years ago. He's very sweet," Towell remarked.

Towell found the West Coast show more laid back. "The people are nice and this facility is beautiful," he said. "I came here to beat up on Stephanie [Danhakl], but she beat up on me!"

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