

# Trakehner Mares Help Young Riders Earn Pony Club "A" Ratings

By Timothy Holekamp

Most horse people know about the United States Pony Club and its rating system, which is designed as a pyramid of achievement and learning, with the very top being the prestigious "A" rating, something that is earned by only about 25 youngsters each year, out of nearly 13,000 members in 630 local clubs. The level of knowledge and riding skill needed to pass the test is high enough that virtually anyone with this rating can find a training job in the horse industry with ease.

This year, on the weekend of July 20 and 21, one of the six testing sites was the Hoosier Horse Park in Indianapolis, IN, and an almost unprecedented eight applicants were approved for the "A." The three national testers present announced that this was the strongest group of approved riders they had ever examined.

Another unprecedented aspect was the fact that of the eight, three were mounted on Trakehner mares – one of them riding two! All three were female and unusually young for this test. Here is a little about each:

Ashley Dalton of Dunlap, IL, is 18 years old and used her 14-year-old mare HERBSTASTER in about three-fourths of the phases of testing, including all of her flatwork, stadium jumping, and cross-country. Ashley bought "Herbie" (by Target, out of Herbstblüte by Matador) from Franz and Elke Hollenbach about three years ago. She struggled at first but now has found the "groove" and has been very successful also at Intermediate eventing this season, winning the USEA western Intermediate Horse Trials Championship at Wayne Horse Trials recently. Ashley credits Herbstaster as the horse who "finally taught me how to really ride," praising her consistency and ability to punish riding error and richly reward correctness.



Photo by Tim Holekamp

Emily Holekamp and her two helpers, Hera by Garibaldi (right) and Kokett by Kalluster (left). Together they got the coveted Pony Club "A" rating.

Emily Holekamp of Columbia, MO, is also 18 years old. She has been riding since she could walk and, like Ashley, has been almost a lifelong Pony Clubber. Much of her experience came on her mare ASTRA (by Amethyst, out of Anemone by Rombus) whom she has trained entirely on her own, but Astra is now in foal to Windfall and out of work, so for the last season she has been training with two other Trakehner mares, the 9-year-old bay HERA (by Garibaldi, out of Havel by Matador) and the 15-year-old bay KOKETT (by Kalluster, out of Koralle XI by Pasteur xx). Both mares shared the testing chores equally for Emily, who was just overwhelmed by the thrill of passing the test on her first try. She will go on to compete Kokett at Preliminary eventing this fall.

Jessica Rachor of Memphis, TN, is a 19-year-old eventer who has been in

Pony Club for seven years and also was trying for her "A" for the first time. She succeeded using exclusively the black ANDORRA LA VELLA (by Amethyst, out of Impressive Cowgirl xx by Royal Chocolate xx), who is only six years old, but has been very successfully evented at Training level last year by Darren Chiacchia. Andorra and Jessica had been together for only two months prior to the test, but her new owner beams with pride about her "great and willing attitude." Jessica says this is by far the best horse she has ever had, and she can find no fault with her whatsoever. Their plans include Preliminary eventing later this year and right on up as far as they can go in the future. 🌟