

Improved Rider 2007 - Winner

Claire Austring

October 15, 2007

Please accept this letter as my nomination for my student, Claire Austring, for the 2007 BCYR Improved Rider Award.

Claire competed at First Level in 2004, then Third Level in 2005, and in 2006 and 2007 has competed at FEI Young Rider Level.

Claire continued to train five to six days a week this year, working to achieve qualifying scores to compete at the Dressage Canada Youth National Championships. She also rode with Albrecht Heidemann in the Young Rider clinics throughout the year. Claire attends Kwantlen College part-time, and also works 2-3 days a week in a tack store.

Last winter Claire's horse, Legacy, experienced a setback when he had an incidence of tying-up, but with care and patience for several months, Claire was able to bring him back to fitness for the start of the show season.

Throughout this year Claire continued to improve her skills as a rider and to advance in her understanding of the aids and how to apply them. She improved her ability to listen to her horse and appreciate his strengths and weaknesses. She became better able to recognize the root of a problem and how to address that first. She improved her recognition of the importance of balance and straightness and how it relates to relaxation.

At the beginning of the season, Claire's scores were falling short of qualifying scores... she found herself with a new challenge. Now it wasn't good enough to ride an accurate test – now it was getting even more difficult to develop the quality of Legacy's paces and strengthen him within his limitations physically. It was difficult at times for her to stay on track with her goals when she could see that his setback in November, coupled with his aging body, was costing her a few percent in the ring... a few percent she hadn't the breathing room to afford. But learning more about his management she was able to move ahead and peak in time for the Youth Nationals – achieving a goal that even she, herself, wouldn't have believed possible... they WON!

Claire and Legacy's test scores (see below) at the start of the show season were not high enough for qualifying, but they competed at every opportunity, seeking improvement. At the first shows in May (Southlands Spring Dressage and Touch of

Class), their technical scores ranged from 56.000% - 59.778% on the YR Team and YR Individual tests. In June they received 61.111% on the YR Team test at Whidbey Island, and in July at Maple Ridge they received 63.750% on the YR Individual. Then at Rising Stars in August they received 67.500% on their YR Freestyle. This was a steady improvement through the season and with these scores they were qualified to compete at the Youth National Championships.

At the Championships, they finished the year by riding their very best, with high scores of – YR Indiv./PSG 64.250% from Kurt Christensen; YR Team 65.333% from Cara Whitham; and YR Freestyle 66.750% from Cara Whitham and Janet Foy – and were awarded Young Rider National Champion, Technical and Freestyle.

I would further like to mention that I am very proud that Claire has learned a powerful lesson of respect for her partner. I have always stressed to my students to take care of their horses FIRST. Claire has shown the greatest sacrifice in following through with her decision to retire Legacy after the 2007 Nationals. The moment I was most proud of Claire was not when she rode well and won the championship. It was when she led Legacy to the award presentations, rather than rode, because she knew he was tired.

It nearly brings tears to my eyes to know she learned the greatest lesson I could teach, and that is to respect and appreciate the giving nature of a very proud and powerful partner.

Legacy retires in good health with a new purpose with pride. He has taught Claire to ride, and now he will enjoy her mother's more patient and less demanding ways as he embarks on his new challenge of teaching Val.

I hope you would consider Claire for these reasons.

Sincerely,

Carmie Flaherty
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Example Test Scores from 2007 Show Season –
Claire Austring and Springtree Legacy

<u>Date/Show</u>	<u>Test</u>	<u>Score %</u>	<u>Judge</u>
May 4-6/Southlands	Indiv/PSG	56.000	Jane Weatherwax
May 11-13/T.of Class	"	59.500	M. vanGanswinkel

June 29-Jl. 1/Amherst	"	59.750	D. Richardson
Aug. 10-12/MREC	"	63.750	V. Stashuk-Matisi
Sept. 15-16/Natl. Champ.	"	64.250	Kurt Christensen
May 11-12/T. of Class	YR Team	57.111	Col. Carde
June 16-17/Whidbey	"	59.556	Linda Zang
Aug. 24-26/Rising Stars	"	61.111	Doreen Horsy
Sept. 15/16/Natl. Champ.	"	65.333	Cara Whitham
May 4-6/Southlands	YR Freestyle	60.500	Lois Yukins
May 11-13/T. of Class	"	62.500	Col. Carde
Aug. 10-12/MREC	"	60.000	Peter Engel
Aug. 24-26/Rising Stars	"	67.500	Sue Rodriguez
Sept. 15/16/Natl. Champ.	"	66.750	Cara Whitham