

Yes! We CAN!!!



Photo by Derith Vogt

Hanna's NAJYRC Story

By Hannah Ross

This year was another extremely successful one for everybody here at Kindred Spirits Stables, and it's to my second family there that I owe a lot. They provide support through all of the struggles, and a helping hand when you just don't think you can make it. They've watched me grow up and become the rider I am and achieve all of my dreams...and helped me realize new ones.

One of my biggest dreams was to participate in the North American Junior Young Riders Competition (NAJYRC), in which I now have competed twice. This competition is also known as the Junior Olympics for ages 14-21. It is an honor to be chosen to compete there. So after this year's competition, my Mom and I decided to share our experiences with you.

Hanna's (the competitor's) perspective:

When we arrived in Colorado, it wasn't nearly as nerve-wracking as it had been the previous year! This time, I knew more of what to expect and was able to help the other team members

on their first endeavor. But this year, the difference in climate was something new to factor in. Not only were we dealing with 100 degree daily temperatures, but the altitude and dryness of the air affected a lot of people, including one of our team members, who suffered heat stroke after cross-country. We had all been informed of the issues we would be dealing with, so I had increased conditioning to help prepare Fantasia's body for the change of environment.

The heat was absolutely stifling, running daily between 98-100 degrees. On dressage day, coats were waived indefinitely from the competition for all competitors (Dressage, Eventing, Show Jumping, and Reining). Fan and I put in a wonderful test, receiving a score of 45.3, being scored at FEI level (approximately equivalent to a score of 29 for normal USEA) and our coach, Jon Holling, was extremely pleased. I was also congratulated by Sally O'Connor, who waited with me to hear the score (I could barely breathe, standing next to her!). After dressage, my teammate was in 1st place, Fan and I were in 3rd, and my other teammates were in 7th and 26th. And as a team? We were in FIRST!

Onto Cross-Country we went, where Fan put in a spectacular round, easily galloping the course. She also came in at the lowest temperature, the same as it was outside: 102. Our vet was extremely pleased with her, as the 18-year old proved she was fit for the test! She received her fluids, although Chris (Vet) believed she could have gone without anything, and was extremely well taken care of by my phenomenal groom. After Cross-Country, Fan and I had moved into 2nd place and our team still held 1st.

The next day was Stadium Jumping, which has always been my mental bug-a-boo. The course was in a rolling arena and was going to need to run fast, due to how spread out it was. Fan and I hit two rails and ended up 7th. Had we gone without penalties, we would've been the Gold Medalist! But... I was able to watch my teammate, Callie, run a beautiful round to come away with the Gold, and help secure our team's 1st place as well! All in all, we had a phenomenal time, and I have never been with such a great group that stood so strong under all of the pressure!

So what's the plan for this year? Well, I just received word that I am going to work

Continued on page 50

“Hannah;” *Continued from page 34*

with Allison Springer, January through April. Fan will be coming with me and we are planning on competing on the CCI* team at NAJYRC next summer. Other than that? Let the hard work and heart lead the way!

Mom's Perspective: Hard work, trust, and reality checks have been the guiding forces for my part. When Hannah presented her vision for herself three years ago, I wasn't aware just how much of each I would need at the time. Roy, (her step father) and I immediately became educated by Hannah and her trainer Cindy Burke about the steps Hannah would need to take in order to qualify to ride in the NARYC. Suddenly, traveling to Lexington, Kentucky, to compete in a 3-day event was a realistic plan for my daughter to complete her CCI*, enabling her to qualify for Young Rider competition...this from a rider who had not had a real direction in her riding just two years prior. Some hard discussions followed as sacrifices and support would have to come from many angles to make this happen. But our family has never followed the easiest paths and with Hannah demonstrating her commitment to her trainer, as well as to our home and school, Roy and I were in for our own ride!

As I walked the cross country course at the Lexington Horse Park two years ago, I was very nervous about the size and scope of this course. Hannah had advanced very quickly and I wasn't sure she or I were really up to this level of challenge. It had been raining (over five inches the day before), footing was slippery and the jumps were huge. I asked Hannah how she felt about the course; if she thought she could do it. The words of wisdom that I received in response will always hold dear. "Mom, trust me. I would never do anything that I didn't feel would be safe for Fan and me. If I have to worry about you not trusting me, then I will lose my confidence and not be able to do this. I am ready."

Nothing like an attitude adjustment for Mom!!

Hannah rode a beautiful course. We walked it again when she was done. She had been the last rider on the course. At the take-off area before each jump the footing was just like soup, churned up by so many horses stepping in the same place...and at every jump was a single set of smaller hoof prints taking a slightly different approach to the jumps to enable Fan to have perfect footing. My daughter had demonstrated thoughtfulness and a sound strategy for not only completing the course in good time, but in the safest manner possible for

herself and her partner.

It seems that doors are opening all the time for Hannah as she continues to pursue a dream of Olympic level competition. This summer she had two very successful outings on Fan at the intermediate level after being part of the NAJYRC gold medal team. Sometimes I don't feel like I can catch my breath! Now a road trip for a three-day interview with Allison Springer in Virginia had to happen. And the outcome? The opportunity to spend four months in Aiken with many of our top riders at the USET training facility as a working student for Allison. It will be an anxious group waiting for Hannah to return to Kindred Spirit Stables in April!

Hannah will bring back and share her new knowledge for all the riders to benefit as she continues to develop her relationship as an aspiring trainer/competitor with Cindy. Who says dreams don't come true? Hard work, trust, faith in your abilities and the support of the people around you will go a long way. Each step that Hannah takes on this journey has been taken with her friends, her trainer, her supporters and her parents right beside her. But it is she that has had to step up, hold out her hand, smile and introduce herself to the next person that will help open doors as she continues to work hard towards her dream.