



LEFT: That's Me Z and Tommy Greengard win the 2022 USEA YEH West Coast 5-Year-Old Championship.
RIGHT: Natagho-w and Kristin Joly win the 2022 USEA YEH West Coast 4-Year-Old Championship.
Photo credit: Tina Fitch Photography

The Stage is Set for the 2023 Dutta Corp. USEA Young Event Horse West Coast Championships

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By Jonathan Horowitz

Paso Robles, CA — The 2023 Dutta Corp. USEA Young Event Horse (YEH) West Coast Championships on October 27-28, as well as the Last Chance Qualifier on October 26, at Twin Rivers Ranch in Paso Robles, California, will offer a big stage for the West Coast's top eventing prospects to shine at a time when West Coast eventers are making history in the sport.

The YEH Program has been a launching pad for 4- and 5-year-old event horses to go on to future success at the highest levels of the sport. In 2023, Mai Baum (Lordano x Ramira) became the first YEH graduate to win a five-star, as his rider, Tamie Smith, made history as the first American since Phillip Dutton in 2008 and the first West Coast eventer since Derek di Grazia in 1985 to win the Land Rover Kentucky Three-Day Event.

The 2022 YEH West Coast Championships featured their largest field since they were first held as a standalone event at Twin Rivers in 2020 with 18 5-year-olds and 12 4-year-olds competing. The 2023 class has grown with 21 5-year-olds and 14 4-year-olds entered.

At the 2022 YEH West Coast Championships, That's Me Z (Take A Chance On Me Z x Venetia) ridden by Tommy Greengard was the highest-scoring 5-year-old out of both the East Coast and West Coast championships. That put "Z" and Greengard first in line to be awarded the prestigious [Holekamp/Turner YEH Lion d'Angers Grant](#) to represent the United States should they qualify for the FEI WBFSH Eventing World Breeding Championships at Mondial du Lion in Le Lion D'Angers, France, in 2024 when the horse is 7 years old.

“We had so much fun, and that was such a good stepping stone for that horse,” Greengard said. “We love going for Young Event Horse. It’s a fun weekend. It’s fun to just focus on the young horses. I love that it’s a standalone event. It really doesn’t feel like an afterthought. It feels like such a production, and we so appreciate the effort that goes into it. It’s awesome.”

Greengard will look to defend the 5-year-old title with I’m All In (Casskeni II x Tortola 2), a bay German Sport Horse gelding he owns in partnership with Andrea Pfeiffer. Out of the dam Tortola 2, I’m All In is a half-brother to Tugce (by Domherr), the recent winner of the CCI2*-S at Bromont in Quebec, Canada, with Jessica Phoenix.

Greengard will also ride the bay California-bred Thoroughbred gelding Check the Boxes (Box Score x Multiplyingtheheat) in the 4-year-old championship. Check the Boxes shares the same breeder, Linda Madsen, as another Thoroughbred in the 4-year-old championship in Smarter World (Smart Bid x Circle the World).

Amber Birtcil will ride Smarter World as one of her four entries in the 2023 4-year-old championship, along with Oxford K (Grand Slam VDL x Walzing Patty), Oriental Star (Comme Prevu x Heaven Angel), and Orpheus (Gerardus x Hiewitta). The three “O” horses are Dutch Warmblood geldings. Oxford K and Orpheus were first and second, respectively, in the 4-year-old qualifier at the Twin Rivers Fall International in September, with Birtcil riding Oxford K and Kristin Joly aboard Orpheus. Joly rode Natagho-w (Comthago x Odorette-W) to the West Coast 4-year-old championship in 2022.



Amber Birtcil and Oxford K. Ride On Photo.

“He is actually quite quirky,” Birtcil said about Oxford K, “but I really like his type, and for me he’s quite comfortable to ride which has become quite important for me. He has been super here for his first outing, taking it all in stride. I love how the YEH introduces them to the sport.”

Birtcil acquired “Oxford” (“He’s quite serious in his personality, so it really suits him,” she said about the barn name) from the Netherlands last year. Oxford’s dam, Walzing Patty, has produced three show jumpers that have competed at 1.40 meters—one based in California, one in Europe, and one in Iran.

In what is scheduled to be a very busy weekend for her, Birtcil also has three entries in the West Coast 5-year-old championship with Bijou, Nevada (Il Est Balou x Onile W), and New Gaillard AJK (Gaillard De La Pomme x Pikolina). New Gaillard AJK was fifth in the 2022 West Coast 4-year-old championship and won the 5-year-old qualifier at the Twin Rivers Summer Horse Trials this year, as well as the Open Training division at the 2023 Woodside Fall International in Woodside, California.

“He’s super to ride,” Birtcil said. “He’s brave. He’s just been lovely to develop.”

She bought “Gary” (“It suits his personality; he’s a little bit of a goofball,” she said) when the bay Dutch Warmblood gelding was 2 years old. He remained in the Netherlands until coming to America shortly before the 2022 championships.

Birtcil won the 2021 West Coast 5-year-old championship with Lex D (Freeman VDL x Berber) and the 2020 West Coast 4-year-old championship with Leonardo Diterma (Gullet HBC x Gracie Terma).

“I love it,” Birtcil said about the YEH program. “I think it’s a great introduction for them as far as learning to go in the water and be in the show atmosphere. Especially, I love doing the championships with the horses. They go up in the big ring with the flags. The jumping is so beautifully decorated. It’s challenging, but it’s inviting for the young horses at the same time.”



Amber Birtcil and New Gaillard AJK. Ride On Photo.

New Gaillard AJK is one of six horses from the 2022 USEA YEH West Coast 4-Year-Old Championship returning as 5-year-olds. The highest-placed returner is third-place Wynnville (Lakerville x Tebowing), a chestnut Thoroughbred gelding ridden by Ella Garcia.

“I had a great experience last year at the 4-year-old YEH,” Garcia said. “I think it’s a phenomenal program for young horses to learn about being in a big atmosphere with no pressure. They set it up like a FEI which I thought really benefited Wynnville, since I plan for him to be my top horse. The Baxter family does a wonderful job putting these championships on, as well as Dutta Corp. and USEA.”



Ella Garcia and Wynnville. Ride On Photo.

Garcia is an advocate for Thoroughbreds in eventing, and the breed recently featured three in the top 10 at the Maryland 5 Star. Wynnville won once during an 11-race career in his home state of California as a 3-year-old in 2021. He moved up to Training in 2023 and won at that level at the Woodside Summer Horse Trials in Woodside, California.

“As an OTTB, Wynnville is thriving in his new career,” she said. “Daily, this young horse surprises me with his old soul and ability to take on this sport the way he has. His mind is so willing, and he gets things so quickly so it’s important I stay mindful of taking my time, given his age and development. He has gone from Beginner Novice to Modified in a year, and in his mind, he’s ready for a five-star.”

The other returners from the 2022 USEA YEH West Coast 4-Year-Old Championship are: fourth-place Monbeg Salt Fever (Womanizer x Eden Breeze) and Ashley Horowitz; seventh-place MRF Nonchalant (Metropole x Cavalier Carnival Rose) and Catie Cejka; eighth-place MBF Kingsriver Romeo (Womanizer x Soraja) and Michlynn Sterling; and ninth-place The Big Easy (Mr Lincoln B x PLS Hippo Q) and Andrea Baxter.

Baxter will also ride Camelot PJ (Colman x Hauptstutbuch Evita) and Nicolai Van de Heering (Hernandez TN x Candy D) in the 5-year-old championship, tying her with Birtcil for the most 5-year-old entries. Arnell Sporthorses’ Nicolai Van de Heering was reserve 4-year-old champion at the 2022 USEA Future Event Horse (FEH) West Coast Championships at Twin Rivers when handled by Rebecca Braiting. The West Coast 4-year-old FEH champion, Valiane (Valentino x Joey) handled by Cejka, is also entered in this year’s 5-year-old YEH championship ridden by Karen O’Neal. Baxter will also be aboard and Urbalreagh Nip N Tuc (Echonix x Ryelands Hope) in the 4-year-old championship.

Baxter serves on the USEA’s Young Event Horse Committee. The Baxter family that has owned and operated Twin Rivers since 2001 has made a significant commitment to growing eventing programs for young horses on the West Coast. The 2023 USEA YEH West Coast Championships will also take place alongside the new Twin Rivers Future Event Horse Festival on October 26-27 and the spirited Halloween One Day Schooling Show on October 29. The Twin Rivers Future Event Horse Festival will offer classes for yearlings, 2-year-olds, 3-year-olds, and 4-year-olds, similar to the Future Event Horse program that used to be run by the USEA.

“We decided to try to keep the tradition going as we’ve done in the past with the USEA Future Event Horse Program,” Baxter said. “This time, we’re calling it a Festival that we’re doing on our own in the same spirit that it was done with USEA. We hope to grow it for the future because we feel like it’s very important to put the spotlight on the young horses and create a positive experience for them that will set them up for future success.”

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