



*LEFT: Camelot PJ and Andrea Baxter win the 2023 USEA YEH West Coast 5-Year-Old Championship.
RIGHT: Amber Birtcil and Oxford K win the 2023 USEA YEH West Coast 4-Year-Old Championship.
Photo credit: Tina Fitch Photography*

Camelot PJ and Oxford K Deliver Fairytale Finishes at Young Event Horse West Coast Championships

October 28, 2023

By Jonathan Horowitz

Paso Robles, CA — The 2023 Dutta Corp. USEA Young Event Horse (YEH) West Coast Championships came down to the final rides in both the 4- and 5-year-old divisions to crown a champion. Camelot PJ and Andrea Baxter recorded the best jumping score on Saturday's second day of competition at Twin Rivers Ranch in Paso Robles, California, to move from sixth to first to win the 5-year-old championship. Oxford K and Amber Birtcil also had the best jumping score for the 4-year-olds to break the tie Birtcil had with another of her horses in Oriental Star after dressage and conformation on day one to win the 4-year-old championship.

This year's YEH West Coast Championships continued to raise the bar for the top eventing prospects on the West Coast. The 32 horses made up of 18 5-year-olds and 14 4-year-olds represented the largest field since the West Coast Championships were first held as a standalone event at Twin Rivers in 2020.

Baxter, who has experienced eventing success up to the five-star level, said she was particularly proud of this victory because of her passion for working with young horses and serving on the USEA's Young Event Horse committee.

"This program has been very special to me," Baxter said. "I remember being able to compete Indy 500 when we first hosted the YEH championships at Twin Rivers in 2011, and that was so valuable early in her journey to becoming a five-star horse. When we gave the West Coast championships their own home here starting in 2020, we decided to turn it into a real FEI event where the young horses get to be showcased in the forelight. It gives them an opportunity that hopefully prepares them for what they hopefully will become."



Andrea Baxter and Camelot PJ. Tina Fitch Photography.

Camelot PJ's victory with a score of 85.94 out of a possible 100 was highlighted by having the best score from championship judges Marilyn Payne from the United States and Christian Schacht from Germany among the 5-year-olds for cross-country efforts (26.4 out of 30) and for overall evaluation for rideability, between fences, and open gallop (13.75 out of 15). Camelot PJ also had the second-best score for conformation (8.9 out of 10), show-jumping efforts (12.3 out of 15), and general impression as a potential four- or five-star event horse (9.2 out of 10). The overall score represents a weighted total of each mark with 10 percent for conformation, 20 percent for dressage, and 70 percent for jumping and galloping.

"To ride him, he is just effortless," Baxter said. "He jumps with scope for days. He lands light as a feather. He gallops. He's a beautiful mover. He's the smartest horse you'll ever come across. He's a little suspicious, a little spooky, and quirky, but just everything about it is self-awareness, and he loves the job. He just plays with the jumps, and he's the type of horse that, if we all had horses like this, we'd be winning medals. So, in my eyes, he's just unbeatable, and it's cool that the judges could see that, too."

The bay roan Hanoverian gelding (Colman x Evita) goes by the barn of "The Hustler" because of his attitude, with Baxter saying that his theme songs are "Hustlin'" by Rick Ross and "You Can Do It" by Ice Cube.

"He's tricky, he's quirky, but he's very self-aware and very brave at the jumps," Baxter said. "He loves the job and loves the game."

Birtcil finished second the 5-year-old championship with the bay Dutch Warmblood gelding Nevada (Il Est Balou x Onile W), culminating a big weekend for her highlighted by the win in the 4-year-old championship with the bay Dutch Warmblood gelding Oxford K (Grand Slam VDL x Walzing Patty). Her Cellar Farm Corp owned six horses in the 4-year-old championship—four ridden by Birtcil and two ridden by Bec Braitling—with all six finishing in the top-seven placings.



Amber Birtcil and Nevada. Tina Fitch Photography.

“Oh, I love it,” Birtcil said. “I think it’s the best. I mean, to go in the Flag Ring and the flags get going for dressage, and they have to cope with that. But, it’s such a laidback, easygoing atmosphere that’s it’s so inviting for them. And, it’s decorated so beautifully. They really make it such a big deal here that I think it’s the perfect thing. That’s why anything that’s 4 and 5 in my barn I drag out and has to come.”

Oxford K’s sire, Grand Slam VDL, is also the sire of the 8-year-old bay Dutch Warmblood gelding Kuno SMH, who competed in the CCI4*-S 8/9-Year-Old class at the Blenheim Palace International in Great Britain in September. His dam, Walzing Patty, is the dam of three show jumpers that have competed at 1.40 meters—one based in California, one in Europe, and one in Iran.



Amber Birtcil and Oxford K. Tina Fitch Photography.

“Oxford” won with a finishing score of won with a finishing score of 83.06 and recorded the highest score among the 4-year-olds for conformation (8.4 out of 10), for general impression as a future four- or five-star eventer (9.0 out of 10), for cross-country efforts (26.1 out of 30), and for overall evaluation for rideability, between fences, and open gallop (13.0 out of 15).

“He’s super quirky,” Birtcil said. “He’s hard to get on. He’s a bit of an odd duck. Those ones tend to stay. He does suit me. He’s very comfortable. I do like his personality even though he is odd, but the easy ones are the easy ones I generally sell.”

Braitling rode the Cellar Farm Corp’s bay Dutch Warmblood mare Olalandra (Falaise De Muze x Gilandra) to second-place in the 4-year-old championship.

“I was riding them for Amber, and I hadn’t jumped them until today with the warmup jumps,” Braitling said of her two catch rides. “I had no plan. It’s kind of almost more fun doing it that way on 4-year-olds. Basically, I think riding 4-year-olds is like having no plan anyways, so it’s perfect.”

Olalandra was the lone mare in the 4-year-old field against 13 geldings.

“It’s funny, and I think it goes in rotations,” Braitling said. “I was just in Europe, and I feel like all there were were a million mares at the top level. I think one deterrent for me if you’re importing is that it’s expensive to bring mares in. But she was phenomenal. She’s an old soul that one.”



Bec Braitling and Olalandra. Tina Fitch Photography.

Sophie Stocks and her bay Irish Sport Horse gelding Rosco (Tyson x Kah Lasina) finished third. Birtcil and the Cellar Farm Corp’s chestnut Thoroughbred gelding Smarter World (Smart Bid x Circle the World) won The Jockey Club Thoroughbred Incentive Program Award as the highest-placing former racehorse in seventh overall. The bay Thoroughbred gelding Check the Boxes (Box Score x Multiplyingtheheat) ridden by Tommy Greengard and co-owned by Greengard and Andrea Pfeiffer won The Go Get ’Em Award, In Memory of Don Trotter for the best gallop score with a perfect 10 for his gallop.

For the 5-year-olds, third-place went to Jordan Linstedt and her bay Hanoverian gelding LS Crown Royal (by Comte). Ashley Horowitz and her grey Irish Sport Horse gelding Monbeg Salt Fever (Womanizer x Eden Breeze) in fourth were the highest-finishing pair that also competed in the 2022 USEA YEH West Coast Championships, with “Salty” also finishing fourth as a 4-year-old. There were six horses from last year’s YEH 4-year-old championship, as well as the 4-year-old champion and

reserve champion from last year's USEA Future Event Horse West Coast Championships that were in this year's YEH 5-year-old championship.

The special awards for the 5-year-old championship were The Jockey Club Thoroughbred Incentive Program Award won by the chestnut Thoroughbred gelding Wynnville (Lakerville x Tebowing) ridden by Ella Garcia. The Big Easy, a chestnut Irish Sport Horse gelding (Mr Lincoln B x PLS Hippo Q) ridden by Baxter, won The Safe Harbor Award given to the 5-year-old with the most graceful and rider friendly performance throughout the competition.

"The Big Easy couldn't be a more fitting winner," Baxter said. "Nicknamed 'Yoda,' he displayed his perfection by standing like a total gentleman in the middle of the ring while everyone else victory galloped around him. He's a gentle giant with scope, talent, and mental capacity for any sport. He's the barn favorite."

As for her overall winner, Camelot PJ, Baxter said, "The sky is the limit."

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