Earned Effort and Anna Collier won the USEA YEH 4-Year-Old West Coast Championship in 2025 and return to Twin Rivers for the 5-Year-Old West Coast Championship in 2026. Tina Fitch Photography

Meet the Field: 2026 USEA Young Event Horse West Coast Championships at Twin Rivers Ranch

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By Jonathan Horowitz

Paso Robles, CA — The USEA Young Event Horse (YEH) West Coast Championships are part of one of the most unique events in America. Held annually as a standalone event at Twin Rivers Ranch in Paso Robles, Calif., since 2020, it features a championship atmosphere just for the 4-year-olds and 5-year-olds that compete. As YEH West Coast graduates make headlines around the country and even around the world, the 2026 championships will take place on Oct. 23 and 24, with a Last Chance Qualifier held the day before the show and the Halloween Derby and Combined Test the day after.

The YEH program is described by the USEA as "an eventing talent search" with the goal "to identify young horses that possess the talent and disposition necessary to excel at the four-star and five-star eventing levels." That identification comes through a dressage test and conformation evaluation on Friday, Oct. 23, and then a jumping test on Saturday, Oct. 24, that includes both show jumping and cross-country fences and culminates with a galloping stretch at the finish. This year's judges are Marilyn Payne from the United States and Chris Ryan from Ireland.

The 2026 West Coast Championships come on the heels of the victory by Orpheus in the USEA/USEF 7-Year-Old Developing Horse Eventing National Championship held at the Morven Park International in Virginia at three-star level. The bay Dutch Warmblood gelding (Gerardus x Hiewitta) was fifth in the USEA YEH West Coast Championships as a 4-year-old in 2023.

In addition, LS Crown Royal, who was third as a 5-year-old in 2023 ridden by Jordan Linstedt, finished eighth out 94 entries at the FEI Eventing Nations Cup at Boekelo in the Netherlands in October at four-star level ridden by Allie Knowles. The bay Hanoverian gelding (Comte x Estefania) was the highest-placing American horse and helped the Defender U.S. Eventing Team secure fourth as a nation.

"Whatever they're going to do in life, I feel like this is such a great experience for them," Birtcil, a YEH West Coast veteran, said. "It's so nice because the atmosphere is that of an FEI event, but it's so calm and quiet. We joke all weekend that this is the best show all year. You get to just come and bring a couple horses and focus on these young horses. You really take your time with them, and you put all your energy and effort into them."

Here's the field for 2026:

5-YEAR-OLDS

CARNUS GiH | Grey Hanoverian Gelding (Cornet de Semilly x St. Pr. Santana)
Rider: Erika Perez Owner: Erika Perez Breeder: Gestut im Hofbruch
The Oregon-based pair of Erika Perez and Carnus GiH finished third in the USEA YEH 4-Year-Old West Coast Championship in 2025. In 2026, they've been reserve champions in the Area VII Novice Amateur Championship held at Equestrians' Institute in Washington. They moved up to Training and finished third at the Twin Rivers Fall International in their next event. His sire, Cornet de Semilly, who is only 11 years old, combines two of the most highly regarded jumping breeding lines in the world—Cornet Obolensky as his sire and Diamant de Semilly as his damsire. Out of the dam Santana, Carnus GiH is a half-brother to Grato GiH (by Grey Top), an FEI show jumper in Germany and Belgium.

CHAMPAGNE AND SUNSHINE | Bay Trakehner x TB Mare (Cassio's Picasso x Real Bubbles)
Rider: James Alliston Owner: Shannon Harger Breeder: Deirdre Harger
The dam of Champagne and Sunshine, Real Bubbles, is a former racehorse that evented up to Preliminary with Shannon Harger. Harger then bred her to Cassio's Picasso, on whom James Alliston won at Intermediate. That foal, Champagne and Sunshine, is now being produced by Alliston. They began competing in USEA-recognized events in May 2026. They've completed two events at Novice and two at Training, most recently finishing on their dressage score of 33.5 in sixth place at the Woodside Fall International.

CAPE FEAR | Bay Westphalian Gelding (Crumble x Sweet City Woman)
Rider: Sarah Cullum Owner: Sarah Cullum Breeder: Elizabeth Callahan
Cape Fear and Sarah Cullum won the 5-year-old YEH qualifier at Shepherd Ranch in June. That was the first YEH event in which Cullum, who has evented for more than two decades, has ever competed. They also won a Future Event Horse class at Shepherd Ranch when Cape Fear was a yearling in 2022.

DOS MBF ENDEAVOUR | Bay Irish Sport Horse Gelding (HHS Cornet x DOS Kono)
Rider: Teresa Harcourt Owner: Steve Harcourt Breeder: Dennis Sullivan
In 2025, Andrea Baxter referred to DOS MBF Endeavour as her "underdog" in the USEA YEH West Coast Championships, and they finished sixth of 13 in the 4-Year-Old Championship. Teresa Harcourt took over the ride in competitions in the summer and most recently finished second in the 5-year-old qualifier held at the Twin Rivers Fall International.

EARNED EFFORT | Bay Oldenburg Gelding (Escher x Katie D)
Rider: Anna Collier Owner: Anna Collier Breeder: Anna Collier
Anna Collier and Earned Effort were the USEA YEH 4-Year-Old West Coast Champions in 2025. Collier competed his dam, Katie D, up to the Intermediate and three-star levels and bred her to the young Hanoverian stallion Escher to produce Earned Effort. "Everybody at the barn absolutely adores him," Collier said. "The joke is if he lets you measure his ears, you can measure them. They're over eight and a half inches long, and I think they've gotten bigger. I have to have a special bonnet and tie it on. The Germans always say the larger the ears, the smarter the horse."

MA MA'S SO CHIC | Black Hanoverian Mare (So Unique x Daphina Sally)
Rider: Andrea Baxter Owner: Andrea Baxter Breeder: Mareike Leers-Schreiber
Ma Ma's So Chic was bred in Germany and has dressage breeding lines. Her sire, So Unique, is a young stallion by Sezuan, the sire of approximately 20 Grand Prix dressage horses. Her dam, Daphina Sally, goes back to Sandro Hit, the sire of more than 100 Grand Prix dressage horses. However, the dam has also produced 6-year-old FEI eventer MaMa's Daily Pleasure (by Diacontinus). Before joining Andrea Baxter's string of promising young horses based at Twin Rivers just this month, Ma Ma's So Chic was produced by Alina Dibowski and competed in young horse classes in Germany.

NITE CAP | Chestnut Hanoverian Gelding (Contenda x Happy Hour)
Rider: Katherine Robinson Owner: Linda Paine
Katherine Robinson calls Nite Cap "a good egg." Their score of 92.15% when winning the 5-year-old qualifier at the Twin Rivers Fall International is the highest 5-year-old YEH qualifying score in the country in 2026. They then won Beginner Novice at the Woodside Fall International on their dressage score of 18.8.

RAMINO | Bay Oldenburg Gelding (Comme Il Faut x Texana II)
Rider: Amber Birtcil Owner: Cellar Farm Corp. Breeder: Michael Heitmann
Ramino and Amber Birtcil were eighth in the 2025 USEA YEH -Year-Old West Coast Championship after posting the highest West Coast qualifying score for 4-year-olds. Imported from the Netherlands, his dam, Texana II, has two offspring that have competed in FEI show jumping at 1.45 meters in Italy. In 2026, "Ray" and Birtcil won Novice at Galway in March and were reserve champions at Training at Caber Farm in Oregon in August. "Ray is always said to be the prettiest one in the barn as he seems to stay incredibly shiny 12 months out of the year," Birtcil said.

RED-RAG VDL | Bay Dutch Warmblood Gelding (Landing VDL x Krealba VDL)
Rider: Amber Birtcil Owner: Cellar Farm Corp. Breeder: VDL Stud
Red-Rag VDL and Amber Birtcil have had a busy 2026 competing in nine USEA-recognized events. The highlights include victories at Beginner Novice at Ram Tap and at Novice at Ram Tap, Twin Rivers, and Caber Farm. Their YEH qualifying score of 89.05% is fifth best in the country among the class of 5-year-olds in 2026. Although Dutch, he has the Spanish barn name of "Rojo" for "red."

RIVALE.T. | Chestnut Dutch Warmblood Gelding (Kallmar VDL x Lady Olytha)
Rider: Amber Birtcil Owner: Cellar Farm Corp. Breeder: M. Terpstra
Imported from the Netherlands, Rivale.T. finished fourth in the 2025 USEA YEH 4-Year-Old West Coast Championship ridden by Amber Birtcil. "Rivy" and Birtcil have blossomed in 2026 and have won blue ribbons in their last two events at Training at Caber Farm in Oregon and at Twin Rivers. "Rivy is

called the child prodigy, as everything seems to come so easy and naturally to him," Birtcil said. His sire, Kallmar VDL, won the CSI4* show jumping winning round at 1.40 meters at Montefalco in Italy in May 2026. His dam, Lady Olytha, has competed in show jumping, dressage, and eventing.

SHARK BITE | Bay North American Warmblood (NAS) Gelding (Jawbreaker x Jolie GP)
Rider: Catie Cejka Owner: Tammy Karplus Breeder: Eye Candy Jumpers
Shark Bite has been competing in Area VII, and Catie Cejka has been a regular in the USEA YEH West Coast Championships coming from Washington. They qualified at Spokane in May and then moved up to Novice, most recently finishing second in the Novice Horse Division at Aspen Farm on their dressage score of 26.8. Shark Bite's sire, Jawbreaker, competed in USHJA Young Jumper classes, including winning at 1.30 meters at Tryon in North Carolina in October 2020 as a 6-year-old.

VIKING VIKO VAN DE DREEF | Black Belgian Warmblood Gelding (Charisto VD Heffnick x Mango Moon Van De Dreef)
Rider: Cellar Farm Corp. Owner: Amber Birtcil Breeder: Ann Berthels
Viking Viko Van De Dreef and Amber Birtcil recorded the second-highest 5-year-old YEH qualifying score in the United States in 2026 with 92.10% when winning at the Twin Rivers Summer Horse Trials. "Viko" is affectionately referred to as "Big Bird" because, Birtcil said, "He has a very fluffy forelock and is built quite uphill." Birtcil acquired him from five-star eventer Matthew Flynn.

VIODOR | Bay Hanoverian Gelding (Vidar x Hauptstutbuch Silbrensil)
Rider: James Alliston Owner: Petey Alliston
Viodor and James Alliston won Open Training at their most recent event at the Woodside Fall International with a dressage score of 19.4 and finishing with 23.4. Viodor is owned by James' mom, Petey Alliston. His sire, Vidar, was fourth in the dressage final for 5-year-olds at the 2019 Bundeschampionat, the German National Championship for young horses and ponies. Now, Viodor will look for success as a 5-year-old in eventing young horse classes in America.

4-YEAR-OLDS

BOGART II | Bay Canadian Warmblood Gelding (Belshazzar x Bonnie CT)
Rider: Andrea Baxter Owner: Brienne French Breeder: Sandra Donnelly
Bogart II, a Canadian Warmblood gelding from Alberta, Canada, will be competing in the United States for the first time. His breeder, Canadian Olympian Sandra Donnelly, rode his sire, Belshazzar. They even competed at Twin Rivers and were reserve champion in the CCI2* (now CCI3*-L) at the 2017 Twin Rivers Spring International. Teenage owner Brienne French events at the Preliminary level with her Zangersheide mare Luxanne Z.

DOMINA WSS | Bay Hanoverian Mare (Dubarry x Funky Diva)
Rider: Ashley Loucks Owner: Katie Ann Blanchard Breeder: Keila Golden
Domina WSS and Ashley Loucks were the earliest in the 2026 USEA YEH 4-Year-Old West Coast Championship field to qualify for the finals with their victory in the qualifier at Spokane in Washington in May. They most recently competed in Spokane's fall show and won at Beginner Novice.

INTO THE WILD | Bay Irish Sport Horse Gelding (Hiello x Flying Love)
Rider: Gabriella Ringer Owner: Gabriella Ringer
Gabriella Ringer competed in her first ever YEH competition when qualifying with Into the Wild at the Twin Rivers Fall International in September. A young rider that's evented for a decade, Into the Wild is just her third competition horse in USEA events, following riding Puddles up to Novice and Get Wild up to Intermediate and three-star. Purchase from Kilkenny International Sport Horses at the beginning of the year, Ringer said, "He is a very brave young horse who absolutely love cross-country. I thought participating in the YEH program would be a great experience for him, so I signed him up for a qualifier. He did great and earned a spot in the championships, so I figured, why not!"

SANTIEGO.O | Bay Dutch Warmblood Gelding (Levi VDL x I Am Nouvelle V&V)
Rider: Amber Birtcil Owner: Cellar Farm Corp.
Amber Birtcil sourced Santiego.O from the Netherlands through Marten Groeneveld, "who sources the majority of my horses," she said. "Santi" debuted at the Twin Rivers Fall International, finishing third in his qualifier. "Santi is known for being the social butterfly, as he loves being friends with all the horses in the barn and is constantly curious to explore new things," Birtcil said.

SYNERGY | Bay Dutch Warmblood Gelding (L Primo x Abkaers Feel Good)
Rider: Anna Stein Owner: Anna Stein Breeder: Dantia Benson
Synergy and Anna Stein had a successful first event together when finishing second in the YEH qualifier at Spokane in September with a score of 84.95%, seventh highest for YEH 4-year-olds in 2026. They also competed in USDF Dressage Breeding Materiale classes at Dressage at Southern California Equestrian Center in July.

WIZMO WARRIOR OMR | Chestnut Belgian Warmblood Stallion (Sandro Boy x Chaccuna Matata)
Rider: James Alliston Owner & Breeder: Oak Meadow Ranch LLC
Wizmo Warrior OMR made his eventing debut with James Alliston with a second-place finish in the YEH qualifier at the Twin Rivers Fall International with a strong score of 91.65%, second highest for the 4-year-old class of 2026. His sire, Sandro Boy, is the sire of more than 20 1.60-meter show jumpers. His dam, Chaccuna Matata, has regal jumper breeding lines as well—by Chacco-Blue and out of a Balou du Rouet dam.

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