



USEA FEH WEST COAST CHAMPIONSHIPS

Putting It All Together at the USEA FEH West Coast Championships at Twin Rivers

October 29, 2022

By Jonathan Horowitz

Paso Robles, CA — It was a case of mistaken identity for chestnut mares that gave a glimpse into the future. Catie Cejka went to school a client's experienced eventing horse this winter but instead grabbed a different chestnut mare. To this point, the rising 4-year-old Canadian Warmblood mare Valiane (Valentino x Joey) had been lightly backed but was not anywhere near the caliber of the horse she thought she would be riding.

"She hadn't been out and handled for six months and was actually able to stay with me for the whole time and trust me," Cejka said.

It was quite a ride, and it's been quite a ride since, culminating in Valiane winning the 2022 USEA Future Event Horse (FEH) West Coast Championship for 4-year-olds ridden and presented by Cejka for owner Barb Hanel on Saturday at Twin Rivers in Paso Robles, Calif. In addition to Valiane, Stacia Lloyd's bay Oldenburg filly Secret Romance (Schwarzenegger x SH Romance) was crowned West Coast champion 3-year-old presented by Chloe Smyth. They joined Friday's FEH winners, Michlynn Sterling's 2-year-old Trakehner filly High And Mighty (Mighty Magic x High Priestess) and Sarah Cullum's Westphalian gelding Cape Fear (Crumble x Sweet City Woman xx), to culminate the biggest field in the history of the USEA FEH West Coast Championships since the event was inaugurated in 2019.

There were a total of 31 yearlings, 2-year-olds, 3-year-olds, and 4-year-olds that presented before FEH championship judges Marilyn Payne from New Jersey and Katie Rocco from Massachusetts. That represented significant growth from the previous USEA FEH West Coast Championships—21 in 2019, 19 in 2020, and 18 in 2021.

For the FEH 4-year-olds, they were judged under saddle and for conformation on Friday and then in the jump chute arena on Saturday. Valiane was fourth heading into the jump chute, and her jumping score of 86.5 jumped them to the win with a final score of 82.6.

Coincidentally, Valiane will continue to learn to event with Cejka and may eventually partner with 16-year-old Hanni Sreenan, the rider of Zena, the horse Cejka mixed up with Valiane in the winter.

"Hopefully, she might be the kid's move-up move-up horse, or I might get to ride her," Cejka said. "I think they're a little shocked with how well she's doing."

Arnell Sporthorses' Dutch Warmblood gelding Nicolai Van De Heering (Hernandez TN x Candy D) ridden by Bec Braitling was second with a score of 81.2. Emilie Melnychuk's Dutch Warmblood gelding Handsome Boy (Hardwell x Walykes) was third with a score of 78.5. Katrina Rivas' Temptress Of Love,

an Irish Sport Horse and Canadian Warmblood cross that finished fourth, won the Born In America Award presented to the highest-scoring American-bred horse.



Valiane. Tina Fitch Photography.

For the FEH 3-year-olds, they were presented in-hand and at-liberty for judging their conformation and gaits before going through the jump chute. Secret Romance was the only entrant to score in the 80s for both conformation and jumping and finished on a final score of 81.3.

“When the pandemic started, I decided to look for something really nice,” owner Lloyd said. “I could not afford a 3- or 4-year-old going. So, I saw her baby pictures, and I ended up purchasing her at 9 months old.”

A lot of factors went into choosing Secret Romance, according to Lloyd.

“Beautiful head, very uphill movement, her dam’s pictures were beautiful,” she said. “I didn’t know a lot about the bloodlines, but I liked the dark bay, and I like mares especially. And, the name just seemed to be a good name. So, I went with it.”

The good feeling paid off, with Secret Romance steadily improving each of the three times she has competed in FEH events at Twin Rivers in 2022.

“At the beginning of the year, she was wild when I brought her for the first time,” Lloyd said. “She’s not a very confident lady, and the second time showed some improvement. I was really impressed with her how she handled herself, and I was just hoping for the best really.”

Lauren Salgueiro’s Oldenburg filly Carolina Comet W.E. (Rabble Rouser x Comet Swinger) finished second with a score of 76.8. Megan Bittle’s American Warmblood filly Nevadas Ember BDF, who was fourth as a 2-year-old in the 2021 USEA FEH West Coast Championships, finished third as a 3-year-old in 2022 with a score of 76.2.



From right to left, Secret Romance with owner Stacia Lloyd, handler Chloe Smyth, FEH judge Marilyn Payne, and FEH judge Katie Rocco. Tina Fitch Photography.

The Jockey Club Thoroughbred Incentive Program award for the highest-scoring Thoroughbred in the 2022 USEA FEH West Coast Championships went to Gemma-Cieli Richards' Tappington (Eddington x Tap the Till), a 2-year-old chestnut gelding that was race training at Golden Gate Fields as recently as last month.

The FEH competition had people at Twin Rivers not only excited about the future for the talented young horses but also for future of the FEH series.

“We’re thrilled with how this program is growing on the West Coast and look forward to what’s in store for the future,” said Connie Baxter, organizer of events at Twin Rivers.

2022 USEA FEH West Coast Champions

FEH-4: Valiane (82.6)

FEH-3: Secret Romance (81.3)

FEH-2: High And Mighty (78.3)

FEH-Yearling: Cape Fear (87.6)

Links [Results](#) | [Website](#)

Sponsors and Volunteers

Twin Rivers is proud to host the 2022 Dutta Corp. USEA Young Event Horse (YEH) and Future Event Horse (FEH) West Coast Championships with generous support from sponsors.

Presenting sponsors for the season include: [LEGIS Equine](#), horsemen insuring horsemen, [Auburn Labs](#), manufacturers of the adaptogenic APF Formula for horses, people and dogs; [Best Western PLUS Black Oak](#), which offers exclusive discounts for exhibitors; and [Professional's Choice](#), manufacturers of sports medicine boots for equine athletes.

Supporting sponsors include: [Chubby Cov](#), makers of beautiful custom stock ties; [Riding Warehouse](#), the horse gear and apparel supplier; [RevitaVet](#), a leader in preventative maintenance and rehabilitative infrared therapy devices; and [Devoucoux](#), saddle makers dedicated to the partnership between horse and rider.

For sponsorship opportunities, please contact Christina Gray of Gray Area Events at Christina@grayareaevents.com.

Volunteers play a major part of events at Twin Rivers. Twin Rivers' generous volunteer incentive program includes vouchers for show stabling and credits for schooling between events at the beautiful 500-acre venue. That is in addition to the genuine appreciation of the Baxter family and the entire Twin Rivers team. To sign up, please visit www.twinrivershorsepark/volunteer.

Connect with Twin Rivers

Location: 8715 N. River Road, Paso Robles, CA. 93446

Email: info@twinrivershorsepark.com

Website: www.twinrivershorsepark.com

Volunteer: www.twinrivershorsepark/volunteers

Show Photographer: [Ride On Photo](#)

Show Photographer: [Ride On Video](#)

Facebook: [Twin Rivers Ranch, Equestrian Events](#)

Instagram: [TwinRivers2020](#)