

Haley Rises to Top at **EAP** National Training Session

This hometown rider impresses the judges with her riding skills and knowledge of horsemanship.

Article and Photos
By Tricia Booker

Observers on the first day of the United States Hunter Jumper Association Emerging Athletes Program National Training Session may not have guessed that the young rider working diligently on the flat with a challenging gray horse would be the overall winner.

But Kate Haley's patience and compassion with her borrowed mount, Calido Too, Nov. 19-21 at the Buffalo Therapeutic Riding Center, didn't go unnoticed. And when combined with a solid score on the written test, an exemplary assessment in the stable, and one of four double-clear performances in the culminating Nations Cup competition, she stood out among the top 12 invited to the program "finals."

"We were impressed by Kate overall," says clinician and Olympic gold medalist Peter Wyld. "Her skill and determination to succeed impressed us, along with her abilities with the horse she had to ride and her anchor position on the team in the Nations Cup."

For her accomplishment, Haley, 18, of Orchard Park, New York, received 30 days of advanced training from an approved trainer, \$3,000 from Dover Saddlery to purchase show clothes and a place in the George H. Morris Horse-



Kate Haley's consistent performances aboard Calido Too, horsemanship skills and equestrian knowledge combined to help her top the USHJA Emerging Athletes Program National Training Session.

mastership Training Clinic in Wellington, Florida, in January.

"I'm surprised and excited to win this," says Haley, who trains with Chrissie Hanon. "Everyone here is so good, and it's steep competition. This experience was wonderful and an incredible opportunity to work with and learn from such great horsemen."

Anna Hallene, 18, of Hinsdale, Illinois, who trains with Beth and Pete Kennedy, also made an impression and garnered the second George H. Morris Horsemastership spot available to riders in the EAP National Training Session.

"Anna has improved tremendously over the course of the Level I, II and III clinics," says EAP co-chairman Melanie Smith Taylor. "She's a thinker and carried what she's learned through to here."

Despite having another of the more challenging mounts—a horse that Wylde repeatedly got on, in an effort to help her—Hallene kept a positive attitude and concentrated on improving herself and her horse. After a four-fault score in the first round of the Nations Cup, Hallene made some adjustments and finished with a superb clear round.

"The most challenging part for me was trying to figure out how to ride my horse's canter," she says. "I had to adapt to a very different ride. But the tips from Mindy [Bower] helped me ride him, and when combined with the things I learned from Peter, all that helped me figure him out. And to feel it all come together today was so rewarding."

The Nuts And Bolts

Haley and Hallene were among the 12 finalists to qualify for the EAP National Training Session from a pool of 200 riders who entered the 2010 Level I training sessions around the country. The finalists, who qualified after attending a Level II session, traveled to the BTRC, where hostess Susie Schoellkopf provided horses owned by BTRC, clients, fellow trainers and friends.

Throughout the EAP National Training Session, the riders were judged on their

riding skills, as well as their horsemanship in the barn and in the ring, and a written exam. EAP Committee members Taylor, Julie Winkel, Sally Ike and Kathy Moore evaluated the riders and met each day with the clinicians to analyze the competitors and, finally, to select the overall winner.

The riders drew their horses from a pool of mounts—hunters, jumpers and lesson horses—capable of comfortably and confidently jumping 3'6". With a variety of types of horses, colors, abilities and quirks, it was up to each rider to adapt to his or her horse and work with Wylde and the other clinicians to develop the best partnership possible within a relatively short amount of time.



Mindy Bower taught natural horsemanship techniques.

Days 1 and 2 included flatwork and over-fences training sessions with Wylde, natural horsemanship sessions with Mindy Bower, stable management lessons with Jennifer Alfano and veterinary instruction from Drs. Midge Leitch and Christopher "Kit" Miller.

Alfano, the stable manager for Schoellkopf's SBS Farms, oversaw the morning barn chores, and each rider was responsible for the care and oversight of his or her horse during the program.

In her introduction, Alfano stressed the importance of caring for the horse in the barn. "They'll only give back to you what you give to them," she notes. "I know my horses really well, and that, to me, is most important. To build a relationship with your horse is the most rewarding aspect of this sport."

With a tight schedule it was difficult

for riders to spend extra time with their horses, but some made the extra effort, hand-walking their horses during breaks and arriving at BTRC prior to the 7 a.m. scheduled barn chores to groom or braid their horses.

On the first day, the riders spent most of their time on the flat and on small gymnastic lines, figuring out their horses' styles, stride length, biting preferences and how they liked to be ridden. Wylde got on a few horses, including Haley's Calido Too, so that he could show as well as tell the riders what he was asking them to do.

They also spent substantial time with Bowers, working on natural horsemanship techniques from the ground. Their goals included having the horses lighten their forehands and become more supple for a better-balanced and more responsive horse in the tack.

The Pressure is On

In preparation for the culminating Nations Cup, the riders had a practice jog in front of the veterinary panel, with instruction from Miller and Leitch on how best to present the horses.

The competitors were grouped into three teams of four riders, complete with a chef d'equipe, and the official draw for the order of go was held the previous evening during the EAP reception.

Then it was time to put all of the preparation into action on Sunday morning with a Nations Cup course run under Fédération Equestre Internationale rules, complete with a countdown clock and formal announcing from Alltech FEI World Equestrian Games announcer Brian Lookabill. The show atmosphere affected some of the horses, so riders had the added challenge of soothing frazzled mounts while also containing their own butterflies.

Clinicians and EAP Committee members observed the riders in the barn, schooling area and in the ring, where they evaluated their riding skills, knowledge and understanding of their horse, preparation, performance under pressure and teamwork.

Team Idle Dice (Michael Kocher, Alexandra Cornish, Dani Beavers, Kate Haley), with chef d'équipe Sally Ike, won the Nations Cup with 0 faults over the two-round competition. Riders Kocher and Haley jumped double-clear rounds to lead their team to victory.

"The nerves today kicked in, especially being the anchor rider, but you have to learn to deal with those," says Haley. "It keeps you a little sharper when you're nervous. Handling that today was hard for me."

"Kate rode beautifully today," says Taylor. "She's smart and focused in the ring and a real competitor."

Behind the scenes, Haley also impressed Alfano. "She did a wonderful job in the barn. I could hire her to work in my barn. I think she understands how the care of the horse carries over to the performance in the ring," she says.

Team Calypso (Paul Frederick, Lauren DiTallo, Morgan Geller, Natalie Crane), with chef d'équipe Kathy Moore, placed second with 4 faults, while Team Gem Twist (Taylor Adams, Anna Hallene, Melena Smith, Alexa Anthony), with chef d'équipe Jennifer Alfano, placed third with 8 faults.

Geller and Crane also produced impressive double-clear performances over the course designed by Chrystine Jones Tauber and based on the Nations Cup course from the 1997 Washington (D.C.) International Horse Show, which was designed by Richard Jeffery.

"I actually thought the course was just perfect," says Wylde. "It wasn't too difficult. It could be ridden very well. There were some subtle parts of the course. If you didn't do it well, it sort of blew up in your face, but if you did do it well, it was a Sunday in the park."

Throughout the weekend, Taylor and Wylde both stressed the importance of the written test and the fact that acquiring knowledge in the sport isn't just about time in the saddle—it comes from time in the barn and in the books, too. On Sunday, prior to the Nations Cup course walk, Taylor returned the riders' written tests and reviewed the answers with them.



Peter Wylde instructed the training session riders.

Frederick, a 21-year-old student at the Savannah (Georgia) College of Art and Design, earned the highest score of 95 on the 50-question written test and received a special award from Taylor.

"I was disappointed with several test scores," admits Taylor. "This test is part of the evaluation, and it's really to help motivate you so you can see how much there is to learn. You can be the best rider out there, but if you fail the written test, you're just not going to be the winner here. It's too important. I don't expect anybody to get 100, but it's important for you to know who came before you and paved the way for you to enjoy the sport."

Parents and auditors were also included in the educational and entertainment aspects of the clinic. Aimee Ritter, a 15-year-old rider from Anchorage, Alaska, traveled to Buffalo with her father to audit and have a post-event lesson with Alfano.

"I went to the Level I clinic in Palmer, Alaska, and just fell in love with the program," says Ritter. "I watched the Level II program in Bend, Oregon, with Melanie and Callan Solem, and it was great. Then my dad was like, 'Do you want to go to Buffalo?' So seeing all of this, meeting Peter Wylde, is just fantastic. I've learned so much just watching these nice horses and nice riders, and you see what you have to know to get to this level."

During the Saturday night reception, the teams were auctioned off in a Calcutta led by "auctioneer" Lookabill. Team Calypso brought the highest bid of \$1,200, and \$3,350 was raised in the auction. In a generous action, the winning bidders donated their portions of the proceeds back to the EAP to finance the program expenses.

Throughout the weekend, clinicians and EAP Committee members encouraged questions and dialog among the riders, auditors and parents, and a feeling of camaraderie and friendship developed among the participants, adding to the educational component. Taylor's dedication to the program was readily apparent, as was her encouragement for all who strive to continue expanding their knowledge in horses and horsemanship.

"I'm passionate about developing horsemen and not just riders," Taylor says. "This program has provided our industry with an opportunity to make that happen. This isn't a riding competition; it's all about finding the complete horseman who can ride well and take care of the horse in the barn. For me, the horsemanship and care of the horse is really what's most important in the big picture. So, I'm very proud of the young people that this program has attracted, and I'm very proud of how they have represented this program in their actions and riding and performance here."

Meet the **EAP** Riders

Taylor Adams

Age: 16

Hometown: Dallas, Texas

Trainer: Celine Burch

EAP Horse: Bob, owned by Buffalo Therapeutic Riding Center

Equestrian background:

Adams is a horse owner, rider, student and enthusiast. She rides and trains most every day and shows an average of two weeks each month. Adams is a working student for her trainer, Celine Burch, and often teaches lessons to beginners. She rides at least four horses per day, owning two and leasing one, along with helping to train others. She has experience working with farriers and veterinarians along with daily care for 20-plus horses. Adams enjoys working with all horses, from young spunky greenies to schoolmasters.

Extracurricular activities: Adams is in the top 5 percent of the class of 2012 at Highland Park High School and had a 4.43 GPA as a sophomore. She's in the National Junior Honor Society (2008), the HPHS HiLites Service Organization, the KLife Youth Ministries and Bible Study, and is the Children's Cancer Fund Volunteer Chairman (2009-10). She received the Bradfield Bronco Citizen Award Recognizing Top Academic and Citizen Achievement, and is in the Talented and Gifted Program Advanced Academic Program.



Alexa Anthony

Age: 17

Hometown: Redmond, Washington

Trainer: Cara Anthony

EAP Horse: Parcival, owned by Rachel Kinney

Equestrian background:

Anthony began riding when she was 4 years old.

Since then, she's been an active member of the Washington State Hunter Jumper Association and is a member of the Junior Com-



mittee. Within her committee position, she's responsible for raising money to help send junior riders to medal finals. By offering this financial assistance, the association helps to promote and aid more West Coast riders who wish to compete nationally. Currently, Anthony shows in the junior hunter division on sales horses for her mom and in the 3'6" medal classes.

Extracurricular activities: Anthony has participated in sports such as soccer, basketball and track.

Dani Beavers

Age: 19

Hometown: Argyle, Texas

Trainer: Matt Cyphert

EAP Horse: Scandal, owned by Meredith Lipke

Equestrian background:

In order for Beavers to buy her first horse, her parents told her she would have to pay for half. When Beavers was 9 she got her first job mucking stalls for \$1.75 a stall. After two summers she had the money she needed, and to this day Beavers has the same drive and attitude toward horses and her job. Currently, Beavers manages her family barn. She's in charge of supplies, care of horses and maintenance. She also competes in at least one to two AA-rated shows a month in the low amateur-owner jumper division. Beavers is focused on learning, and she'll hack and school horses for her trainers hoping to gain as much experience and mileage as possible.

Extracurricular activities: Beavers is a National Merit Scholar, a member of the National Honor Society and volunteers with Habitat For Humanity.



Alexandra Cornish

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Age: 16

Hometown: Chico, California

Trainer: Benson Carroll



EAP Horse: Cicero, owned by Lindsay Cornell

Equestrian background: Cornish would love to become a professional rider in the future. Currently, she competes in the 3'6" equitation and medal classes as well as in the jumper divisions. She began home schooling in the sixth grade to allow her to commit the necessary amount of time to her horses. She works hard at her family's barn, cleaning stalls, grooming, riding, feeding and overseeing the daily responsibilities.

Extracurricular activities: Cornish carries a 4.0 GPA and has been on the honor role for the past three years. She'll graduate from high school one year early. She also volunteers with her family at the Jesus Center.

Natalie Crane

Age: 18

Hometown: South Dartmouth, Massachusetts

Trainer: Kathryn Fletcher

EAP Horse: Becoming, owned by Lydia Ulrich

Equestrian background:

Crane has concentrated on the equitation division during her riding career. She's qualified for the Platinum Performance/USEF Talent Search, the Pessoa/USEF Medal and ASPCA Maclay finals the past few years. Last summer, Crane began competing in jumper classes and quickly became intrigued with learning another aspect of equestrian sports.

Extracurricular activities: Crane assists at the Schwartz Center with special-needs children, participates in drama and musical productions and performed in the 2009 American High School Theater Festival in Edinburgh, Scotland. She also volunteers her time at a therapeutic riding center.



Lauren DiTallo

Age: 17

Hometown: Long Grove, Illinois

Trainer: Laura Stern

EAP Horse: Shrek, owned by Valerie Hoban

Equestrian background:

DiTallo has been riding for



12 years and competing on the A-rated circuit since she was 8. She's shown in a variety of classes and currently competes in the low junior jumper division. DiTallo's primary passion is working with young horses and breaking babies. Since 2008, DiTallo has worked as an intern for trainer and judge Julie Winkel. In the future, DiTallo hopes to own her own barn and become a successful grand prix and hunter rider.

Extracurricular activities: DiTallo was a member of the Student Council 2008-2009.

Paul Frederick

Age: 21

Hometown:

Savannah, Georgia

Trainer: Ron Danta

EAP Horse: S & L

Clever, owned by Sam Wright

Equestrian background: Frederick grew up riding at the grassroots

level, and he quickly made it a goal to ride and train with the best in the industry. As a junior, he taught at local barns in Virginia and Florida and managed his own small hunter show series. Since then, Frederick has ridden with numerous trainers and gathered many more experiences with all levels of horses. He currently attends the Savannah College of Art and Design and competes on their intercollegiate team. Frederick also rides and shows with Ron Danta and Danny Robertshaw.

Extracurricular activities: Frederick volunteers around Georgia as a freelance stylist, and his work has been seen in the pages of *The South* Magazine as well as in student films and photo shoots. Frederick has made the Dean's List every quarter at SCAD and maintains a 3.96 GPA. In 2008, Frederick received the USHJA Affiliate ANRC Collegiate Amateur Rider Award and the Ronald C. Warranch award for most IHSA points combined with the highest GPA. Since high school, he's volunteered with civic organizations, 4-H, and the SCAD Equestrian Team on projects such as river clean-ups, making blankets for the Linus Project, and



Doggy Days in the Park for Savannah ASPCA, as well as working closely with Danny and Ron's Rescue.

Morgan Geller

Age: 16

Hometown: Manhattan Beach, California

Trainer: Peter Lombardo

EAP Horse: Elmo, owned by Heather Heberle

Equestrian background: Geller currently competes in

A-rated shows in the equitation and medal classes, and most of her free time is spent riding or showing. Due to the long commute to her trainer's barn, Geller keeps her two horses near her home and cares for them herself. Through this arrangement, she's learned firsthand what's involved in keeping horses, including feeding, grooming, daily exercise and dealing with injuries.

Extracurricular activities: Geller is serious about her schoolwork and takes AP and honors classes in a variety of subjects. She's on her school's varsity soccer team and participates in the Interscholastic Equestrian League. Geller has been successful in IEL, winning her division almost every year.



Kate Haley

Age: 18

Hometown: Orchard Park, New York

Trainer: Chrissie Hannon

EAP Horse: Calido Too, owned by Sandy Wolf

Equestrian background: Haley began riding nine years ago and has been competing regularly since then. At the barn

and on the road, Haley is a working student for her trainer and assists in all aspects of horse care, riding and training. When Haley isn't at a show, she has a variety of tasks at the farm, most often cleaning stalls, feeding and helping out with summer camps.



Extracurricular activities: Haley played on the Orchard Park Youth Basketball league from 1997-2007 and played Intramural Floor Hockey. She's been on her school's Honor Roll every marking period since 2002. She received the Outstanding Achievement in Spanish Award in 2007 and the President's Scholastic Achievement Award in 2006. In her spare time, Haley volunteers at the Buffalo Therapeutic Riding Center.

Anna Hallene

Age: 18

Hometown: Hinsdale, Illinois

Trainer: Beth and Pete Kennedy

EAP Horse: Trueman, owned by Buffalo Therapeutic Riding Center

Equestrian background: Hallene began riding at age 7 after persistently petitioning

her parents. She started with weekly lessons at a local barn and is now an active competitor on the A-rated show circuit in the children's/adult jumpers and the 3'6" equitation and medal classes. She's currently working at Stanley Luke Farm, where she gives lessons to beginners as well as teaching basic horsemanship. To help pay for board and lessons, Hallene helps her trainers at horse shows.

Extracurricular activities: Hallene is in the top 10 percent of her high school class with a 5.1 GPA on a 4.0 scale. During her freshman year Hallene was named "Young Scholar" in her school's Young Scholar Program, which recognizes freshmen students with a 5.0 or better GPA. Hallene has made the Dean's List Honor Roll every semester in high school, is fluent in Spanish and plays the piano.



Michael Kocher

Age: 17

Hometown: Lynn, North Carolina

Trainer: Kelly Kocher

EAP Horse: Lady Liberty, owned by Buffalo Therapeutic Riding Center

Equestrian background:



The son of a professional rider, Kocher has trained and worked with horses his entire life. He's currently working in his brother's barn in Alabama where he helps with all aspects of the farm, from mucking stalls and unloading hay to showing horses to customers and preparing them for shows. He funds his own showing expenses through body clipping and shipping horses. Kocher shows in the low junior jumpers and junior hunter divisions and has also competed in the 3'6" equitation.

Extracurricular activities: Kocher was a letterman on his varsity soccer team in 2009, and as of December 2009 he was ranked fourth overall in his class. He's also a member of the National Honor Society.

Melena Smith

Age: 17

Hometown: Mahopac, New York

Trainer: Carla Sacco

EAP Horse: Nadal, owned by Buffalo Therapeutic Riding Center

Equestrian

background: During

her nine years of

riding, Smith has rid-

den numerous horses for her trainer and

helped train many of them for the show

ring. To offset showing expenses, Smith

is often found on the braiding stool. When

she's not showing, Smith often attends

shows to watch and help out wherever

she's needed. Smith volunteers her time

at the We Will Ride therapeutic riding

center and helps to manage the horses

and teach. She also volunteers at the

New England Equine Practice, an equine

veterinary hospital in Patterson, New

York, where she shadows veterinarians

and helps in the clinic and assists with

surgeries.

Extracurricular activities: Smith is an

honors student and has been on High

Honor Role since sixth grade. She's an AP

Scholar, earning a 3 or higher on three

AP examinations. Smith is also involved

in the Math Team, Spanish Club and the

Spanish Honor Society.

