

A Little Faith Pays Off For Pielet At Adequan FEI North American Youth Championships

The young show jumper earns junior individual gold and leads the Zone 5 team to victory.

STORY AND PHOTOS BY MOLLIE BAILEY

The first time Alexandra Pielet climbed aboard Helene VE, it didn't exactly go well.

"I couldn't get a lead change; I couldn't stick the jump. She jumped a cavaletti six feet high; I had every rail," recalled Pielet. "When my

mom and my [then-trainer Molly Ashe Cawley] thought it would be good, I said, 'Are you sure?'"

They were sure, and it's a good thing Pielet listened, because the mare took her from the children's jumpers to her first under-25 grand prix classes.

And during the Adequan FEI North American Youth Championships, held Aug. 1-5 at Old Salem Farm in North Salem, New York, the pair won the USHJA North American Junior Rider Show Jumping Individual Championship, and they anchored Zone 5's junior team to gold to boot.

"I never really had high expectations for us," said Pielet, 17. "But the bigger the jumps got, the more she kept jumping her heart out, and the more comfortable she was. To be here to get two gold [medals]—I was just crying earlier. I can't believe it happened! It just seems like a dream. My goal is to always do my best and put in clear rounds, especially for my team because I didn't want to let my teammates down. Luckily I was able to stay strong, and it means a lot coming to a championship and having all my work I've done all year pay off." Pielet claimed her individual gold

Alexandra Pielet fulfilled a major dream when she rode Helene VE to double junior gold at the Adequan FEI North American Youth Championships.



over Elli Yeager on Waliba VDL, with Puerto Rico's Claudia Villamil and Quite Close VD Smis earning bronze. Helene VE lives with Pielet's trainer

Andre Dignelli at his Katonah, New York, Heritage Farm, and Pielet makes the trek from Highland Park, Illinois, to train. At home



ADEQUAN FEI NORTH AMERICAN YOUTH CHAMPIONSHIPS North Salem, N.Y.—Aug. 1-5

► \$75,000 USHJA YOUNG RIDER INDIVIDUAL CHAMPIONSHIP

HORSE/RIDER/NATION/ZONE	ROUND 1	ROUND 2	ROUND 3	ROUND 4	ROUND 5	TOTAL
1. Great White/Daisy Farish/USA/4, 5	0	0	4	0	0	4
2. Carmen/Samantha Cohen/USA/2	1.14	0	4	0	0	5.14
3. Durosa W/McKayla Langmeier/USA/1	2.28	0	0	4	0	6.28
4. Prestigious/Madison Goetzmann/USA/2	3.57	0	0	4	0	7.57
5. Baloucento 2/Ailish Cunniffe/USA/2	3.60	4	0	4	0	11.60
6. Market Irminka/Carlos Hank Guerreiro/MEX	5.04	0	4	4	0	13.04

Also competed: 7. River Dance Semilly/J. Gaspar Albanez/MEX, 13.82; 8. Emorkus RE/R. Rombauer/USA/10; 16.18; 9. Qantar Des Etisses/T. St. Jacques/USA/3, 6, 16.58; 10. Chacco's Goldy/N. Dean/USA/10, 19.93; 11. Costa Rica VH Waterschoot Z/S. Hopson/USA/7, 8, 22.51; 12. Dynamo/C. Schreder/USA/1, 22.87; 13. Milan IV/D. Flynn/USA/7, 8, 24.77; 14. All In/K. Strauss/USA/2, 25.09.

Did not compete in round 5: Alaska/S. Lefebvre/CAN; Quick Ardent/A. Gutierrez Diaz/MEX; Ayma De La Demi Lune/H. Loly/USA/10; Just A Jet/H. Alcock/USA/3, 6; Haribo/E. Sargent/USA/3, 6; Caesar A/E. Fitzgerald/CAN. Did not compete in round 4: Chacco Prime/A. Thibault/CAN; Bart C/C. Fath/USA/1; Amadeus/T. DeJong/USA/7, 8; Camilla/S. Leon/CAN; Carjo Z/M. Head/USA/4, 5.

► USHJA YOUNG RIDER TEAM CHAMPIONSHIP

1. USA/Zone 2 (Baloucento 2/A. Cunniffe, Prestigious/M. Goetzmann, Carmen/S. Cohen, All In/K. Strauss), 9.8; 2. USA/Zone 10 (Ayma De La Demi Lune/H. Loly, Emorkus RE/R. Rombauer, Chacco's Goldy/N. Dean, Triskel De Kerliven/H. Zadel), 33.36; 3. MEX (Market Irminka/C. Hank Guerreiro, Davidoff/U. Madariaga Gonzalez, Quick Ardent/A. Gutierrez Diaz, River Dance Semilly/J. Gaspar Albanez), 36.24; 4. CAN (Camilla/S. Leon, Caesar A/E. Fitzgerald, Alaska/S. Lefebvre; Chacco Prime/A. Thibault), 40.13; 5. USA/Zone 1 (Dynamo/C. Schreder; Bart C/C. Fath, Durosa W/M. Langmeier), 46.23; 6. USA/Zone 7, 8 (Amadeus/T. DeJong, Costa Rica VH Waterschoot/S. Hopson, Milan IV/D. Flynn), 63.32.

Did not qualify for round 2: USA/Zone 3, 6 (Haribo/E. Sargent, Just A Jet/H. Alcock, Elonie/B. Ruziska, Qantar Des Etisses/T. St. Jacques). Eliminated: USA/Zone 4, 5 (Analyze This/T. Korotkin, Carjo/M. Head, Great White/D. Farish).

► \$50,000 USHJA JUNIOR INDIVIDUAL CHAMPIONSHIP

HORSE/RIDER/NATION/ZONE	ROUND 1	ROUND 2	ROUND 3	ROUND 4	ROUND 5	TOTAL
1. Helene VE/Alexandra Pielet/USA/5	5.36	0	0	0	0	5.36
2. Waliba VDL/Elli Yeager/USA/4	2.80	1	0	0	8	11.8
3. Quite Close VD Smis/Claudia Villamil/PUR	0	4	4	0	4	12
4. Pippi/Emma Kurtz/USA/5	8.03	4	0	0	0	12.03
5. Puertas So What/Martina Franco Stephan/MEX/West	5.01	0	4	4	0	13.01
6. Charly/Madison Hildermann/CAN	9.09	0	1	0	4	14.09

Also competed: 7. Coralissa/S. Walker/CAN, 14.68; 8. Dirkie Z/P. Matthies/USA/5, 15.51; 9. Rembrandt Blue/C. Casas/USA/5, 17.01; 10. Comtesa/K. Perez Nunez/MEX/East, 17.37; 11. Diazella/A. Bereznicki/CAN, 17.77; 12. Catoki Boy/J. Quintana Melgoza/MEX/East, 18.29; 13. Qat Kid/M. De la Mora Ramiro/MEX/West, 19.22; 14. Carlos V LS La Silla/M. Denis Chambon/MEX/West, 21.50; 15. Campanula/G. Boston/USA/1, 3, 7, 24.12.

Did not compete in round 5: Think Big Van T L/C. Villanueva/USA/2; Balou's Fly High/I. Russekoff/USA/1, 3, 7; Campari/C. Caddell/USA/10; Why Not/T. Simpson/USA/10; Lara Croft B/A. Bittar/USA/10; Kangano/K. Brewer/USA/10; Q-Two/E. Callanan/USA/2; Cubiki/E. Reichow/USA/10; Enduro/L. Mills Hegewisch/MEX/East. Did not compete in round 4: Ziezo/D. MacTaggart/USA/2.

► USHJA JUNIOR TEAM CHAMPIONSHIP

1. USA/Zone 5 (Rembrandt Blue/C. Casas, Dirkie Z/P. Matthies, Pippi/E. Kurtz, Helene VE/A. Pielet), 17.88; 2. MEX/West (Puertas So What/M. Franco Stephan, La Jovena Cassandra/C. Villa Issa Campos, Qat Kid/M. De la Mora Ramiro, Carlos V LS La Silla/M. Denis Chambon), 28.73; 3. CAN (Diazella/A. Bereznicki, Charly/M. Hildermann, High Jack/A. Krawitt, Coralissa/S. Walker), 34.54; 4. USA/Zone 2 (Think Big Van T L/C. Villanueva, Cortina/C. McInerney, Ziezo/D. MacTaggart, Q-Two/E. Callanan), 39.77; 5. USA/Zone 10 (Cubiki/E. Reichow, Why Not/T. Simpson, Kangano/K. Brewer, Lara Croft B/A. Bittar), 47.80; 6. MEX/East (Trebou De La Nutria/C. Molina Gordillo, Enduro/L. Mills Hegewisch, Catoki Boy/J. Quintana Melgoza, Comtesa/K. Perez Nunez), 54.96.

Did not qualify for Round 2: USA/Zone 4 (Bonita Z/A. Piper, Light Show/J. Jones, Waliba VDL/E. Yeager); USA/Zone 1, 3, 7 (Campanula/G. Boston, Caroquados T/I. Baxter, Balou's Fly High/I. Russekoff).



Zone 5 Chef d'Equipe Alex Warriner joined riders (from left) Charlise Casas, Emma Kurtz, Alexandra Pielet and Paige Matthies to celebrate a win in the USHJA North American Junior Rider Show Jumping Team Championship at the Adequan FEI North American Youth Championships.

► Meet The Zone 5 Junior Horses

► **REMBRANDT BLUE:** 13-year-old Selle Français gelding (Mr. Blue—Historie De Vaux, Super De Bourrière) owned by Always Faithful Equine LLC

► **DIRKIE Z:** 13-year-old Zangersheide gelding (Dutch Capitol—Brioche VH Gehucht Z, Baloubet Du Rouet) owned by Barbara Smith

► **PIPPI:** 9-year-old Hanoverian mare (Perigueux—Goldeney, Gloster) owned by Chagrin Saddlery LLC

► **HELENE VE:** 11-year-old Belgian Warmblood mare (Diamant De Semilly—Tiffany, Skippy II) owned by Co-Pielet LLC



Great rides on Carmen helped Samantha Cohen win young rider individual silver and team gold at the Adequan FEI North American Youth Championships.

she stays fit by working out with a personal trainer, but her main focus is schoolwork, and she's committed to Auburn University (Alabama) for 2019.

In the opening speed round, Pielet and the mare were going for broke when they had a drive-by at the last fence. But they were still quick enough to finish in 11th that day. Pielet continued to fight her way up the leaderboard by staying clean for the next four rounds.

"My horse isn't a very hot horse, so five rounds is a lot for her, especially on [Nations Cup day] when we had the exact same two rounds," said Pielet. "She knew where she was going, and I had to pay extra attention that she wasn't shifting."

Pielet and Helene VE were the only pair to keep a clean sheet on Nations Cup day, which boosted Zone 5's team, comprised of Pielet, Emma Kurtz, 18, on Pippi; Paige Matthies, 17, on Dirkie Z; and Charlise Casas, 17, on Rembrandt Blue, to team gold over Team Mexico West.

"I've known these girls since I was 8 years old, and being able to be on a team with them and being able to compete with them is really special," said Casas, of Chicago.

Kurtz and Matthies, Lake Leelanau, Michigan, were riding relatively new

“I’ve known these girls since I was 8 years old, and being able to be on a team with them and being able to compete with them is really special.”

—CHARLISE CASAS

The Zone 2 young rider squad of (from left) Madison Goetzmann, Samantha Cohen, Ailish Cunniffe and Katherine Strauss credited their Adequan FEI North American Youth Championships win to the cheerleading and wise words of Chef d'Equipe Ralph Caristo.

► Meet The Zone 2 Young Rider Horses

► **BALOUCENTO 2:** 13-year-old Oldenburg gelding (Baloubet Du Rouet—Centin Z, Cento) owned by Elm Rock LLC

► **PRESTIGIOUS:** 11-year-old Westphalian gelding (Con Cento—Iduna VI, Corofino) owned by Madison Goetzmann

► **CARMEN:** 11-year-old Dutch Warmblood mare (Whitesnake—Wanado, Corland) owned by Samantha Cohen

► **ALL IN:** 13-year-old Dutch Warmblood gelding (Aachen—Orlandaise, Indoctro) owned by Katherine Strauss LLC



► Getting Outside Your Comfort Zone

U.S. Youth Chef d'Equipe DiAnn Langer was thrilled that this year's Adequan FEI North American Youth Championships had more interest from show jumping competitors and their support teams than in recent times. She emphasized that adding prize money to two divisions—\$75,000 for young riders and \$50,000 for juniors—added value to potential competitors.

"This year we had more young riders aiming for this competition, and we really got the best of the best," said Langer. "We had an increase in entries, yes, but also an increase in declared horse-and-rider combinations who qualified, and each zone selected their nominees off the top. That's great news."

The United States also accepted an invitation to participate in the inaugural FEI Youth Nations Cup Final in Belgium in September, but they still had to qualify by earning team gold or silver in the young rider division at NAYC. Zones 2 and 10 took those podiums to guarantee the country can field a team.

Langer and the U.S. Developing Rider Chef d'Equipe

Anne Kursinski held several formal and informal forums to discuss the show jumping pathway and to connect with trainers, parents and riders about how to fulfill Olympic dreams.

"Youth is the hot-button topic right now, here in this country, in Canada, with the FEI and with every country in Europe," said Langer. "There's also a children's and junior's Nations Cup final, and we'd like to add those down the road."

Another topic came up in meetings with the younger riders: getting outside the comfort zone.

"You have to compete in deeper pools of talent," said Langer. "I don't care if it's across the country or in Europe. You have to be competing against someone besides your best friend. You have to feel a little uncomfortable because things are different and work through it. Maybe you go to Europe, and no one speaks your language, and the footing in the warm-up isn't the best, but you have to go and get it done anyway. That's how you develop as a rider."

partners, but both came back for the second round and put 0 on the scoreboard.

"I've done a lot of hunters and equitation, and I just started to get into the jumpers, so it's incredible to get here and have such a great result," said Kurtz, Hudson, Ohio.

None of the riders had earned a gold medal in competition before coming to NAYC this year, so the victory tasted extra sweet.

"I have been watching [NAYC] team competition for the last few years. It's always been a goal just to come here, much less to earn gold," said Matthies. "I'm very grateful for that."

Team Mantra Propels Zone 2 To Young Rider Gold

The four riders who climbed atop the USHJA North American Young Rider Show Jumping Team Championship podium had a mantra they say got them there: Do it for Ralph.

Katherine Strauss (All In), 19; Madison Goetzmann (Prestigious), 18; Samantha Cohen (Carmen), 17; and Ailish Cunniffe (Baloucento 2), 21, all said that deferring to Ralph



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▶ Tidbits

▶ With the program now in its second year, children's jumper riders again had the chance to compete at the Adequan FEI North American Youth Championships. The Canadian team of **CHARLOTTE MCLAUGHLIN** (Bronan), **STELLA CHERNOFF** (Filia Van Den Bisschop), **ERIC KRAWITT** (Wellington) and **OLIVIA STEPHENSON** (Chaccana) beat out four other teams for the win, with **STEPHENSON** earning gold in the individual competition after a nail-biting jump-off.

▶ Guatemala fielded its first-ever team at NAYC. Twin sisters **ANA SOFIA RODRIGUEZ** and **ANA CRISTINA RODRIGUEZ** were joined by **VALENTINA ARENAS SARAVIA** to form a children's team. **ARENAS SARAVIA** also finished with the individual children's bronze medal in the competition.

▶ The winning junior Zone 5 squad had a new chef d'equipe this year, and she's perhaps better known for being Kent Farrington's right hand than coaching youth squads: **ALEX WARRINER**.

"Abby Blankenship asked me to do it, and I said yes," said Warriner. "It's a great team of riders with good trainers behind them, so it's a joy to do."

While she used to travel internationally constantly, Warriner now manages Farrington's U.S. operations, which includes the stables of one customer in Newtown, Connecticut, and another of Zone 5 team member **CHARLISE CASAS** outside Chicago.

"All of them rode great, and they were super composed," said Warriner. "Good horses, good rides, and they really fought for it."

▶ **JORJA ROSE JONES** accepted the Captain Andrew B. de Szinay Memorial Sportsman Trophy for the hard work, team spirit and dedication she showed as she competed with the Zone 4 team in the USHJA North American Junior Rider Show



Jorja Rose Jones accepted the Captain Andrew B. de Szinay Memorial Sportsman Trophy for the hard work, team spirit and dedication she showed as she competed with the Zone 4 junior team at the Adequan FEI North American Youth Championships.

Jumping Team Championship.

Jones, Byhalia, Mississippi, takes full care of her mount, **LIGHT SHOW**, and in addition to grooming herself at NAYC she was also an enthusiastic team member and good role model.

▶ As winner of the NAYC individual young rider gold medal at the USHJA North American Young Rider Show Jumping Championships, **DAISY FARISH** had more to take home than a check and plenty of prizes. She was also the recipient of the Maxine Beard Award from the U.S. Equestrian Team Foundation. That award was established to recognize and assist talented young show jumpers in furthering their quest for equestrian excellence on the international stage. Farish received a trip to an international senior Nations Cup competition and will have the chance to observe operations in the show office, stabling, veterinary inspections and schooling, and she'll also walk each course with U.S. team members and the chef d'equipe.

ADEQUAN FEI NORTH AMERICAN YOUTH CHAMPIONSHIPS
North Salem, N.Y.—Aug. 1-5

▶ **USHJA CHILDREN'S INDIVIDUAL CHAMPIONSHIP**

HORSE/RIDER/NATION/ZONE	ROUND 1	ROUND 2	ROUND 3	ROUND 4	ROUND 5	TOTAL
1. Chaccana/Olivia Stephenson/CAN	0	0	0	0	0	0
2. Bronan/Charlotte McLaughlin/CAN	0	0	0	0	0	0
3. Belina/Valentina Arenas Saravia/GUA	0	0	0	0	0	0
4T. Filia Van Den Bisschop/Stella Chernoff/CAN	4	0	0	0	0	4
4T. Cassandra Dreams/Mia Albelo/USA/3, 4, 5, 7	0	0	0	4	0	4
6. Condelo/Ava Wong/CAN	6	1	0	0	0	7

Also competed: 7T. Flashback VDS/C. Mawhinney/USA/10, 8; 7T. True Blue Mate/N. Pedley/PUR; 8; 7T. Wellington/E. Krawitt/CAN, 8; 7T. Santa Rosa Yakarta/S. Menduet Davila/MEX, 8; 11. Chasinta/M. Cardelli/USA/3, 4, 5, 7, 12; 12. Callao/D. Laiken/USA/10, 13. 13T. Santa Rosa G Camille/A. Legorreta Hernandez/MEX, 17; 13T. Stillwater/G. Munson, USA, 3, 4, 5, 7, 17; 15. Suecco De La Nutria/J. Gaspar Albanez/MEX, 21.

*There was a jump-off for the gold medal. Chaccana/Olivia Stephenson/CAN (0/37.31) won over Bronan/Charlotte McLaughlin/CAN (0/38.91) & Belina/Valentina Arenas Saravia/GUA (8/39.62).

▶ **USHJA CHILDREN'S TEAM CHAMPIONSHIP**

1. CAN (Bronan/C. McLaughlin, Filia Van Den Bisschop/S. Chernoff, Wellington/E. Krawitt, Chaccana/O. Stephenson), 0; 2. USA/Zone 3, 4, 5, 7 (Chasinta/M. Cardelli, Cassandro Z/A. Reed, Stillwater/G. Munson, Cassandra Dreams/M. Albelo), 12; 3. MEX (Suecco De La Nutria/J. Gaspar Albanez, Doncella Granth Chief/C. Saad Vega, Santa Rosa G Camille/A. Legorreta Hernandez, Santa Rosa Yakarta/S. Menduet Davila), 20; 4. USA/Zone 10 (Callao/D. Laiken, Flashback VDS/C. Mawhinney, Quintana/N. Cunningham, Hertogin Ter Drie Leien/A. Leong), 21; 5. GUA (Erieda/A. Rodriguez, Zoline/A. Rodriguez, Belina/V. Arenas Saravia), 36.

Caristo, the legendary coach of the Zone 2 squad, helped them keep their focus for gold.

“The last thing he says to you before you go in the ring is: ‘I’m here for you,’” said Cohen. “That and, ‘Go first, finish first.’ I went first yesterday, and Ailish went first today. He was right!”

All four riders were emotional about their win.

“To win a gold medal with this team is an incredible feeling,” said Goetzmann, Skaneateles, New York. “We have great team spirit, and we’ve grown up together. It’s been amazing competing here and adding this to our list of accomplishments and to Zone 2’s accomplishments.”

Historically Zone 2 finds a place on the podium, and the young women were well aware of that legacy.

“There are so many riders who rode for Zone 2 who we all look up to today, like McLain Ward, Georgina Bloomberg, Reed Kessler, and the list goes on,” said Strauss, New York City.

About eight trips into the two-round young rider final, a storm rolled in, prompting a 30-minute delay as competitors waited for the lightning to leave the area and the rain to calm. But it didn’t affect the Zone 2 riders, two of whom had already competed.

“I was still about seven or eight out when they called the delay, and I’d just been flatting,” said Cohen, New York City. “We took her back to the barn, untacked her, and she got to go in her stall and unwind. But I had complete confidence in her to come out and be the same, and she was great.

“We started in the junior jumpers, and she’s always been right there for me,” Cohen added. “She has the biggest heart and always tries for me.”

Cohen came back to jump clean in Round 1 of the team competition, and then ticked her only rail of the week in Round 2. But a pair of clear rounds the next day still earned her young rider individual silver behind Daisy Farish on Great White (see p. 50). 🐾

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