



Canada's gold medal Young Rider team on the podium. From left to right: Sam Walker, Dannie Murphy, Mackenzie Wray, and Samantha Starratt.

GOLD MEDAL FOR CANADIAN YOUNG RIDER TEAM AT NORTH AMERICAN YOUTH CHAMPIONSHIPS

Canada emerged victorious in the Young Rider division at the 2019 Adequan® FEI North American Youth Championships (NAYC), presented by Gotham North, held from July 30 to August 4 at Old Salem Farm in North Salem, NY.

Comprised of Dannie Murphy, 19, of Charlottetown, PE; Samantha Starratt, 20, of Calgary, AB; Sam Walker, 17, of Nobleton, ON; and Mackenzie Wray, 20, of Loretto, ON, the Canadian Young Rider show jumping team came out on top in an extremely competitive field for riders aged 16 to 21.

Walker, who had been a member of Canada's Junior team at the 2018 NAYC, returned to Old Salem Farm with Coralissa, a nine-year-old Holsteiner mare (Com Air x Corrado I) owned by MarBill Hill Farm. Stepping up to the Young Rider division, Walker only incurred a single time fault over the three rounds of team competition to lead Canada to victory. With a final team score of 19.25, Canada took the win over USHJA Zone 10 who had a team total of 22.49 for silver, while USHJA Zone 2 collected the bronze medal with a score of 36.36.

"It was an amazing experience for me; there are not that many people that get to make it on the Canadian team and compete down at Old Salem, so I'm very grateful," said Walker. "My team was phenomenal this year, and we got the team gold, which is the most important to me because this is a team event. I think everybody that came down was a bit nervous, but we handled the pressure really well. We all look forward to a very bright future; we have some great riders for Canada. I'm very, very proud of my team and my horse."

Carrying forward his one time fault, Walker held the lead moving into Sunday's Individual Final where he and Coralissa incurred two rails. With a final score of nine faults, Walker claimed the silver medal while Sophie Gochman of USHJA Zone 2 took the individual gold medal riding Carola BH with a final score of 2.80. USHJA Zone 10's Natalie Dean riding Don's Diamant, a former mount of Canada's Erynn Ballard, earned bronze with a final score of 9.36 faults.

Children's Team Bronze and Individual Silver

Canada also earned two medals in the Children's division for riders aged 12 to 14. In the Team competition, the three-rider team of Olivia Blaber, 14, of Ottawa, ON; Joseph Carruthers, 13, of Millarville, AB; and Olivia Stephenson, 12, of Calgary, AB, earned the team bronze medal despite not having the advantage of a drop score.

Stephenson was the top Canadian performer in the team competition, incurring two time faults over three rounds of competition riding Chaccana, a 12-year-old Oldenburg mare (Chacco-Blue x Kannan) owned by her mother, Cheree Stephenson. The pair then jumped two clear rounds in the Individual Final to claim the silver medal. Mexico's Isaac Parada Urtaza rode Tarnot to a perfect score of zero to earn the individual gold medal while the bronze went to Ella Bikoff of USHJA Zone 2 riding Basidmodo with a final score of five faults.

Junior Team Finishes Fifth

Canada finished fifth in the Junior division, open to riders aged 14 to 18. Mexico earned the team gold medal with a final score of 20.62 over USHJA Zone 2 with a score of 26.81. USHJA Zone 5 earned the bronze medal with a final score of 41.02. Emma Bergeron, 18, of Wellington, FL; Jenna Lee Gottschlich, 16, of Edmonton, AB; Carly Stevens, 16, of Foothills, AB; and Sara Tindale, 17, of Campbellville, ON, posed a final score of 53.28 faults for fifth place.

Gottschlich was the top-placed Canadian, placing eighth in the individual final with a final score of 16.80 riding Evita P, her 10-year-old Dutch Warmblood mare (Vingino x Niveau).

"I want to thank Equestrian Canada for this experience; it has been an amazing opportunity for both my horse and me," said Gottschlich. "It's been great to have a team here. You never feel alone when you're on Team Canada, and you always feel like you're a family."

Dayton Gorsline of Okotoks, AB, was acting as chef d'equipe of the Canadian Team for the first time at the North American Youth Championships.

"For my first time officially in charge, I'm very happy with it all," said Gorsline who recently took over the role formerly held by Beth Underhill. "Even when we didn't medal, the kids improved throughout the week and their results got better and better. I think if you sat here for three or four days and watched, you'd see the nervousness of riding in a team competition and the process of score accumulation each day. It's not just a one-off day, so I think experiences like this are invaluable in this sport because obviously, over the years, we are looking for some of these kids to step up to the big time, and what better place to learn than here against their peers. It was really a fun, nice group of people that helped this year, from the parents to the kids to the trainers and grooms. Having such a great group made it so much easier."



Sam Walker led the Canadian Young Rider team to a gold medal before claiming the individual silver riding Coralissa.



Mackenzie Wray posted scores of four and zero for Canada in the Team Final riding Jewel LVP.



Olivia Stephenson and Chaccana anchored Canada's bronze medal Children's team and also claimed the individual silver medal.



Jenna Lee Gottschlich was the top Canadian in the Junior division finishing eighth individually riding Evita P.