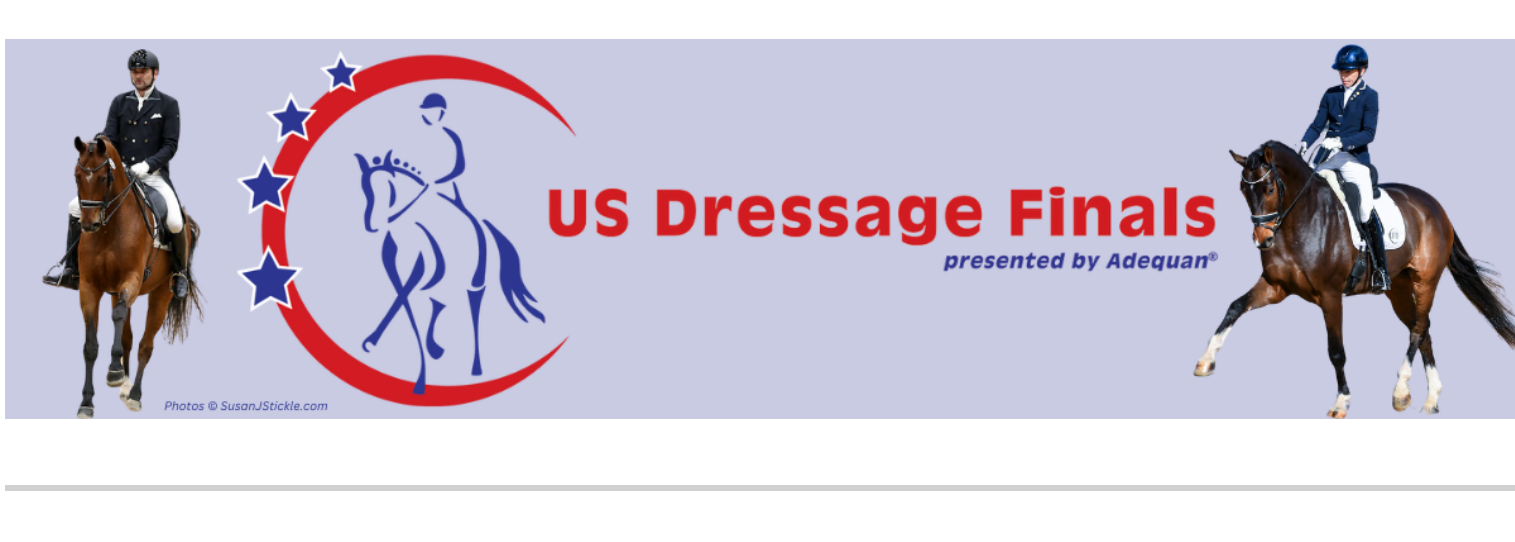




Riders From Aiken Have Magic Touch at 2024 US Dressage Finals Presented by Adequan®

Lexington, KY – Saturday, November 9, heralded the busiest day of the 2024 US Dressage Finals presented by Adequan®, with 14 titles up for grabs from First Level to Grand Prix at the Kentucky Horse Park. The 2024 US Dressage Finals, presented by Adequan® concludes on Sunday, November 10.



Despite Jeremy Steinberg contending with injury, he and his five-year-old Henry topped the Open First Level Championship with 74.583%. **Photo by SusanJStickle.com.**

Injury Almost Stops Play

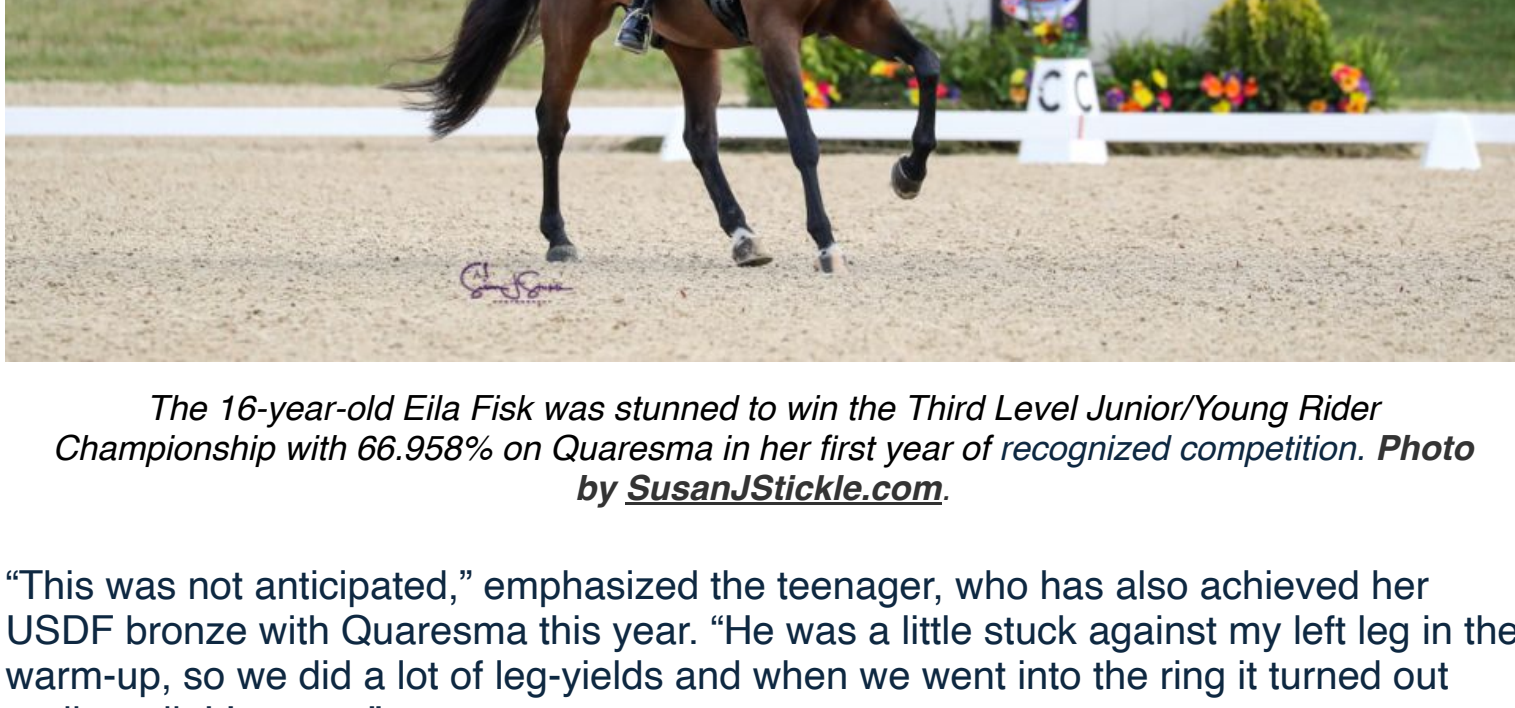
After aggravating a year-old groin injury two weeks before the 2024 Finals, Jeremy Steinberg could not even canter in one direction in his first ride on his five-year-old Henry at the Kentucky Horse Park. But, when it came to crunch-time, Steinberg pulled off a 74.583% winning test in the Open First Level Championship to secure the title.

In a repeat of the result in the class at the Region 1 Championships, Steinberg's friend and student Allison Cyprus finished runner-up with 72.917% on another five-year-old, her own Oceana ISF.

Steinberg bought Henry from the Netherlands as a two-year-old after spotting an online photo of the son of For Final and fell for him.

Teenage High Achiever

Eila Fisk was a little shellshocked after her victory in the Third Level Junior/Young Rider Championship with 66.958% on Quaresma in her first year of recognized competition. Photo by SusanJStickle.com.



The 16-year-old Eila Fisk was stunned to win the Third Level Junior/Young Rider Championship with 66.958% on Quaresma in her first year of recognized competition. **Photo by SusanJStickle.com.**

"This was not anticipated," emphasized the teenager, who has also achieved her USDF bronze with Quaresma this year. "He was a little stuck against my left leg in the warm-up, so we did a lot of leg-yields and when we went into the ring it turned out really well. It's crazy."

A Festival of Friesians

Dancing to powerful warhorse-themed music, Brie Seltser and her gift horse, the six-year-old Friesian Grietinus Fan Hophtille, strutted their way to 70.491% and the Open Second Level Freestyle Championship. Another of Seltser's Friesians, Hylke Van De Klei, finished third on 67.491% with her student Hannah Catsulis in the saddle.



Brie Seltser and her ex-carriage horse, the six-year-old Friesian Grietinus Fan Hophtille, strutted their way to the Open Second Level Freestyle Championship. **Photo by SusanJStickle.com.**

"It's crazy that I'm even here," said Seltser, who trains with Tyra Vernon. "This horse was supposed to be a carriage horse, but it wasn't his thing, and he was given to me. He's been a blessing in my life. I lost my other Friesian who was doing I-1, and 'Friezy' stepped in and now look where we are. He's done so much for my heart, and I've learned so much. What a gift."

Third Time's a Charm

Patricia Hughes has had a winner's blanket firmly in her crosshairs for the past two years, and 2024 was the year in which she made it happen. The young retiree rode her own 18-year-old San Angelo to 72.658% to capture the Second Level Freestyle Championship.



AA Patricia Hughes and her 18-year-old Sandro Hit gelding San Angelo nabbed a winner's blanket on their third Finals try, topping the Second Level Freestyle with 72.658%. **Photo by SusanJStickle.com.**

"This is an unbelievable experience," stated Hughes, who was awarded a nine for the simple change to the left from judge Sarah Geikie. "I was here last year and the year before and all I wanted was this cooler; I've had my mind set on this cooler for three years! I'm thrilled beyond pieces."

Shimmering In Every Way

Nicole Acosta rode the American Warmblood Cali to a 69.042% AA Third Level victory. Cali is a palomino gelding by the cremello stallion Limet Hurry and also carries Akhal-Teke blood, so his coat shimmers.



Nicole Acosta and Cali captured the AA Third Level title with a 69.042% performance. They will now aim for Prix St. Georges level. **Photo by SusanJStickle.com.**

"It was a really fun test," said Acosta, who only started dressage when she bought the now 15-year-old, and they have been learning the ropes together. "He's so obedient and always there for you. We are hoping to do Prix St. Georges next year."

Going Out on a High

AA rider Alexandra Krossen and the 12-year-old Nicene snagged the Fourth Level Freestyle Championship sash with 70.083% — the only plus-70.0 of the class — in what was the mare's last-ever test at the level. Krossen has a hectic schedule at Finals with nine Championship tests, more than any other competitor.



Alexandra Krossen rode Heather Mason's 12-year-old Nicene, by Nimbus, to the AA Fourth Level Freestyle Championship with 70.083%. **Photo by SusanJStickle.com.**

"Nicene went to the best of her ability today," said Krossen, who works full-time at a pharmaceutical company and rides at her trainer Heather Mason's barn in the evenings. "This is her last fourth level test ever, so it's a nice one to go out on."

Five Going On 15

Emma Batchelder and Eminem are no strangers to Finals, having won the AA Training Level Championship in 2023. This year they stepped up a level and reigned supreme in the AA First Level Championship with 72.963%, just 0.1 percentage points ahead of the reserve, Katrina Heilbroner on Odanse GS. Batchelder bought the son of Escolar at the Hanoverian Elite Auction in 2022.

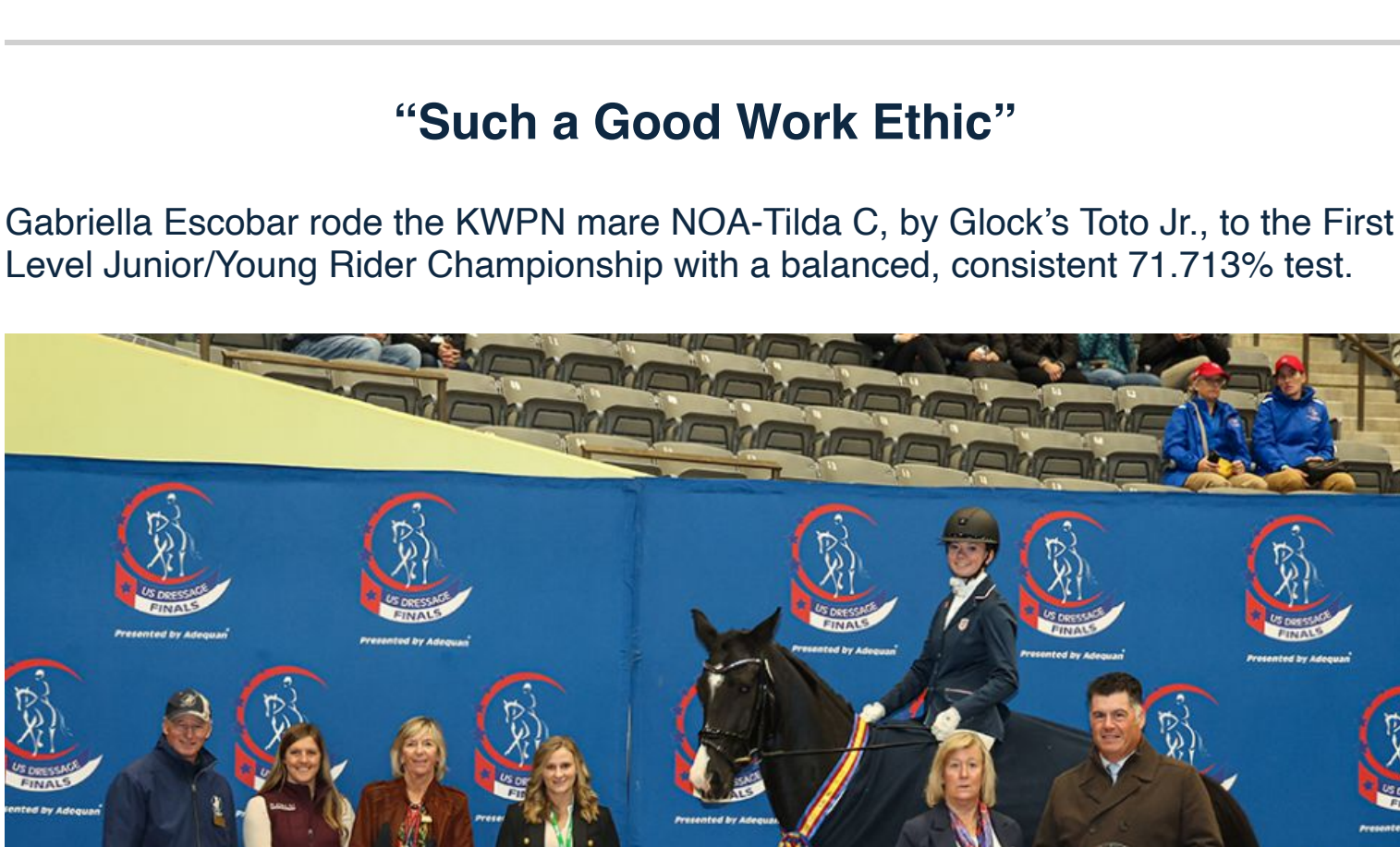


Emma Batchelder's five-year-old Eminem, by Escolar, returned to claim another championship, this year the AA First Level with 72.963%. **Photo by SusanJStickle.com.**

"He's grown up so much, and he feels like an old pro," said Batchelder, who works as a nurse anesthetist and has been travelling back and forth between Savannah, GA, and Florida with "Slim." "I think he's five going on 15. Now he's filling out too — he's getting a lot more power and more control of the power," she said.

“Such a Good Work Ethic”

Gabriella Escobar rode the KWPN mare NOA-Tilda C, by Glock's Toto Jr., to the First Level Junior/Young Rider Championship with a balanced, consistent 71.713% test.



Kinesiology student Gabriella Escobar piloted her six-year-old Glock's Toto Jr. daughter NOA-Tilda C to a 71.713% and the First Level Junior/Young Rider Championship. **Photo by SusanJStickle.com.**

"We had a few bobbles, but I was so happy with how she did — she's only six so she's still learning, and she gave it her all," said the 19-year-old who is a sophomore in college in Farmville, VA, studying kinesiology with hopes to become a physical therapist.

"I had a junior horse who I retired at 18 and went looking for an upper-level prospect and came home with a five-year-old. I'm not mad about it because she has such a good work ethic, and I hope we will go to grand prix. I'm working toward my silver medal with her," added Escobar, who has three horses and travels home every three days to ride them between her studies.

Champions Double Down

Two riders stamped their already successful Finals by adding a second title to each of their trophy cabinets on Saturday.

Madison Rezaei captured the AA Grand Prix on Friday, then followed up with the Freestyle at the level on a commendable 70.033%. She and her partner Maximus were awarded the Calaveras County Perpetual Trophy for winning the class, presented by Olva Stewart Pharo. Strategy executive Rezaei, who trains with Heather Mason, is in her second season with the half-Thoroughbred 13-year-old Polish Warmblood, and he is her first grand prix horse.



Madison Rezaei on Maximus (left) and Phyllis Sumner on Jonanta M (right). **Photos by SusanJStickle.com.**

Phyllis Sumner added the winner's blanket from the Intermediate I Freestyle to her win in the straight class the previous day. To music including Vivaldi and Led Zeppelin, inspired by her brother Rob Evan's Broadway show Rокtopia, Sumner and Jonanta M clinched the class from first draw with 71.05%. Sumner is a lawyer who rides early in the mornings and trains with Roel Theunissen. She bought the 10-year-old Negro x Gribaldi mare two years ago and introduced her to competing for the first time, which she has taken to wonderfully.

Coverage of the day's remaining classes to follow, including the Open Grand Prix Freestyle Championship held during Saturday's evening session.

Competition concludes on Sunday, November 10, with the final 10 championship titles to be decided. The full digital show program is available [here](#). Follow the action via the [USDF Facebook page](#) and the [US Dressage Finals website](#), plus live online streaming of all the action from the Alltech Arena on [USDF Network](#). To learn more about the US Dressage Finals presented by Adequan® and read daily news, visit the official US Dressage Finals event website. Start times and results can be found on [www.horshowoffice.com](#).

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By Alice Collins for Jump Media/US Dressage Finals

About USDF

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