

Loreen Kay & Adrienne Hillas Mill Creek Riders Score NAYRC Gold

by Donna Gulnac

Loreen Kay and Adrienne Hillas, riders from Mill Creek Equestrian Center in Southern California's Topanga, helped bring home the CCI** (Intermediate) eventing team gold medal for California from the North American Young Riders Championship (NAYRC). The event took place August 10-15 and was held, fittingly, in Old Mill Creek, Ill.

NAYRC is the premier equestrian competition in North America for young riders, age 16-21. It covers the three Olympic equestrian disciplines of eventing, dressage and show jumping and includes riders from the U.S., Canada, Bermuda, Mexico and the Caribbean Islands. It is FEI recognized and designated as an official USA Junior Olympics competition.

The Gold Medal Area VI team (California), which also included Cayla Kitayama and Athena Arnot-Copenhaver, dominated the CCI** from the beginning, winning each phase as well as the overall prize. The team won the dressage phase thanks to Adrienne's first place and Loreen's second place finishes in that portion of the competition. Loreen and Cayla had double clean rides in the cross country test and finished first and second respectively



Adrienne Hillas with Turbonium. Sarah Levin (on the left), another Mill Creek rider, groomed for Adrienne at the event.

Photo: Valerie Hillas

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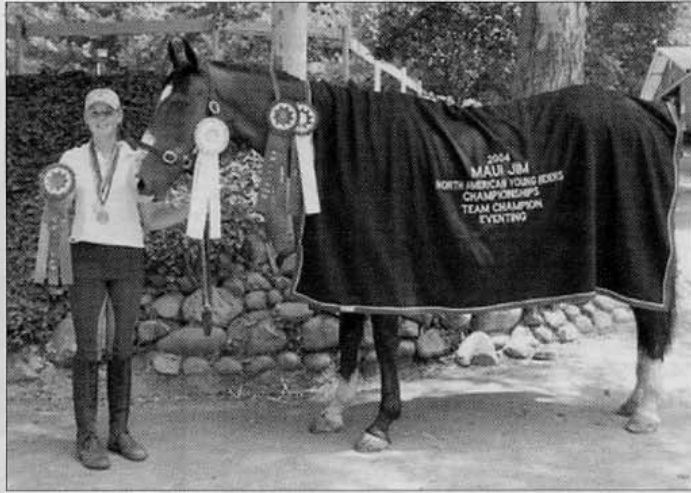
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after that phase, maintaining the team's top standing. Unfortunately, Adrienne's horse, Turbonium, came up lame after cross country, so she withdrew from the competition. Loreen and her horse Russian ended up in fifth place overall and Cayla and her horse Docksider finished in third place. In addition to an FEI gold medal for winning the CCI**, the team was also awarded a Junior Olympics Gold Medal.

It was 15 year old Loreen's and 17 year old Adrienne's first team experience in a major competition. Both riders found the experience positive and rewarding in ways they hadn't imagined. Adrienne enjoyed the support of the team and the feeling that they were all working toward the same goal. She was impressed by how hard everyone had worked and the obstacles they had overcome to get there. Loreen agreed that her teammates were amazing. "We all learned to share things and give each other helpful advice," she says. "It has really made me more outgoing and I believe it made me realize winning isn't everything." They also agree that being part of a team contributed to making the experience feel much more relaxed and fun. Loreen points out that, in addition to great teammates, the other riders at the competition were fantastic. "I made tons of new friends from both California and out of state and in other disciplines."

Loreen's accomplishment is even more impressive because this is her first

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Loreen Kay with Russian.
Photo: Donna Gulnac

show season on her horse Russian. She thinks this competition brought out the best in her horse. "I thought he handled the transportation, the endurance and the experience itself extremely well," she says. "He came out on top and I respect him for that. He really had a good time. I know now that he will always be in a good mood whether he is uncomfortable, hurt or upset that he hasn't gotten his food yet! I really love my horse."

Adrienne, who is thinking about becoming a veterinarian and/or a horse trainer, had to deal with the disappointment and worry about the injury of her horse Turbonium, whom she calls Melvyn. After

the cross country phase, he was limping by the time he reached the vet check box. She spent the next eight hours icing his leg in hopes that he could still continue the next day. After seeking many opinions and letting him rest overnight, she decided to withdraw from the competition. Through this experience, Adrienne also learned much about her horse. She found that with each of the vets they saw, "He was calm and very willing to participate. He was a perfect angel the whole time we were there and I wouldn't have wanted him to act any differently." Melvyn has since had minor surgery and is recovering nicely.

Adrienne should be particularly commended for qualifying for the NAYRC and for her accomplishments there. She has had Melvyn for two and a half years and has been his sole trainer in that time. When she got him, he was fairly green and could be considered a "difficult" ride. For a teenager to bring a horse along to the Intermediate level is quite an impressive feat. Adrienne is currently ranked seventh nationally among Junior Intermediate riders and Turbonium is the number 10 Intermediate level horse in the country. Adrienne hopes to move him up to Advanced next year and compete in at least one CCI***.

Both teens feel that it was "amazing to win a gold medal!" Adrienne says it was like something out of a dream to be "standing up there on that podium with all my friends and teammates." Loreen is pleased with her fifth place finish overall. "That high of a placing in such a [prestigious] competition at my age was great."

Loreen adds, "The competition brought out a different side of both me and my horse that I really enjoyed. I hope from now on that feeling will stay with me."

More information about NAYRC is available at www.youngriders.org.

Author Donna Gulnac is a regular contributor to *California Riding Magazine*, and an amateur rider at Mill Creek Equestrian Center.

