

2010 USDF Region 3 Junior Team

Made up of three dedicated young horsewomen, the USDF Region 3 Junior Team knows all about working hard to reach their goals. A very competitive region for equestrian sports, Region 3 spans most of the Southeastern United States including Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Tennessee and South Carolina. With such a large horse community making the North American Junior/Young Rider (NAJYR) Championship and representing Region 3 is quite an accomplishment.

Stephanie Bedford

Currently ranked 1st in the region and 2nd in the nation, Stephanie Bedford never dreamed that she would be riding in the FEI Junior Championships. She fell in love with the sport of dressage even before she stumbled upon her current mount. An 18 year old graduate from Harrison High School in Acworth, GA, Stephanie is the oldest member of the team with the youngest horse. Wählen is a seven-year old US Hanoverian gelding by Wonderful, a Weltmeyer line, who was locally bred in Georgia. Her mother purchased Wählen when he was just a colt barely 90 days under saddle and Stephanie has been his constant rider ever since.

In 2007, Stephanie rode Wählen, then four years old, in the Training Level Jr/Yr Region 3 Championships Earning Reserve Champion with a score of 69%. Early in 2008, they earned the Sam Hart Memorial Award (Jr/Yr High Score), at the Greater Atlanta Dressage Southern with a score of 71.3%. Later that year they qualified and rode in the First Level Jr/Yr Region 3 Championships. In spring 2009 Stephanie found her current trainer Jason Canton and with his help qualified for Second Level Jr/Yr Region 3 Championships. "We spent the summer really going back to lay the foundation for the upper level work," said Stephanie. "The training scale is a huge part of what I work on every day. Because I normally work with Jason only a couple times a month it is important to have the basics of relaxation and obedience in place." Late in 2009 the pair re-entered competition at Third Level where Stephanie earned her Bronze Medal at the age of 17; Wählen was just six years old.

This season Stephanie and Jason felt they would be competitive at the FEI Junior level and so Stephanie and Wählen took a leap of faith in March at the Southern Comfort Horse Show in Aiken, SC. They earned an average score of 65.793% placing 6th in the country and 1st in Region 3. "I was so proud of him," Stephanie recalls. "That was the first moment that I really believed we actually had a chance to earn good enough scores to qualify for NAJYRC or Gladstone. I



always dream big, and I initially felt this was more dream than reality. I'm glad I was wrong." The rest of her season has followed along the same vein, culminating with a bang at the May Poplar Place Dressage Show in Hamilton, GA, where she earned a clean sweep of the three FEI Junior level classes including a 69.474% for the Junior Individual Test and a 69.250% for the Junior Freestyle. She also was awarded Reserve Champion for Freestyles and FEI High Point. She credits her success to her mentor, inspiration, and trainer Jason Canton who "inspires [her] everyday to work harder and never settle for anything less than [her] best". She records her journey in her online blog at www.passagethroughtime.wordpress.com.

Rebecca Cohen

Coming in at a strong 2nd in Region 3 and currently ranked 8th in the nation is Rebecca Cohen. No stranger to the FEI arena, Rebecca has been one of the few young dressage riders to compete in the FEI Pony division. At 14 years old she is the youngest competitor even allowed to ride for the Junior Championships. Her current mount is Downtown, a thirteen-year old



Westfalen with Pilot jumper lines. Purchased by her mother in late 2009, Rebecca only had him a month before their debut show together at Equestrian Estates Dressage Show in Wellington, FL. Downtown previously competed at the NAJYR Championships making him the perfect match for this rising star.

Rebecca is heavily involved in all of the youth programs USDF and USEF have to offer. In 2004, even after experiencing the personal and awful loss of her father two weeks prior, Rebecca competed on Kassius and won her Bronze Medal with a 71% at Lendon Gray's Youth Festival. Rebecca was 8. In 2005 Rebecca was fortunate enough to spend the summer riding at Viegard Stutteri located in Denmark. Rebecca rides year round in Wellington, FL, with her trainer John Zopatti whom she started riding with in 2006. "John

Zopatti has been a huge influence in preparing me for shows," said Rebecca. "He is a tough task master, but kind, and extremely supportive." In 2007 she was the youngest person to place in the top 4 at the Region 3 Championships for First Level Jr/Yr, scoring a 69%. In 2009 Rebecca started competing towards the FEI Pony Championships earning scores in the high 60's. She competed at both the First Level Jr/Yr Region 3 Championship, earning reserve champion on her pony, Day of Diva, with a 67%, and at the Second Level Jr/Yr Region 3 Championship, earning reserve champion on her other pony, Dornroschen, with a 66%. In spring 2010 Rebecca

earned High Point Jr/Yr at the Wellington Classic Spring Show on her pony Diva with a staggering 74%.

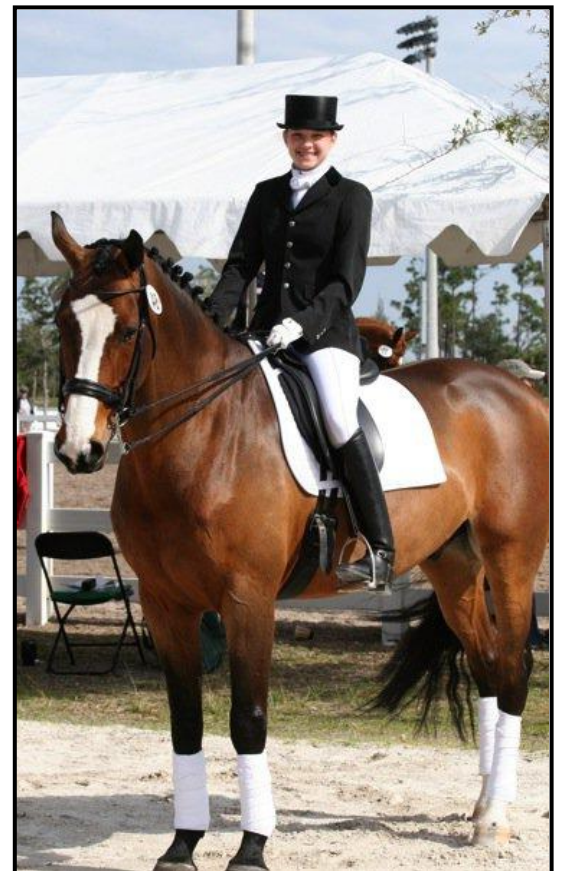
This competition season Rebecca's focus has been on her quest for FEI Junior success, something which has come fairly consistently for this young Junior. Her journey began in Florida at the Dressage Equestrian Estates show where she earned an average score of 64.472% placing them in 7th place on the national ranking list. She has been extremely consistent in her scores this year; Rebecca's final average is that of 64.493%. Her last show was at the May Poplar Place Dressage Show where she scored two 2nd Place finishes for her Junior Team Test (65.405%) and her Junior Individual Test (64.474%). She also showed her Junior Freestyle scoring a 66.750%. Her main goal is to represent Region 3 the best that she can!

Alexandra Kitchen

The third and final member of the Region 3 Junior Team is Alexandra (Alex) Kitchen. Currently ranked 3rd in the region, this is Alex's first year showing at the Junior Level. Alex, now 17, started riding at age six and has ridden everything from ponies to off the track thoroughbreds and quarter horses. Purchased a year ago, Ronaldo, a nine-year old Westfalen gelding, is Alex's current partner. Trained to Prix St. George and ready to go to Intermediare I, he is the ideal mount for her to make the move into the FEI arena.

Alex began riding school horses at the Vogt Riding Academy in Atlanta, GA, under the eye of trainer Anneliese Vogt Harber. She has always enjoyed the challenge of dressage, no matter what the horse's breeding. A year ago Alex was fortunate enough to find her first horse Ronaldo from Kathy Priest in FL. In 2009 she campaigned Ronaldo at Second Level winning every class they entered. She and Ronaldo also won a High Point Award at every show, the highest of these scores being a 76%. The pair both qualified for and won the Region 3 Regional Championship for Second Level Jr/Yr which also ranked them 4th in the nation for Jr/Yr at Second Level.

Alex's desire to compete for the FEI Junior division led her to Karen Lipp and Top Hat Dressage. Karen Lipp is no stranger to the Junior and Young Rider competitions sending girls to the Championships since 2001. "Adjusting to a new barn and a very classical way of riding was a big change for me," said Alex. "Juniors was a huge step up for both me but Ronaldo and I are becoming great partners." At the May Poplar Place Dressage Show they finished in 2nd place in the FEI Junior Freestyle with a 67%. Her goal this year is to "learn as much as [she] can from Karen who [she] is so happy with" and to "learn



from [her] teammates who's goals are similar to [hers]". She is hopeful for a Region 3 Junior Medal at the 2010 NAJYRC.