



Chester Weber wins his seventh straight National Championship; see page 9 story. Photo by Pics of You

THE Wheelhorse

NEWSLETTER OF THE AMERICAN DRIVING SOCIETY

NL 182

Representing Carriage Driving in the United States and Canada

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"Rain Gear, and a Sense of Humor."

That was what organizer Mary Fowler advised drivers to bring to the 2009 Maine Carriage Days show, which this year reclaimed its ADS recognition and sought out a better venue (the Topsham Fairgrounds) in the interests of making a comeback from near-extinction. A day-long downpour didn't quench the enthusiasm of New England drivers such as Kelli Gerrior of Hudson, Massachusetts and her carriage dog Zip (above). Judges Susan Koso and John Greenall kept the schedule moving to reduce standing around in the rain. The good news—organizers are already planning for next year. (Photo by Jim Leiby)



A Message from the Executive Director



September and October are critical months in the operations of the ADS, as we put together the January-to-June 2010 Omnibus. Organizers submit their applications each year on September 1 for shows that will take place in the first six months of the upcoming year.

I am happy to report that all but one show will be returning to the January-to-June 2010 Calendar. All the dates for these competitions have been added to the calendar on the ADS Web site, at www.americandrivingsociety.org/calendar.asp. Check out this page and start planning your 2010 show season early.

If you won't be doing much showing for the 2010 season, or are just getting into the sport and want to learn more, consider volunteering. Every show needs volunteers to help make it happen so if you haven't had a chance to participate in this side of the sport, why not give it a try?

Susie

More on Driving Down Under and in Britain

By Pat Cheatham, ADS Vice President

This month's column on driving organizations in other countries is something of a catch-up on information that was not available at the time my columns appeared in earlier issues of the Wheelhorse. In other words, others have caught—and now corrected—my omissions and errors. I thank those who took the time, effort and interest to point them out, and trust that I do their observations justice.

First, an update on my September topic, the Australian Carriage Driving Society. I didn't provide much information on ACDS officials, the relationship between ACDS and the Australian National Federation (their equivalent to USEF) or the particulars on their brand of Combined Driving, so here's the scoop.

From their membership of 1,500, the ACDS has about 120 Show Judges (Light & Heavy Harness), 36 CDE Technical Delegates (Novice & Advanced), 64 Dressage Judges (Novice & Advanced), 40 Cones Judges, 23 Course Designers, 47 Temperature Pulse and Respiration (TPR) Stewards, and 40 Presentation Judges. Much like ADS licensed officials, Judges must attend a refresher course every two years—but I don't know if that requirement extends to all ACDS officials. In a comparison of numbers, the ADS has fewer than 100 licensed officials out of our 2,600 members. Sounds like our Aussie friends are somewhat more involved in their sport than us. So what's the deal, folks? Sign up to be a Learner!

An obvious difference for ADS CDE competitors is that it seems ACDS rules force drivers up through the levels, unlike our rules where you may continue at your chosen level as long as you like. The British Horse Driving Trials Association (BHDTA) also has relatively more strict prerequisites to progress through CDE levels, but I cannot report on whether they too require—as opposed to allow—upward mobility. I'll find out and report back in a future column.

So if you're an Australian CD driver and you do well in a couple of lower-level ACDS events, you must drive at the next higher level, regardless of whether you think your horse (or you) is ready. With this sort of 'up or out' rule, it appears some experienced drivers, bringing along new young horses, may take a big "E" so as not to be forced up sooner than they'd like.

There's also a significant difference between their marathons and ours. ACDS CDEs are tough, with five-section marathons (even for single small ponies) that have eight hazards, all to F gates. I saw something of the same thing at Bromont with five gates in each hazard at the Preliminary Level. Maybe we're a little too soft in the U.S. these days—comments?

While we seem to struggle to ensure the importance (did someone say relevance?) of the US National Championship, the ACDS National Driving Event provides a robust annual national CDE championship. This coming year, the event will be held in South Australia at Easter. The event rotates around the country, giving each state the opportunity to host.

One final observation: The ACDS and the Australian National Federation appear at odds on some issues. Frankly, it hasn't always been love and kisses between the USEF and their National Driving Affiliate (that's us), but we appear to be playing together much better these days. From what I understand, the Australian National Federation sanctions a separate set of driving events apart from the ACDS and requires that both drivers and grooms be members

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The Henry Lawson Pilgrimage Drive held in June 2009.

This ACDS recreational drive covers a distance of 350 kilometres, averaging 25-40km per day with 26 vehicles taking part.

Photo by Peter Fitzpatrick.

[continued from page 2](#)

of the National Federation. A rift between any country's driving organizations doesn't bode well for our sport and I hope that any disconnects and misunderstandings are soon mended.

Next, I need to go back to my initial review of other countries' driving organizations, those of Great Britain. I committed a faux pas in that review: I omitted the Scurry Driving Association.

The full name of Scurry Driving Association (SDA) is Double Harness Scurry Driving (www.scurrydrivers.co.uk), which really means pony pairs racing through a cones course at full gallop. Scurry drivers compete against each other for the fastest time. From my admittedly meager research (which includes watching several neat online videos off the SDA website), this is light years different from our nascent sport of scurry driving (see the May 2009 *Whip* and www.americanscurrychallenge.com for more on the U.S. version of the sport). An aside for the Presentation fanatics among us: SDA competitors look damn good while going fast—coats, ties, aprons and hunt caps!

A form of Scurry Driving started as far back as the 1950s in American chuck wagon races, where competitors negotiated barrels in lieu of cones. If you ever watched Bill Long drive Jim Keathley's No-Tail team of Welsh, you can understand the excitement! The sport came to England using single ponies and used red Watney's beer barrels. Whether competitors consumed the contents before or after their runs is an open debate among historians.

The sport soon began using pairs of ponies, real cones and progressed from cautious trotting and the occasional canter to today's winning gallops. One of the more in-

teresting aspects, given our on-going angst over standard cones widths, is that the British sport of scurry doesn't use anything else. At least one set of wheels must be no less than 130 cm and the cones are set at 170 cm apart, period. At a gallop this requires a great deal of accuracy, but not many volunteer cones setters. The courses run between 10 and 14 obstacles and include a box and slalom. The SDA recognizes two sections: ponies under 12hh and those over 12hh but under 14.2hh.

The SDA came about as a friendly offshoot of the British Horse Driving Trials Association (BHDTA). The BHDTA administered scurry driving from the mid-1960s until the Scurry Driving Association formed in 2001, endorsed by the BHDTA. With its inception, scurry driving was recognized as a sport in its own right. Eight years on, there are 25 major competitions throughout the country and three main championships: The Living Heritage Champion, The National Champion and the Grand League Points Champion. From what I gather, most of the competitions and all the championships are held in conjunction with other agricultural shows and driving events. This is a great merchandising scheme for a developing and niche sport: You go to where the audience is and show how much fun and excitement you have. There may be a lesson for us in the methods of the Scurry Driving Association.

I hope you're enjoying this journey through other countries' driving organizations as much as I. If you have an organization you'd like to see featured, please let me know. Otherwise, I get to set the agenda. Here's to good ponies and soft hands wherever you drive.

Training Level:

A column and forum for new driving enthusiasts

By Deby Stewart

As I discussed upcoming columns for beginners with the Wheelhorse editor, it struck us that a good start would be to talk about appropriate horses for novice drivers. I'm sure there are both horror and success stories out there, because the right horse makes all the difference in whether the beginning driver's experience is good or terrifying.

When I bought TigerLily I made all the mistakes that a new horse buyer can make, even though I've owned horses all my life. I'd never even driven a horse before. I went shopping for a driving horse by myself and had no idea what I needed to get. Plus, I'm a sucker for grays. If that isn't a recipe for disaster, I don't know what is.

At least I wasn't *totally* stupid. The seller was known for representing her horses honestly and was recommended by my friend Cathy, who is an experienced horseperson; although she is a driver now, however, she was not at the time.

My husband, Steve, wanted me to get a riding horse and I knew I should get a riding horse. The people at the place where I would keep my new horse expected me to buy a riding horse. It seemed I was the only one in the whole chain who was thinking "driving horse." But this was the first new horse I'd bought in 30 years and, by golly, I was going to get what I wanted.

So off I went to Cathy's house in Ocala for a weekend of horse hunting. I made appointments to see several horses in the area and a few on the way there. TigerLily was just across the road from Cathy's farm and we went to see her the next morning. It was the second week of January and really cold. Donna, the seller, already had the mare harnessed; she quickly hitched her to the carriage and off we went down the street beside her house. She showed me how to hold the reins and talked me through my very first driving lesson. Woo-hoo! I was finally driving! Then suddenly two motorcycles came roaring past and I froze, expecting TigerLily to react badly. Donna quickly retrieved the reins and urged the only slightly nervous mare forward and on we went like nothing had happened. WOW!

I knew if she could handle situations like that, with nothing more than a little eye rolling and a slight hesitation, then this was the horse I wanted. But of course I also needed to ride her. Wasn't I supposed to be buying a riding horse? I wish I could say that she was as fabulous under



TigerLily sports her "batty" Halloween headband. Photo by Deby Stewart

saddle as she was in harness but, well, she wasn't. She was barn-sour, unresponsive to leg and didn't know how to canter. Great trot, though!

Somewhere in the back of my mind I knew Steve wasn't going to be too happy. But I pushed that thought away and made a deal on the spot for a used harness, an old Meadowbrook cart and TigerLily. I have replaced the harness and cart with new equipment, but TigerLily is definitely here to stay (and Steve loves her too).

I realize now how incredibly lucky I was. It could have gone sooooo wrong! TigerLily is only 6, but she really knows her stuff and is so brave and smart. She teaches me something every time I harness or drive her and forgives me for every mistake I make—and there have been some.

The one thing that people will tell you as a new driver is that you need an experienced horse. Believe them! One of you has to know what you're doing or one or both of you will wind up hurt (or worse). Notice I didn't say "might" wind up hurt—I said "will." And that's just the truth.

I've only driven a couple of other horses, but they've made me appreciate my TigerLily even more. Every horse feels different and is best suited for a certain level of driver. I am not so comfortable driving a forward type of horse; TigerLily moves deliberately and at exactly the speed I ask her and not one bit more. And I just adore her for it. But someone who thrills at the feeling of power from such a horse would probably be bored stiff trying to push my lazy mare.

When buying any type of horse, you should always go with a trainer you trust and who really knows what you need—for your personality, your level of experience and your budget. Ideally, you should have already taken a few lessons so you can try the horse yourself and get a feel for it. Personally, I won't buy a horse unless I feel a real connection, because I'm making a commitment to keep it for its whole life—but that's just me.

So tell me, how did you get your first driving horse and how did it work out? Were you as fortunate as I was, or do you have a nightmare story to share? Email me at deby@justusdriving.com and tell me about it.

Till next time—Drive On!

Deby

Confessions of a Learner Judge: The Judges' Clinic at Shady Oaks

Story and photos by Emery Hinckley

Like most Combined Driving competitors, I have had visions of performing brilliant dressage tests, blazing the marathon obstacles and finessing the most difficult cones courses. I've even managed to do it a few times. Also, there have been many times when I have not performed so brilliantly. It surely hasn't been for the lack of effort and commitment to the sport and to my various four legged partners!

This spring my promising and beloved mare injured her suspensory ligament. Of course, this happened just as we were finally putting many of the pieces together. With the depressing prospect of many months or possibly a year of layoff, and the unfamiliar sight of my carriages gathering dust in the corner of my barn, I began taking stock of my predicament. I realized that among other things, I needed to find a way to keep learning about the sport. I also wanted to stay involved in the fun of competing and stay connected in some meaningful way to the driving community. After I scribed for Jane Anne Merritt at The CDE at Inavale, she recommended that I consider the ADS Judging Program. That is how I found myself, about eight weeks later, at the September Judges' Clinic at Shady Oaks in Lodi, California.

With Penny Nicely and Larry Brinker presiding as leaders, we were 12 in all. I was the only learner in the group but I already knew many of these people from my years as a competitor. They have safely and efficiently presided over many of the CDEs I've attended. They've politely and kindly answered all of my questions; they've also been the ones often wearing sunglasses in the dark box at C in Dressage, silently judging my test. It was a little intimidating. Don't get me wrong, though, this was a very friendly and welcoming group.

We spent most of Friday, with Larry's leadership, observing and discussing the dressage tests of the day. At various



Larry Brinker leading a discussion by the cones course

breaks during dressage, Hardy Zantke, President of the Jury, came over to discuss several of the tests with us. Later in the day we went to our "classroom," where Larry and Penny gave more information than I thought I could possibly assimilate. Before dinner that evening, I could be found spread-eagled face down, exhausted from so much think-

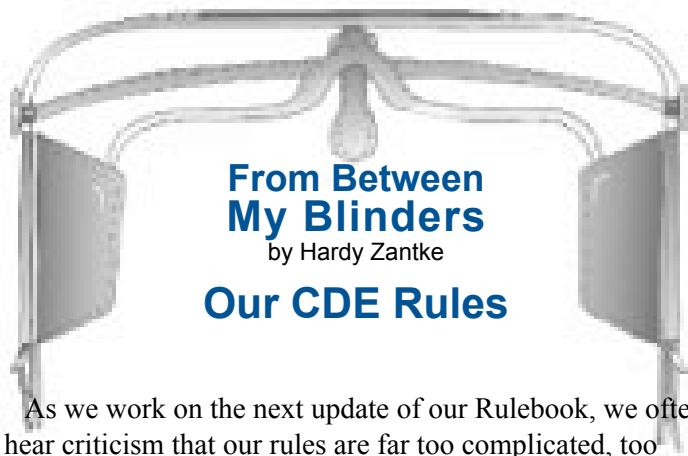


Linda Yutzy (auditing), Marybeth Goree and Mary Ann Boyden working hard in our "classroom". Phyllis and Fritz Gruppe kindly provided one of their carriage rooms (sans carriages) for us to use as a meeting place.

ing. Going through the rulebook felt like trying to navigate a corn maze. How was I possibly ever going to make sense of all this? By 5 a.m. Saturday I was making a royal mess of the part of my homework, which required creating an order of go and schedule for marathon. I was worried! Penny had asked us to hand in our homework later in the day.

At sunrise we met as a group to observe Technical Delegate Ellen Ettenger's various volunteer briefings for marathon. Later we walked out to some of the hazards to consider safety issues and the suitability of optional routes for the different competition levels. While eating lunch and worrying about my homework assignment, I thought I had better come clean and get some help from one of my fellow attendees who had clearly created schedules effortlessly many times before. Jody Cutler joined our group in the afternoon and we spent the rest of the day role-playing the various briefings that Judges and TDs conduct for volunteers and competitors. We discussed many difficult situations where the rules need to be carefully considered. Saturday night after dinner, Craig Kellogg joined us to lead a conversation about Presentation and all the subtle ways it can affect a competitor's dressage test. Sunday we observed the cones competition, once more discussing many of the pertinent rules. I was surprised that cones can be especially difficult to judge. Sometimes the balls are really hard to see because of terrain, or a bird will inadvertently knock one off! Back in our classroom that afternoon, Penny passed out the corrected open-book tests that we had completed before arriving at Shady Oaks. I had found it quite difficult and was relieved to learn I had passed with one of the highest scores.

By the end of the clinic, I had learned more than I ever imagined I would and I had made several good new friends. It was hard work and I have a long way to go but it was fun and I loved it. I can't wait to learn more, and I highly recommend it!



From Between My Blinders

by Hardy Zantke

Our CDE Rules

As we work on the next update of our Rulebook, we often hear criticism that our rules are far too complicated, too many, and not beginner-friendly. Yes, I fully agree. The problem is, this is like the tax code: We all agree that it is too complicated, but we haven't yet found anyone who can really simplify it—and do so to everybody's satisfaction. There are many people with great ideas and suggestions, but rarely do they agree with each other once it comes to the details. I'm afraid this is just human nature; it is very hard to come to a solution and find common ground to satisfy everybody and do the best for our sport, but the people on the CDE and Rules Committees are sure trying their hardest.

Many argue that we should not follow the FEI Rulebook, as most of our drivers will never drive at the FEI level. So why not have a simple rulebook just for the lower levels? In theory that sounds wonderful, but the devil is in the details. Which of the FEI rules would you like to keep, and which not? Yes, there are a few rules on which many of us agree that we don't need them—do I dare mention the requirement for reflectors? On the other hand, the reflectors are really a very minor item, aren't they? Just stick two stickers on your axle and you are done. That's nothing to get bent out of shape over. So which other FEI rules don't you like? Well, I have a few, as I am sure most of you might—BUT would we ever be able to reach a consensus on those that *both* of us don't like? Most likely not, as each of us has his own ideas on many of the issues.

So here are the reasons I think we should stay in sync with the FEI rules. It is not so that the few upper-level drivers don't need to learn a new rulebook, or so that our officials don't need to carry (and know) three rulebooks (FEI, USEF and ADS). It is only a small part of my reasons (even though a valuable part) that we will do well to stay in sync with the rest of the world rather than developing our own game and diverging from the international community. It is much more so that we can avoid more confusion and uncertainty in our already complicated sport, not only for some upper-level drivers, but more importantly for all the other people in the sport, including volunteers and spectators. Maybe they helped out or watched an upper-level event, not only abroad but also right here in our own country—and then they come to a lower-level event and

get confused when things are done totally differently there. Some of these organize on the local level and could wind up setting up their event completely differently.

The next important reason that many may not have considered concerns the officiating at our events. Even now, we unfortunately have different decisions from different officials at times. They are all human, have their own opinions and at times interpret the same written words differently, or don't remember when a rule was changed. This leads to different decisions resulting in unhappy and at times confused competitors, volunteers and spectators. Those differences would be multiplied if we had different rule books, as with each new (simplified?) wording of a rule—even if the intent is perhaps still the same—new interpretations will come in, resulting in different decisions. I think that is the biggest danger with different rulebooks.

We do have some variations from FEI rules for our lower levels, which we try to keep to a minimum. We often have a very hard time to even agree on those, and often get rule change proposals (RCPs) to change those variations this way or that way. Example: After long debate, a few years ago it was decided to disallow cantering in marathon obstacles for Training Level competitors, but to continue to allow them to canter in Cones. Both decisions were and still are controversial and were not supported by the full committee, but in the end each got a majority vote.

Naturally there are still people who feel differently about these issues; they have good arguments for their positions and keep sending in RCPs. Would the sport really be served better if we re-open these issues for discussion every year, perhaps resulting in swapping back and forth every year? How much confusion would that create?—Or are we not better off to leave such decisions in place until there is a real need to revisit the former decision?

Of course, to each proponent of an RCP the real need *is* there, but perhaps not so to the next person. If the rule were changed to implement this proposal, the next proponent would send in his RCP the other way around and bring just as many good arguments for his case.

The committee members don't always have all the right answers either, but they usually do have many years of accumulated experience and see a few more of the implications than some of the individuals sending in RCPs. That is why the committees are usually very careful before implementing any new rules or rule changes, and do so only if a majority is really convinced that it is in the best interest of the sport.

So to all of you who think you could do a much better job and create a better and simpler beginner-friendly rulebook, I have a suggestion. Before attempting what I think is an impossible task, why not tackle a much simpler job? Sit down and write some good educational articles for our beginners to help them get into and understand our sport.

ADS Fund Update: Helping World Championship Driving Teams

Your World Championship Pony and Pair Horse Teams recently returned from their European competitions. The ADS Fund played an important part by helping to underwrite training costs on the path to each Championship, and some of the hefty costs of participation. Training is important to long-term success; each year, need-based training grants are available to ADS members who aspire to the international level. When the dream has been achieved, the ADS Fund provides a conduit through which donations to each team are distributed and enhanced by our broader efforts. Your contributions make a formidable undertaking possible for our most talented drivers, and create a hopeful path for those just starting the sport.

Broader efforts include The Laurels at Landhope's very popular clean stall initiative; this year, 30 generous competitors contributed \$3,100, helping to advance opportunities for drivers from young to seasoned. Opportunities this fall include the National Drive—always a strong supporter of the Fund—and Katydid CDE, where something new will be introduced. Each initiative results from the hard work of members and their enlisted friends, and we are tremendously grateful for the support

Please contact Jamie O'Rourke for more information about how your competition, show or drive can develop an initiative to help: 484-832-4365 or ADSFUND@aol.com.

Thank You!



Martha and Jimmy Duchnowski driving their four of VSEs at Morven Park during the ADS meeting in August.
Photo by Dana Bright

Volunteer for ADS at Equine Affaire

The American Driving Society will once again be represented at this year's Equine Affaire, thanks to the volunteer efforts of members like you. Please consider joining Northeast Regional Director Marc Johnson at the ADS booth in the Stroh Building on November 12-15 to meet and greet and talk about your driving club with drivers from across the Region. Sterling Graburn, Equine Affaire's Ride With the Best clinician, will also be at the ADS booth between sessions. If you have an hour or two to spare and would like to share your love of driving with others, please contact either Marc Johnson at obstacle21@aol.com or Cat Luce at catprints2@aol.com. Your help is needed on Thursday through Sunday, morning or afternoon; just let us know what day and time you have available.

Thank you!

Equine-Assisted Program Carriage to Be Featured at Washington International Horse Show



The Fort Myer (Virginia) Caisson Platoon handicapped-accessible carriage will be on display at the Verizon Center in downtown Washington DC during the Washington International Horse Show, October 20-24. The Army's Caisson Platoon and the Caisson Therapeutic Equestrian Program are scheduled to do a 10-minute ride/drive before the evening performance on Saturday. This demonstration will be followed by the Opening Ceremony with a laser show.

Here, Caisson Platoon soldier SPC Hough is driving the carriage; seated beside him is CPT Mariah Kochavi, whose brother Clay Steinwinter stands facing her. The horses are Sam and Sarge and belong to the US Army, 3rd Infantry (The Old Guard), Caisson Platoon.

2009 Calendar of Events

Bold Type Indicates an ADS Recognized Competition

All driving activities may be listed in the Calendar, but as space is limited, please submit only dates of activities that are open to all ADS members. For a complete up-to-date calendar listing, visit www.americandrivingsociety.org/calendar.asp.

October

- 2-12/1 LICENSED OFFICIALS APPLICATIONS DUE:** will be reviewed and acted on by February 2
- 6-11 National Drive: Lexington, KY; The drive is the largest gathering of recreational drivers in the country. www.nationaldrive.net
- 17-18 Driving Clinic with Lisa Singer: The Carriage Barn Equestrian Center, Newton, NH; Carriage-barn@comcast.net or 603-378-0140.
- 18 Not So Traditional Day of Driving, Nearaway Farm, Perrineville, NJ: Pleasure, Reinsmanship, Cones, Gambler's Choice, Dressage, Barrel Racing, Pole Bending, Carriage Dog, Costume, Almost a CDE. Ellen Weisfeld, ewgnhb@aol.com, 732-928-7477.

November

- 13-15 Fall Carriage Driving Weekend at Palmetto Bluff, Bluff, Bluffton, SC: Larry Poulin clinic in covered arena Friday and Saturday, Paper Chase Drive on Sunday. Come for one day or all three; registration form at www.longfieldstables.com, Melissa Vanacore 843-706-9559.

2010

January

- 13-17 WINTER ADS BOAD OF DIRECTORS' MEETING:** in conjunction with USEF Annual Meeting., Louisville, KY.

February

- 5-7 **SUPER CLINIC**, Tampa, FL: Will coincide with the Florida State Fair show.

March

- 25-28 LIVE OAK INTERNATIONAL CDE:** Live Oak Plantation, Ocala, FL; www.cailiveoak.com; Intermediate, Advanced; Contact: Susan Gilliland, H: 352-489-6586, C: 813-220-8226, F: 352-489-9284; s_gilliland@msn.com

October

- 7-9 **ADS ANNUAL MEMBERS' MEETING:** in conjunction with WEG, at Gayla Driving Center (Georgetown, KY).

OMNIBUS CHANGES

HALLOWEEN HUSTLE (Nov. 1): Change in location from Lake View Terrace to Conejo Equestrian Park, Thousand Oaks, CA.

As of June 2009, in response to ADS member comments, the Wheelhorse Calendar of Events will include changes in Omnibus listings, ADS meetings, deadlines for Licensed Officials applications, and those events sponsored by or of interest to ADS members. Please submit activities for publication in ADS publications and on the ADS Web site to the ADS office. View Omnibus Web pages for complete updated information. http://americandrivingsociety.org/06_omnilistings/adsomnibusindex.asp

ADS at Friesian Convention

ADS Executive Director Susie Koos-Acker will attend the Friesian Horse Association of North America (FHANA) 25th Anniversary Convention in Reno, Nevada October 8-11. The ADS will host an informational booth during the convention, to help FHANA members learn about carriage driving opportunities that they can participate in through the ADS. This event marks the first time that the ADS has participated in a breed event of this magnitude through our new Breed Partnership Program. The booth will feature a slide show illustrating Friesian horses participating in a wide variety of ADS driving events. We will offer instructional books and videos on the sport, as well as discounted membership offers. We are hoping that this approach will prove a successful mechanism for getting the word out about driving to owners of an equine breed that excels at our sport. See more about the convention at <http://fhana-convention.com>.

Classified Ads

Classified ads are accepted for The Wheelhorse at a cost of \$1 per word with a \$15 minimum for a one-month insertion in the next available Wheelhorse publication. For two issues, the cost is \$2 per word, etc. Payment must accompany ad text (checks, Visa, Mastercard accepted).

COMPETITION CONES: \$27 each. Marker Balls \$2.70 each. For practice at home, Pleasure Driving Shows, and CDEs. Accepting MC/Visa. Phone Gayla Driving Center 1-800-360-5774. (KY)

BORIUM SHOES: Large selection of Borium shoes plus custom work. www.theblacksmithshop.net 800-840-7463

Membership Memo

Renewal time is right around the corner! Watch your e-mail for a reminder to renew your ADS membership for the upcoming year.

Our new anniversary-based membership has encouraged people that typically wait until the beginning of the year to join now, and our numbers show it. New members are taking advantage of this program, joining at any time during the year and still receiving a full 12 months of membership benefits.

Weber's 7th Championship Was About More Than Luck



Careful preparation at home resulted in Chester Weber winning the Cones phase at the National Championship in Lexington, Kentucky. Photo by Pam Knisley

At a Kentucky Cup and Lexington Driving Classic competition freighted with significant milestones, a standout was four-in-hand driver Chester Weber's attainment of the goal he set himself publicly earlier this year: to win his seventh straight USEF National Four-in-Hand Driving Championship.

Weber prevailed over fellow US team driver Tucker Johnson by 10 points, winning the Dressage and Cones phases and coming second to Australian Boyd Exell in the Marathon. Dressage has been a historic strength for Weber, but his success on the Lexington cones course was due to concentrated work on that phase in recent months. He trained intensively at home in Ocala, Florida in August and September with Germany's Michael Freund, using the most difficult cones elements from big European CAIs.

Weber's performance in the Cones phase at Lexington had a humorous footnote: He had not used 18-year-old Jamaica (2008 USEF Horse of the Year) in the marathon to save his energy for the final phase, only to find the veteran way beyond fresh in Cones.

Another high point of the weekend was Larry Poulin's Advanced/ FEI Level Horse Pair Championship win in his final Combined Driving outing. (He will continue training and competing in ridden dressage from his farm in Peter-sham, Massachusetts.) Poulin's dressage score of 37.50

was the best in the entire competition and he also won the marathon phase.

Suzy Stafford of Bear, Delaware, individual bronze medalist at the World Pony Championships in Greven-Bockholt, Germany this summer, won the Advanced Single Pony Championship with Beverley Leshner's Courage to Lead; the Morgan mare was also retiring from competition after the Kentucky event.

A newcomer to the top ranks was Advanced Single Horse Championship winner Fritz Grupe of Stockton, California, whose horse had only been driven as a single three times before the championship.

This year's Kentucky event was the official test event for the 2010 World Equestrian Games. Participants experienced a preview of next year's conditions, including new traffic patterns in the Kentucky Horse Park and a chance to compete in front of the 2010 WEG ground jury.

Watch for a more detailed story about the Lexington CDE in the November Whip.

More information, complete results and photos are available at the following Web sites.

Complete results: <http://www.alltechfeigames.com/content.aspx?is=3136>

Photos, blogs and videos: http://www.clubequestrian.com/coverage/kentucky_cup_driving_2009.aspx

Top quality video clips and all the news from the Kentucky Cup: <http://www.clubequestrian.com/videos/watch/1285768702.aspx>

Chester Weber's win: <http://clubequestrian.com/videos/watch/1284697793.aspx>

More information on Chester Weber and his team: www.chesterweber.com



Chester Weber celebrates the culmination of a year's efforts toward his record seventh straight National Four-in-Hand Championship. Next: Live Oak International and the WEG. Photo by Pics of You

Our Driving Community and the California Station Fire

By Veronica Campbell

Our driving community was very much in the line of the Station Fire in Los Angeles County, and Whip'r Snappers Driving Club president Patti DeVault asked me to contact members to see if anyone was in need of help. Patti said she was all right except for lots of smoke and ash, but she was moving her horses out in case someone needed to move horses into her place. Patti is on the Bradbury emergency response team and spent much of her time at city hall taking calls and directing people in need of help.

We contacted club members by phone and email asking how they were coping with the fires. Most responded that they were okay, except many were inundated with the smoke. Unlike many fires, this one was not driven by wind; however, this in itself caused other problems. The heavy, unmoving smoke made it hard for helicopters to drop water or planes to drop fire retardant in the extremely low visibility.

Many in our driving community offered their places for stabling and refuge. Patricia Demers, who lives in the Mojave Desert, had evacuees from Juniper Hills. Three horses, five cats and two dogs along with their owners took refuge with her. As parts of the High Desert were being threatened, others in the area--Valerie Daidah, Diane and Wayne Pitzler and Molly Rush--offered temporary shelter

to any who needed it.

Several of our club members were very close to the fires. The fire was in the steep foothills directly behind Ronda and John McPherson's street.

"I have lived here 23 years and never seen anything like it. The area called Gold Creek is in the middle of Little Tujunga Canyon. Last I heard five people who refused to evacuate were making frantic calls for help two nights ago. The sheriff's department was furious as they tried several times to convince these people to leave. I later learned they got out okay. The smoke made any judgment of the actual danger very difficult," Ronda wrote in an email.

Other members in the thick of things were Doug and Nancy Russell, who took in 31 horses.

Unfortunately not all of our driving community escaped unhurt. Ingun Littorin, a former ADS Dressage Judge who lives in Big Tujunga Canyon (where most of the initial structures were lost) lost one horse and many of her buildings. The good news is she and her son saved 28 horses.

Our driving community is close-knit and knowledgeable; we look out for those around us and offer help and solutions where we can. This fall we will hope that Mother Nature doesn't bring lightning to the mountains and that everyone is careful while enjoying the outdoors.

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