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Our Zone 10 Emerging Athletes Program finalists, Michael Williamson, Ransome Rombauer & Cecily Hayes, who was selected for the stable management portion.

by Ransome Rombauer

Day by Day at the USHJA's EAP Finals

Riding the horse you have is a major take-away at Emerging Athlete Program Finals.

My first step toward the EAP Finals was attending the Regional EAP clinic at Sonoma Valley Stables with riding clinician Kip Rosenthal and stable manager clinician Nanci Snyder.

This was the second EAP clinic I participated in. Two years ago I participated at the same location but with Candace King for riding and Anne Thornbury for stable management. At that time, I was 14 and definitely the youngest and one of the least experienced at the clinic. Heading into my second clinic this summer, as a 16-year-old, I realized that I had learned so much my first year and I felt so much more confident.

I *really* wanted to do well and I was on a mission to be a contender for National Finals selection. I made a point to be the first to arrive each morning and to be the last to leave at night check. I felt confident about the riding portion (although the first day, it was a little rough for me) and put a ton of effort into the stable management sections.

This year's Regional Clinic was actually really fun, despite the 16-hour days. I got to know Michael Williamson and Cecily Hayes pretty quickly because we spent 16 hours a day together for three-and-a-half days. The three of us hit it off right away and worked as team supporting

The National Finals are the culmination of Emerging Athlete programs run throughout the year and throughout the country. Held at the Austin E. Knowlton Center for Equine Science at Otterbein University Nov. 12-15, the Finals consisted of 16 riders selected from regional sessions. The event consisted of four days of riding instruction, stable management evaluation, a practicum and ID test and the Nations Cup competition.

The individual winner was Danielle Roskins, who, along with reserve champion, Zone 10's Ransome Rombauer, earned a place in the George Morris Horsemastership Training Session, in Florida in January.

For more information on the United States Hunter Jumper Association's Emerging Athletes Program and to find out about applying for next year, visit www.ushja.org.

each other and helping each other out throughout the clinic. I think this clinic was Michael's second clinic, too and it was a first for Cecily.

At the end of summer, Cecily found out that she was an alternate for the Stable Management portion at Nationals. She was very excited; especially considering this was her first year at Regionals. Michael and I were a little worried because we had not heard anything for a few days after Cecily was notified. I was concerned that I was going to receive a "Sorry, but..." letter in the mail.

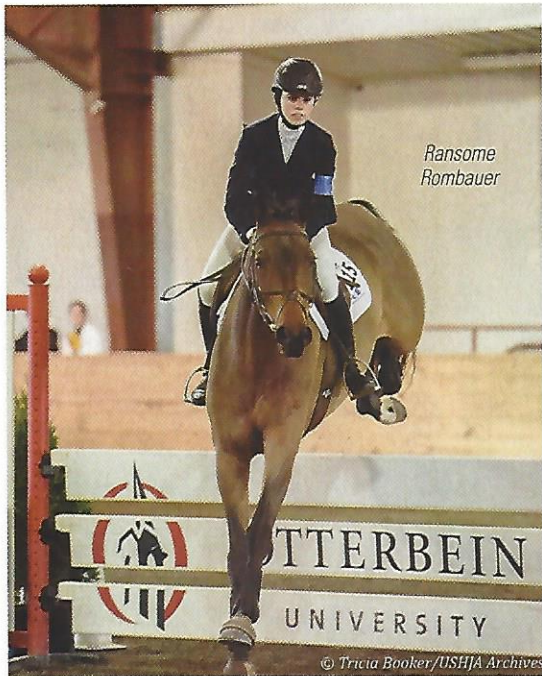
I was so excited to find out that both Michael and I made it for the riding portion. After becoming such great friends it would have been awkward

if one of us didn't make it. We were a trio! Three peas in a pod! Then Cecily found out she made it! It was so exciting to know that all three of us were going and that no one was being left behind!

One of the other National finalists, Rosie Powers (a sophomore at Sweet Briar College), was totally into getting all us going to Nationals connected and communicating before we even got to Columbus. It was fun and I felt like I was beginning to get to know some of the others before we met in person.

Travel Day: Wednesday 11/11

Cecily spent Tuesday night at my house and we had an early morning flight out of Sacramento.



Ransome Rombauer

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With the time change and a connection in Dallas, we didn't get to Columbus until early evening. Got a rental car, checked into the hotel and made plans to have dinner with Rosie and her mom. We were tired and excited at the same time. At least we could sleep in a little, as we were not scheduled to be at Otterbein University until noon the next day.

Thursday: Day One EAP Nationals

Cecily and I got up pretty early. Hit Starbucks for breakfast and hunted down a tack shop to pick up some supplies we thought we might need. Great tack shop called Equus: it had a great selection and a huge area for used and consignment items. I could have spent hours trolling through the racks and shelves. Rosie and her mom met us at the tack shop and we ran into three other EAP-ers doing the same thing. Back to Starbucks for round two.

Got to Otterbein early (of course). Hung out, toured the barn. There was a 1 p.m. meeting and introduction. The schedule was explained and then there was the "drawing" of horses. Dover Saddlery donated these great fully-loaded grooming kits and each kit had a horse's name in it. I drew Cully, a 20-year-old grey eventing horse. He seemed like a good guy and somewhat tall – good for me. Everyone did a very light hack and a few jumps to see what we had and if our horse was a match.

After stable chores and dinner again with the Powers, we went back to the barn for night check and then into bed.

Friday, Day Two

5:30am: Departure from the hotel – wanted to be the first ones there! My mom drops Cecily and I off and makes a run to Starbucks for caffeine and breakfast.

5:45-8:00am: Barn chores, prepare our horses for riding later in the am.

8:00-9:30am: Equine physiotherapy session: showed us all these different tools and products that assist with horse rehab and recovery. It was really cool because I know we use some of the products and it was great to understand the reason why we use them, etc. I really enjoyed this section.

9:30-11:00am: Stable Management with Anne Thornbury.

11:00-3:00pm: Flat work and jumping (gymnastic) with Peter Wylde.

Unfortunately, as it turned out – Cully was very strong

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Michael Williamson

Michael Williamson

Day 1: This was a really exciting day. We flew in the day before, so we got to sleep in! Otterbein University is really a great equine facility. It was really fun to meet the other finalists and clinicians. Our riding groups and stable managers got assigned. Dover Saddlery provided the riders with coolers, shirts, pads, jackets and a tote bag with grooming supplies.

We were asked to take turns and pick a tote bag in the bag, and surprise, there was the name of the horse we were assigned for the remainder of the week. I got Jerry, a wonderful 14-year-old Irish Sporthorse. It was a lot of fun to get to meet him afterwards. We all got settled in the stable and got to flat our horses. Jerry was a super boy and very well mannered

Day 2: Fun day! The best part of EAP is to be so involved with our horse pretty much 24 hours a day. Getting to know them in the stable and in the arena, feeding, grooming and caring for them create such a good connection and trust. The first riding session with Peter Wylde was all flat and gymnastics, making sure that we had control of the horse. Lots of collection work.

Equine physiotherapy was great and we learned a lot about what to do to keep our horse in great physical condition. Terrific meeting with all the clinicians who reinforced the importance of teamwork, communication, paying attention to details and hard, hard work!

Day 3: Great riding day with Peter Wylde, flat and coursework. Super fun to get to know Jerry over fences. Also fun and informative media session in which we learned how to handle an interview. Finished the day with a gala dinner.

Day 4: Very exciting day! It started early, about 5 am, to get our horses braided. I really enjoyed the Nations Cup team format. My team finished third overall. Very proud of Jerry for two clean rounds!

I really recommend that any young riders committed to the equine industry participate in the EAP program. It is a unique program that focuses on the connection with the horses, putting the horses first always!

Congrats to Ransome for getting invited to the George Morris Horsemastership clinic. It was a lot of fun to share this EAP National with Cecily and Ransome.

A Horse Show Mom's Perspective

Surprisingly, a lot of juniors do not know about this program – at least in California. So many of Ransome's friends ask "You are doing what?" The regional clinic was amazing and an extraordinary learning opportunity but the National Final experience was beyond the beyond.

First of all, Peter Wylde is a very gifted teacher. He has a communication style that is very clear and meaningful and he definitely connects with the young riders. I can see him becoming the next George Morris!

In addition, to have Anne Thornbury (stable management), Sally Ike, Mary Babick, Myron Leff (Interscholastic Equestrian Association co-founder), Bob Cacchione (co-founder and executive director of the Intercollegiate Horse Show Association) in attendance throughout the weekend along with an entire string of other equestrian notables was impressive. -- Laura Rombauer

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after a jump and instead of settling down, he got stronger and stronger and practically ran over Peter.

At that point, Peter and I decided to try one of the alternate horses. Unfortunately, horse #2 had some soundness issues. Third time is the charm. So I tried "Mark," a little chestnut gelding that I swear was just a hair larger than a large pony. I am used to bigger horses with big strides, so riding Mark was a huge adjustment for me. He had a short stride and wasn't entirely confident going over the jumps. He required a lot of support.

At the end of the schooling (I went at the end on my own because of being on a third horse), I was pretty nervous and concerned about making it work with Mark. I wasn't sure if he had enough scope to jump 3'-3"/3"-6". I knew I had to do my best and work with the horse I had, but I was still nervous and concerned. Peter and Sally Ike felt that Mark was the best horse for me and I deferred to them.

3:30-4:00pm: Set the course for Saturday

4:00-5:30pm: Group presentation about the use of social media and media guidelines. They also talked about conducting interviews and dealing with the press. It was very interesting.

5:30-6:00pm: barn chores

6:30-7:00 pm: pizza party at the barn

7:30-9:00pm: We go out for dinner with the Powers (again!) and this time Carly Williams joins us. She won Nationals last year and is good friends with Rosie Powers. Since her Nationals win, Carly is working as a private trainer for a family that shows with Peter Wyld.

9:00pm: Night Check

10:00pm: Go to bed!

Saturday: Day Three

5:30am-8:00am: Barn chores with Anne

8:00-9:30am: Stable Management test with Anne; included identification of bits, conformation flaws, unusual tack and a practicum that included packing a hoof with an abscess, proper standing wrap application and poultice.

9:30-11:00am: Flat work and jumping with Peter. This time we did a full course. The course was set at 3'-3"/3"-6" and was fairly forward and technical. This was good preparation for the Nations Cup jumper style rounds scheduled for the following day. I was still worried about Mark, but Cecily was really positive and after looking at my rounds (my mom video-ed) it looked much better than it felt. I know I had to push through and ride the horse I had. I was the one who needed to adjust and once I got that through my head, I was excited to make it work – and it did.

11:00-12:30pm: Jump crew and observe another group ride.

12:30-1:30pm: Lunch (no time, eating in the barn, mom smuggles in food)

1:30-3:00pm: More media training. . . and explanation of how Sunday will run. Two team rounds and then four to six individuals will work off for the two coveted spots to the George Morris Horsemastership Clinic in Wellington, Florida, in January.

3:30-4:30pm: Set the course for Sunday with Peter

4:30-5:00pm: Barn chores with Anne

5:30pm: Go back to the hotel and shower before the banquet. I realized I didn't bring fancy enough clothes. Oh well – "California casual."

6:30-8:30pm: Banquet. Really nice dinner. All of the riders and stable managers sat together at one long table. Carly Williams did a nice speech. Feeling exhausted. Not enough sleep.

We were told we didn't need to go to night check but a few of us went anyways. . . .

Sunday, Day Four - Team and Individual Competition

5:00am: Departure from hotel. Wanted to get to the barn extra early to braid my horse plus do morning barn chores and show preparation.

8:00am: course walk with Peter. Feeling a little worried about the fence height for Mark.

9:00-11:00am: Nations Cup: two-round format. I am on Team Charles Owen (one of the program's great sponsors!) Round One (I am the 4th and anchor rider for our team) I ride clear, within time allowed and I think I had the fastest time.

Mark was great but I had to cluck at him every jump. He was very brave and was great. Everyone on our team goes clear. Tied for 1st place. Round Two, one of our riders had to circle at a fence and had 13 faults. I really had



HQC Ambassador Elizabeth Evans (Encino, CA), assistant trainer at Mischief Farm, who received the Outstanding Education Ambassador Award for volunteering her time during both EAP and HQC Nationals. She is pictured (center) with Sally Ike (left), Emerging Athletes Program Committee chair and Cricket Stone (right), Horsemanship Quiz Challenge Ad Hoc Committee chair.

to push Mark and, as the anchor rider, the pressure was on because we could drop the 13-fault score and still maintain our first place.

All was going well (and fast!) but at the plank, Mark jumped really flat and we dropped a plank (4 faults). DARN! But as it turned out, we still got the silver medal and all was good.

I felt like I had a breakthrough – I rode the horse I had and adjusted my ride to meet his needs. I was definitely out of my comfort zone, but I pushed through and made it work. Peter talked a lot about riding the horse you have and listening to your horse and adjusting your ride accordingly.

This really hit home for me as I have been in a tough place with my jumper (Albertino) at home. I am inspired and feel like I made a breakthrough and I can't wait to get home and work with Albertino with this new mind-set. Peter was very inspiring and his communication style clicked with me.

11:00am: Work Off. Five horses and riders are selected for the equitation style work-off. My name is called out to come back!!!!

Peter wanted to see a style round and said he wanted to see what we could do to impress him. I think I went fourth in the order and was assigned to ride Shane. Shane was a very cute bay gelding. A little pokey, definitely bigger than my little pony Mark and he had a tendency to over-jump – so much so I got a little popped out of the tack. I went out just like I would normally do for an equitation round. I was a little concerned he would pick up the wrong lead, plus his trot was a little wonky. I felt I had a solid round and left feeling good.

1pm: Awards Ceremony ... So excited our team "Charles Owen" got the Silver Medal and as it turns out, I was pinned Reserve Champion! I was so excited (and surprised!). This meant I was going to Wellington!

In Closing

I cannot even begin to say enough how great the experience was to go to EAP Nationals. I so much enjoyed the camaraderie, competing as a team and really working hard and getting to know the horse you drew. Something really clicked for me. Mark was a great horse for me and through my four-day experience with him, I learned a lot and took away so much that will make me a better person and a better rider.