



Jaelyn Pepper / Taboo  
Photos by Jennifer Keeler



Mackenzie Pooley / Jonkara  
Photos by Jennifer Keeler



Kelli Newton / Luciano

## **NAJYRC REGION 7 DRESSAGE TEAMS: DAY FOUR - FIGHTING FOR A CHANCE TO DANCE**

*By Yellow Horse Marketing for the California Dressage Society*

Region 7 Young Riders and California Dressage Society members Kelli Newton, Jaelyn Pepper, and Mackenzie Pooley have a lot to look forward to as all three finished in the top 15 rankings from Thursday's Individual Test, thereby qualifying for the final freestyle competition at the FEI/Adequan North American Junior and Young Rider Championships (NAJYRC) in Lexington, KY.

Kelli Newton, who rode Karen Ball's Luciano to claim the seventh-place ribbon, positively glowed during the awards presentation, and not just from the heat. "All I wanted, more than anything, was to qualify for the freestyle so I would have a chance to do it," Newton explained. "I felt much more confident today, and I just knew I could do it."

Jaclyn Pepper had a near-miraculous recovery from a diagnosis of walking pneumonia and heat exhaustion on Wednesday night in order to pilot Taboo to a ninth-place finish. "We've definitely had a tough show," Pepper admitted. "I'm on antibiotics and still struggling a little with my strength, and Taboo is a big, powerful horse and can sometimes be difficult to ride. But he was so light in my hand and on his feet today. I've only had him for a year, and so I am thrilled to be getting a chance to perform our freestyle on Saturday."

"I couldn't be happier with my horse, we really went for it, and had no mistakes in our test," said Mackinzie Pooley of her mount Jonkara and their sixth-place ranking. Pooley's concentration combined with the afternoon heat finally caught up with her. "I was so focused, and rode every single step," she explained. "But after the final halt I was having a hard time breathing, and was hyperventilating by the time I dismounted."

Young Rider team mate Ari Lopez, another determined competitor, was not going to let her NAYRC experience end without a fight. "After yesterday's test, I thought a lot about it, and since I know my horse has it in him for a 70%, I really wanted to go for it," said Young Rider team member Ari Lopez, who finished just outside the top 15 with Corlander II. "But when I pushed him, unfortunately we had some mistakes. But this has been such a great experience for both of us and we'll only get better from here."

Region 7 Juniors had their work cut out for them in a very competitive field for the Individual Test. Although disappointed in not finishing in the top 15 riders who are moving on to the freestyle, all four competitors had solid rides and plenty to be proud of. Team member Stephanie Early believes that even though she may not have gotten the score she hoped for, her Individual Test ride was one to remember. "It really was a magical moment today, because Panash and I were so in sync," she explained. "It was most important to me to have a good test, and looking back on it I couldn't have done anything better. I stuck to my plan to allow a little more time for preparation and then I really thought through my ride instead of just being a passenger. We've come so far, and I couldn't be happier."

Complete scores and placings for all teams and individual horses and riders are available at this link:  
<http://www.youngriders.org/Results.aspx>.

Dressage horses enjoyed a much-deserved day of rest on Friday, and competition resumes with the Junior freestyle competition on Saturday at 1pm ET, followed by Young Riders at 4:30pm ET. Region 7 competitors Jaclyn Pepper, Kelli Newton, and Mackinzie Pooley compete back-to-back beginning at 5:40pm. Competition information, including schedules, live scoring, and results are available at [www.youngriders.org](http://www.youngriders.org).