

Youth finds success on equestrian trail

By KEN VOYLES

It may be surprising that a suburban girl like Bernadette Sak can find satisfaction and the thrill of equestrian competition.

Sak, a 14-year-old equestrienne, was born and raised in Livonia. But at heart she is a horse jumper with all the nerve and guts of the old cowboys that once dominated the American West.

The young horsewoman began riding for pleasure three years ago. She never dreamed she would be competing throughout Michigan as she has done this past summer.

But what's all of the excitement about? Because not only did she compete last summer but she won the whole bag. Sak was crowned the Michigan Junior Hunter-Jumper Association Champion for 1978 in her age group.

That title was won after touring through Michigan on the horse jumping circuit and beating out 25 to 30 other jumpers in her age group.

The circuit is run by the MJEJA and lasts from May through August. There are seven different shows, as they are called, and the champion is determined by the total number of points the riders collect on the circuit.

The idea is much like the Grand Prix Auto Circuit. Each show is a meet in itself. Winning a show gives a rider five points. Second place is worth three points, third is worth two and fourth is good for one point.

Sak won four shows, was second once and third twice. Her performance was good enough for the title and the trophy that goes with it.

"Friday Surprise" is the name of Sak's horse and she rides out of Haverhill Stables in Walled Lake.

Bernadette credits her sister Paula as the biggest influence on the champion when she was getting her start in the sport. Paula also used to ride on the circuit. Then one day, according to the girls' father, Richard, Bernadette asked when it would be her turn to ride.

"I never rode before I started some three years ago. Paula was the biggest single influence upon me. I would watch her and be very captivated by what she was doing," Sak said. "She also helped me get into the sport and influence my decision whether to compete or not."

And so the first step on the way into equestrian competition was completed. Young Sak started learning how to handle a horse. It was a basic apprenticeship before the big leagues.

It was then that Julie Agar stepped into the picture and took Bernadette under her guidance. Agar was an instructor at Haverhill and saw young Sak's potential. Agar worked with her for two years on all aspects of the sport, from simple good riding habits to the recommendation of proper jumping techniques.

"One day, Julie told us that Bernadette should get a horse of her own and go into the Michigan circuit and try her hand at competitive riding," Bernadette's father explained. "We never thought we had started out as a pleasure trip for Bernadette but turned into this."

But the Saks' followed the instructor's advice, and they did indeed buy the horse. Sak says there is more work to making a single mistake. Every error on jumps adds points to the tandem's score. The rider with the lowest point total wins.

"It is very difficult to get a clean round (no mistakes)," Sak said. Each show is a two-day event with the preliminaries on the first day and the finals on the second. According to Sak, it can be a very trying experience.

"When I started competing, I really didn't think I would do as good as I do. It all came as a surprise," said Sak. "I love competing, but I really don't know where I am going to go with it. That's in the future."

"Oh, sure, I'd like to go into the national circuit or maybe the Olympics but that is a long way off," she continued. "I'd like to go higher into the sport but I'll just continue and see what happens."

Bernadette also has a brother, and the main topic of conversation around the house is horses, horses and more horses. It's a family sport at the Sak residence.

Sak constantly works with her horse over the various courses at Haverhill to do just that.

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S-L, SHS have poor mat showings

Neither Southfield nor Southfield-Lathrup did as well as they would have liked to in their wrestling tournaments last weekend.

Southfield participated in the Oakland County Tournament at Pontiac Central, but the Blue Jays failed to place a wrestler in the final four in any event and finished 24th in the 28 team tournament.

Lathrup traveled to Ypsilanti for the Ypsilanti Invitational. The Chargers won two weight classes and placed three other wrestlers in the top six, but only managed a sixth-place finish in the 17-team event.

"There was a lot of stiff competition," Lathrup coach Ray Toobey said. "Montrose was last year's Class C champ, Monroe placed third in Class A, and Oscoda was the Class B runner-up."

"And tournament winner Flint Northern—they're a pretty tough team. They won their own tournament, and now this one. They had eight people place in the top six in 13 events. Still, I think we could have done better."

Lathrup's chances were crippled with the loss of three wrestlers. Two were unable to compete because of injuries and a third failed to make weight.

But the Chargers did get their share of fine performances. Rob Parent kept his win streak alive in the 126-pound weight class as he outpointed Ricky Coleman of Flint Northern, 11-2. Parent, a state semi-finalist last year, is now 15-0 on the season. He pinned his first three opponents to advance to the finals at Ypsilanti.

Jim Fish was Lathrup's other winner in the tournament. Fish outscored Brian Crawford of Ann Arbor Huron in the 105-pound weight class, 12-5. The victory raised Fish's record to 15-1 for the season. He also pinned his first three opponents to reach the finals.

Other point winners for the Chargers were Tim Herbert in the 138-pound class, Dean Wolf in the 178-pound class, and Nader Kassab in the 191-pound class. Herbert captured a sixth place, Wolf a fourth, and Kassab managed a third.

SOUTHFIELD DIDN'T fare quite as well as Lathrup. The Blue Jays scored only 12 team points, with three wrestlers winning points. Dan Stone pinned his first opponent before falling in the 100-pound class, and Mark Fine lost to eventual tournament champ Willie Moore in the 110-pound class.

The Chargers host Livonia Stevens tonight at Beechwoods Ice Arena. Country Day entertains Wyandotte Roosevelt on Jan. 3 at 4:30 p.m.

along with Tony Adelson in the 126-pound class, scored all the Southfield points.

Next event for both teams is a double-dual meet at Lathrup, Wednesday night. Farmington and Wedgwood Union will join both Southfield schools for the meet, which will begin at 7 p.m.

OAKLAND COUNTY TOURNAMENT

TEAM SCORES
 1. Warren Lincoln 145 1/2; 2. Hazel Park 157 1/2; Farmington 138 1/2; 4. Lake Orion 131; 5. Ashmun Heights 126 1/2; 6. Detroit Catholic Central 120; 7. Farmington Harmon 118; 8. Pontiac Central 111; 9. Royal Oak 108 1/2; 10. Pontiac Notre-Dame 107 1/2; 11. Warren Fairview 97 1/2; 12. Farmington 97; 13. Oakton 96; 14. Rochester 66; 15. Madison 60 1/2; 16. Walled Lake Western 60; 17. Bloomfield Hills Lathrup 59; 18. Waterford Kettering 58; 19. West Bloomfield 46; 20. Birmingham Groves 34; 21. Clawson 22; 22. Royal Oak Summit 22; 23. Medeson Heights Bishop Foley 22 1/2; 24. Southfield 12; 25. Walled Lake Central 12; 26. Warren West 4 1/2; 27. Birmingham Seaholm 2; 28. Pontiac Catholic 4.

YPSILANTI INVITATIONAL TOURNAMENT

TEAM STANDINGS
 1. Flint Northern 161; 2. Detroit 117 1/2; 3. Jackson Parkside 110 1/2; 4. Ann Arbor Huron 111; 5. Montrose 101 1/2; 6. Southfield-Lathrup 86 1/2; 7. Ypsilanti 84; 8. Dearborn Heights 83 1/2; 9. Oscoda 81; 10. Monroe 78; 11. Dearborn Heights Kelleysburg 67 1/2; 12. Grand Ledger 67; 13. Lakeside 67; 14. Dearborn 16; 15. Highland Park 20; 16. Lakeside 17; 17. Beech Ridge 6.

DCDS whips S-L

Southfield-Lathrup played even against Country Day for two periods, but the Chargers couldn't contain the Yellowjackets in the third, as they dropped a 4-1 decision Sunday at Country Day.

Lathrup got on the board first on a goal by Steve Hoke at 12:54 of the first stanza. Ken Angrove got the assist. But the Chargers' offense went to sleep after that, and Steve Rüsser tied it for Country Day with a goal at 9:46

of the second period on a pass from Dean Myso.

The Yellowjackets put it away with three third-period goals. Pete Salomon scored the eventual game-winner at 9:46. Jay Wilson and Myso added insurance goals for Country Day.

The loss dropped Lathrup to 2-3 overall. The Chargers host Livonia Stevens tonight at Beechwoods Ice Arena. Country Day entertains Wyandotte Roosevelt on Jan. 3 at 4:30 p.m.

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