



The 2008 Youth World Cup in London, Ontario, featured youth from 16 countries.

# Riding the Dream

*The 2008 AQHA Youth World Cup was a world-class Quarter Horse competition.*

**Story and photos by Christine Hamilton and Tonya Ratliff-Garrison**

WHAT DO NIAGARA FALLS, MORE THAN 90 ALL-AROUND AMERICAN Quarter Horses, 1,000-plus pieces of tack and more than 100 top youth riders from four continents have in common?

They all played a part in making the 2008 AQHA Youth World Cup an event to remember.

On July 5-13 at the Western Fair in London, Ontario, the Youth World Cup attracted teams of youth riders from 16 countries: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Dominican Republic, France, Germany, Israel, Italy, New Zealand, Sweden, The Netherlands, United Kingdom and the United States. They competed in nine AQHA events for the team championship: showmanship, hunter under saddle, hunt seat equitation, trail, horsemanship, western riding, reining and cutting.

When the dust settled on the last western riding go July 13, Team United States was at the top with 185 points overall.

But it wasn't easy.

Going into the last day of competition, Team USA was two points behind eventual reserve champion Team Germany, but several top placings in the last day of classes pushed Team USA ahead. Team USA had at least one rider in the top 10 in every class in the competition except the first day of western riding. The team often had more than one in the top five. Highlights included Cara Walker's overall 68 points earned; T. Joe Jeane's two wins in western pleasure; and Marissa Dalton's two wins in showmanship.

"They are outstanding individuals, character-wise and talent-wise," said AQHA Professional Horseman and Team USA coach Nancy Cahill. She has coached every U.S. Youth World Cup team but one since 1988. "This win and these buckles are the exclamation point at the end of a very long sentence."

For the first time in Youth World Cup history, every participating team had at least one rider in the top 10 on at least



Members of Team Austria wore their country's traditional dress for the opening ceremonies.



Becki Dixon of Team United Kingdom was unable to go due to a horse-back riding injury shortly before the competition. The team created a doll that looked like Becki and carried it around in order to feel as if a little part of Becki was with them for the event.



Team Belgium's Koen Daemen helped out Youth World Cup announcer Justin Woodley by pronouncing Jessica Vangenechten's last name during the show results of the first day of trail. Justin said he had been butchering Jessica's name all day and needed some help.



The Canadian Cowgirls mounted drill team gave a special performance at the opening ceremonies to honor the Youth World Cup teams.



Carolyn Lenz of Team Germany gives Mr Goodwill a pat on the neck after their class. Carolyn earned 80 points, more than any other rider at the Youth World Cup.



Team Czech Republic's Veronika Petlanova listens to the clinicians in the hunt seat equitation clinic. Veronika enjoys hip-hop dancing back home.



In the first day of hunt seat equitation, Dido Masi and Zipsavannah Rose brought in the first win for Team Italy.



Suzanne Derks of Team Denmark and The Dark Smoking placed third under one judge and fourth under the other in the reining competition.

# COMPETITION WINNERS

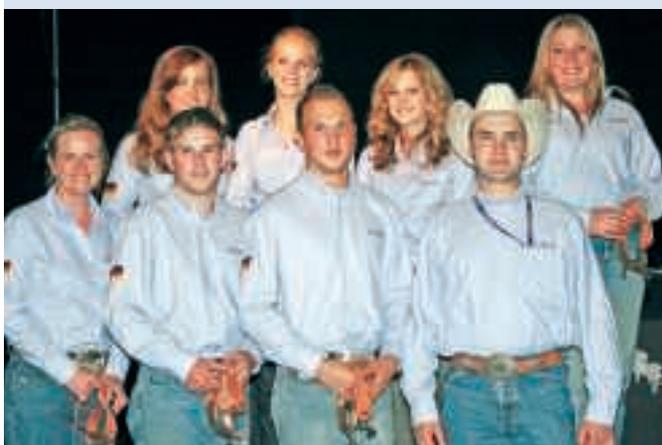


## Champion Team United States

**Coach:**  
Nancy Cahill

**Manager:**  
Dawn Forest

**Riders:**  
Marissa Dalton, Kyle Fuller, T. Joe Jeane, Katie Jo Jones, Cara Walker  
**Leadership:** Corinne English, Makena Lawrence, Mamie Tomlin, Zane Pluhar



## Reserve Team Germany

**Coaches:**  
Maik Bartmann and Sylvia Jaeckle

**Manager:**  
Markus Bingel

**Riders:**  
Sophia-Milena Raschat, Marcel Schadt, Felix Schnabel, Carolin Lenz, Leonie Behrens and Deborah Haase, alternate

## Individual High Point Champions

**Showmanship:** Marissa Dalton, United States  
**Reserve:** Katie Jo Jones, United States

**Hunter under saddle:** Ilke Poelman, Belgium  
**Reserve:** Cara Walker, United States

**Hunt seat equitation:** Sara D'Imperio, Italy  
**Reserve:** Dido Masi, Italy

**Western pleasure:** T. Joe Jeane, United States  
**Reserve:** Sara D'Imperio, Italy

**Western horsemanship:** Cara Walker, United States  
**Reserve:** Danielle Olafson, Canada

**Western riding:** Vanessa Bauer, Austria  
**Reserve:** Carolin Lenz, Germany

**Trail:** Carolin Lenz, Germany  
**Reserve:** Jessica Vangenechten, Belgium

**Cutting:** T. Joe Jeane, United States  
**Reserve:** Daniele Lelli, Italy

**Reining:** Felix Schnabel, Germany  
**Reserve:** Kelly Truesdell, Canada

**Best horse caretakers:**  
**Team The Netherlands**

**Most improved team:**  
**Team Dominican Republic**

**High point horse:**  
**For The General**  
1997 brown gelding by General Mito and out of Ole Jewels by Midnight Deposit  
*Owned by Sherry Newbigging, Cambridge, Ontario*

**Reserve:** Zipsavannah Rose  
1998 palomino mare by Irresistabelle Zip and out of Savanna Cookie Reed by Jets Played First  
*Owned by Suzanne Sprague, East Aurora, New York*



one judge's card. In addition to the United States and Germany, gold and silver medals went to riders from Italy, Belgium, Austria, Canada, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

"It's all about the horses and the kids," said 2008 Youth World Cup Chairperson Patti Carter. "And you can't have the event without the horses."

Gracious horse owners from Canada and the northeastern United States hauled in top all-around, cutting and reining horses – along with their show tack – for the teams to ride. It was the universal opinion that this might have been the best overall group of horses ever gathered for a Youth World Cup.

"It's in the middle of the summertime and busy show seasons; for owners to give up their horses for 10 days says volumes," Patti added. "That's pretty incredible."

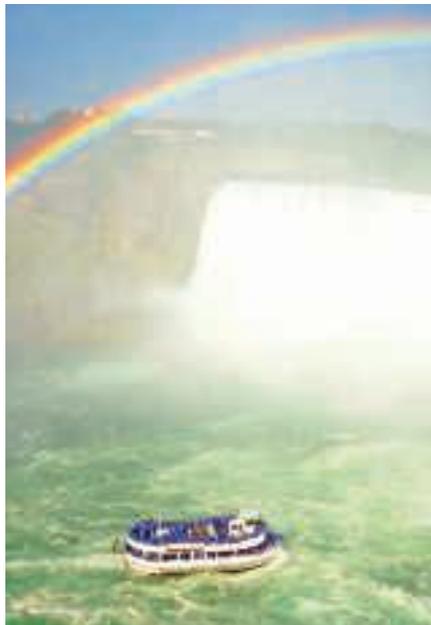
Host country Canada certainly rolled out the welcome mat. As the week went on, Canadian Quarter Horse Association volunteers shared tasks from unloading hay or punching

**"This win and these buckles are the exclamation point at the end of a very long sentence."  
Team United States Coach  
Nancy Cahill, Madisonville, Texas**

RIVERBEND DESIGNS



Andrea Martinez of Team Dominican Republic throws a rope during a teambuilding exercise one evening at the dorms. The teams were housed at the University of Western Ontario's Perth Hall dormitory. "International incidents" – evening water fights, volleyball matches, late-night visits from Two-Bits and games – made for some new international friendships.



Several teams rode the Maid of the Mist to the base of Niagara Falls.



Team Canada's Mallory McKewen and The Netherlands' Michelle Linssen ride in heat one of the western pleasure. Mallory placed eighth overall.



MacKenzie Harvey of Toronto, Ontario, was the very last rider of the very last class of the 2008 Youth World Cup, and she went out in a blaze of glory. Riding Docs Daring Me, MacKenzie won a silver medal for Team Canada.



Anastasia Bienfait of Team France readjusts her hat as she and Jo C Yankee move into their fast circle. She placed fifth under both judges. It was the first time for a team from France to enter the Youth World Cup competition.



Felix Schnabel turned in amazing scores while riding Marilou Paradis' Chexy Brennass. He won first under both judges in reining for Team Germany.



Team Sweden's Elin Engblom warms up her horse for the western pleasure clinic. Elin won a silver in hunt seat equitation.



Marissa Dalton of Team United States took home the first win of the 2008 AQHA Youth World Cup, which was in showmanship.



Team Israel decorates its stall area. All of the teams displayed national pride with their stall decorations.

RIVERBEND DESIGNS



T. Joe Jeane of Team United States was first place under one judge for the cutting event.



Madeleine Kay, 18, of Team Australia participated in the 2004 AQHA Youth World Cup. The 2008 Youth World Cup was her last opportunity to compete in the event, and she gave this advice to those wanting to be a part of the AQHA event: "Ride lots of horses and different levels of horses, green ones, too."



Team New Zealand pauses for a group shot in front of the American Falls on the Canadian side of Niagara Falls.



African djembe drums were brought out for all the teams to play at a banquet. Led by The Drum Café, the exercise helped build team spirit and cooperation.

## HOW YOUTH WORLD CUP WORKS

- Before the teams arrive, organizers sort the pool of donated horses into groups of varying experience levels.
- Each country brings a team of five riders and has the option of bringing non-riders or alternates.
- At the beginning of the competition week, the teams draw the groups of horses they will have for the competition.
- Teams go through several clinics with Professional Horsemen to get to know their horses.
- The first day of the competition features seven all-around classes: showmanship, horsemanship, western pleasure, hunter under saddle, hunt seat equitation, western riding and trail.
- The cutting and reining are on separate days, with a clinic in the morning and the competition in the afternoon.
- The last day of the competition is another round of the seven all-around classes.
- Points are given for the top-10 overall placings in each class – the team with the highest points wins.
- As soon as everyone has rested a bit, organizers start thinking about the next event, which is two years away.



Nikita van Berdendonk of Team The Netherlands guides Gab Power Shock through the second day of trail competition.



Team Italy's Sara D'Imperio breaks down in tears of happiness when it is announced she received first place under one of the judges in the second day of showmanship.



Team Belgium's Alexandre Bruls sports sunglasses while warming up Taylored By Tabu for the second day of trail classes. They finished fourth in that class.



Team Dominican Republic takes a group photo with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. The Mounties performed drills for the youth in an exclusive performance.



The teams sported color-coordinated shirts during the 2008 Youth World Cup.

lunch cards to organizing awards and manning the buses. The spirit of volunteerism extended to class sponsors and Professional Horsemen who gave clinics. They came from across North America.

"The thing that was the most humbling and overwhelming for me was to see how everybody pitched in and worked, from start to finish," Patti added.

And if you asked the "World-Cuppers" what they'd remember most about this experience, high on the list was the chance to see legendary Niagara Falls before the competition began.

One of Team Germany's coaches, AQHA Judge Sylvia Jaeckle, said it best:

"We would really like to thank all the people who were involved with the organization of the Youth World Cup; everything has been organized fantastically. And a big thanks to all the volunteers and the horse owners who donated their wonderful horses – they were fantastic horses!

"It was a great experience for all of us. Without all those people, it would not have been." 📷



Team United Kingdom alternates Tom Howell and Ralph Titmuss wrote a blog on [www.aqha.com](http://www.aqha.com) highlighting their Youth World Cup experience. Team Denmark and Team United States also had blogs.

**Behind the Scenes**  
Get behind the scenes at the 2008 Youth World Cup with the *Journal's* online coverage at [AQHA.com: aqha.com/youth/activities/ywc/08coverage](http://aqha.com/youth/activities/ywc/08coverage). You'll find photos, team blogs, riders' stories and more.



The teams showed their patriotic spirit throughout the 2008 Youth World Cup. Here, AQHYA President Zane Pluhar and Mamie Tomlin, leadership members for Team USA, sport the red, white and blue.