

Team Nova Scotia headed to Kelowna, British Columbia for National Dressage August 13-15, 2010. Liia Roop (Avon Pony Club) competed at First Level, Rebecca Ongo (Annapolis Pony Club) competed at the Training Level, and Ashley Spicer (Evangeline Pony Club) competed at the Pre-Training Level. BC Interior hosted the 2010 National Dressage Competition at the Kelowna Riding Club. The riding facility is surrounded by the Okanagan Mountains which provided a beautiful background for the competition.



The competition got underway Friday morning with a welcome breakfast and horse draws. Liia had arrived only a few hours prior due to flight delays; but the girls were relieved she made it on time. The team proudly sported their new NS Team golf-shirts – and of course everybody wanted the NS Pony Club pin for their collection.



The team headed out early to the Kelowna Riding Club to get their first look at the horses generously donated for the competition. The team was met by a small group of volunteer grooms desperately trying to get the horses bathed, braided and ready to meet their national riders. The team realized within a few minutes there was no way five grooms were going to be able to prepare over 20 horses for competition tryouts at 10:00AM. They dropped their gear, and in the true spirit of the East Coast, volunteered to help out. Liia grabbed a braid kit and got to work braiding horses, Ashley & Rebecca got busy in the bathing bay.

Over the three days of competition, the blue shirts with the NS flag were a common sight in the stables; whether it was cleaning stalls, tacking up horses, or bathing, Team NS could always be found giving the volunteer grooms a hand. More than once they were acknowledged for their efforts; and during the awards ceremony the Second Level Champion Johanna McKeen gave her groom award to Nova Scotia.



Ashley Spicer, Pre-Training try-out on her #2 horse draw



Rebecca saddling up her #2 horse draw

Horse tryouts finally got underway and Team NS were introduced to their mounts. The air in Kelowna was very dry, and dust prevailed over the competition grounds. Sometimes the riders would disappear in a dust cloud only to reappear on the other side.

There were a variety of hiccups with tryouts resulting in Liia not riding both her horses until the following day – our First Level Rider was not having the best of luck (first flight delays; and now horse delays) but in the true manner of Pony Club sportsmanship she kept a smile on her face and continued to set an example for her younger team mates.

Friday evening the team decked out in their formal dress gear and attended the 2010 National Dressage banquet. The team was starting to feel the 4 hour time difference; but there is nothing like an ‘all you can eat dessert bar’ to give you a big enough sugar high to hang in for the best part of the night - guest speaker Karen Robinson delivered a wonderful presentation on designing a free style routine. Karen is one of the foremost freestyle designers in the world having provided choreography for Olympic, World Cup and WEG freestyle routines.

Saturday night after a BBQ supper, participants and spectators were treated to a freestyle demonstration from Olympic 2012 hopeful Janine Little. Janine and her nine year old Hanoverian gelding presented a beautiful Grand Prix freestyle program that wowed everyone in the audience.

Throughout Saturday and Sunday, Team Nova Scotia successfully completed all four phases of the national dressage competition. Two dressage tests per level, a called mystery test (where the rider picked their test from a hat and had only five minutes to review it prior to riding), and finally the fourth phase a written exam.



Liia Roop, riding her First Level Test sporting the Avon Pony Club saddle pad!



Rebecca Ongo, warming up for the Training Level mystery test

Throughout the national competition NS stayed together as a team, they rode as a team and during the awards ceremony – they celebrated as a team!



Ashley, Rebecca & Liia proudly hold the NS Flag as they wait for the awards presentation



Liia Roop, Rebecca Ongo & Ashley Spicer (NSPC 2010 Dressage Team)



Liia, Rebecca & Ashley proudly hold the NS Flag and the teams' many achievements throughout the competition



Our NS Flag Rocks!!

With the competition behind them, it was time to hit the road for some sightseeing!! The team crammed into their little red car and headed out to take in the sights (well after a small detour at Dairy Queen for some well deserved celebratory ice cream!).

First stop was downtown Kelowna – lush green grass, fragrant flowers and fresh water lakes surround downtown Kelowna.



The team visited Kelowna's new mural and Liia braved over her fear of heights to sit up on the wall for a group hug!

With the whirlwind tour of downtown Kelowna complete; the team headed up the Okanagan Mountains. While travelling up the mountains, the team laughed at the adult chaperones near panic at the shear drop off the road from the right hand side of the car. Riding the roadways of the Okanagan was very much like riding a roller coaster – complete with steep turns, twists and the occasional lookout for rams with horns!

The team arrived at Lake Okanagan Vacation Resort where they decided to tour the grounds and step into Lake Okanagan.





Team Nova Scotia lives it up in style at ‘their accommodations’ while at Lake Okanagan Resort.

Although National Dressage was over, the members of team Nova Scotia were still on the move for the rest of the summer. Liia took the bus from Kelowna and headed to Vancouver to meet up with her family to tour the southern side of BC. Ashley returned home to prepare for the NS Regional Dressage Competition while Rebecca prepared for Regional C2 testing.

The girls were able to experience the best that pony club has to offer – the opportunity to travel Canada; develop friendships with pony club members from across the country while competing in a sport they love.