

Maddy Darst Dominates the Green Hunter Division at the 2009 USEF Pony Finals

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Lexington, KY – There is a lot that goes into the makings of a champion pony. Just ask Ohio's Meredith "Maddy" Darst. She would know. And to prove it, two of her mounts-Rock the Boat and Brownland's Mr. Mac-jumped their way through the over fences phase of the 2009 United States Equestrian Federation Pony Finals National Championships to take the Medium Green Hunter Pony and the Small Green Hunter Pony champion titles. In addition to that, the five-year-old Brownland's Mr. Mac (or Starburst as he is known in the barn) was crowned the 2009 USEF Overall Green Grand Hunter Pony Champion on a domination score of 1,060.

The 12-year-old rider put her all into the trainer and preparation of the overall champion according to her mother, and famed trainer at Lochmoor Stables, Mindy Darst. If ever there was a proud parent, this would certainly be true as evidenced by happy tears and earnest words of praise for her daughter's accomplishments.

"When Starburst was three, we got a call from Kim Burnett-Mitchell who said she wanted Maddy to train him," said Mindy. The grey/roan Welsh gelding that stands 12.1 hands was graceful and confident across the course laid out in today's deciding competition. Bred at Brownland Farm in Franklin, TN, by the Anderton Family, this pony was picture perfect and walked away with the Brownland Farm Green Hunter Pony Championship Perpetual Trophy.

"I am thrilled and happy for both ponies," said Maddy. "I'm just so excited. And I'm really happy because I wanted to win this for Sissy Anderton." She expressed just how big a deal it was to win at the USEF Pony Finals, especially after having won so many champion and reserve champion titles this year with the pony. For her, the only one to have ever ridden the pony, it seemed to be the ultimate prize.

"She did all the work herself," continued Mindy. "I just couldn't possibly be any prouder of her."

And, of course, there were two wins for the young rider as she also took the title in the Medium Green Hunter Pony division. Chopper, as Rock the Boat is known, made his way from All Seasons Farm, and according to the Darsts, this win was six years in the making. The 13.1 hand bay gelding only began showing in the small ponies this past winter.

"He was so green," laughed Mindy. "He wasn't really changing leads, but under the hands of Tom Wright, that changed."

It was hard to imagine the pony doing anything but textbook work by the sights of him in action at the Kentucky Horse Park's Walnut Arena. He racked up an impressive score of 1,043, 16 points ahead of the reserve champion pony.