

# Ballantrae rider earns equestrian honors

The combination of Mandy Van Veen and her little sister's 20-year-old pony Chelsea proved to be a winner down at the CNE last weekend. Mandy is a 14-year-old Ballantrae resident who, like so many young-

sters exposed to the world of horses, has become hooked on things equestrian.

She rides with the Toronto and North York Pony Club, a group of pony operations with barns spread out from York Region right into

Toronto.

For the past two years, Mandy has been riding with the A team, the number one squad, of the club's Prince Philip Games program.

The games, or PPG as they are referred to, were initially established



From Where I Live

Bruce Stapley

as a means of providing young riders with an exciting type of competition before they are old enough to become involved in high level testing and showing in recognized fields such as dressage, show jumping, and three-day eventing.

Anyone who has attended a PPG meet knows about the breathtaking excitement, the hilarity, and the sheer delight as riders compete as individuals or with their teammates in such pursuits as riding with an egg held in a spoon, going around pylons in a specific sequence, or jumping along beside their ponies in a potato sack.

The kids cheer lustily as their mates go through the course, handing off objects to each other as the relay races move along. Photo finishes sometimes occur as all teams do the course at the same time.

And while Mandy has her own horse which she uses for more conventional riding, she found kid sister Tricia's less frisky pony Chelsea to be ideally suited for the gentle stops, starts, and turns required in PPG competition. After all, it doesn't take much of a jolt to send that egg crashing to the ground, and the younger horses are usually chomping at the bit, so to speak, making them a little too aggressive for the nuances of PPG.

Mandy and Chelsea made the perfect duo, helping their team prevail in the five-meet series against other pony clubs held this summer. Their overall victory earned them the honor of representing Central Ontario at the provincial championships at the CNE.

Up against the Western Ontario champs from Caledon and the Eastern Ontario winners from Ottawa, the Toronto and North York unit walked away with all the marbles. Which means Mandy will now head off to Vancouver, B.C. later this month to contest the Canadian PPG championship with the two best teams the west has to offer. The second place-finishing Caledon team is also entitled to make the trip west.

When I talked to Mandy's father Frank on Tuesday, he was busily making preparations for the trip west, while enthusing at the accomplishments of his daughter and her three young teammates.

He was also looking ahead beyond the next year, Mandy's last year of PPG A level eligibility. If she continues to climb the ladder the way she has, she would then be able to try out for the Canadian PPG team which competes internationally.

For now, however, Mandy plans to enjoy this year's success as far as it might go, while basking in the thrill of a trip to the west coast to represent her province in competition. But when it's all over, she'll have to find a way of thanking little sister Tricia for being so willing to share.



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