

Brannigan Goes Two-For-Two At American Eventing Championships

The young rider from California tops two divisions in Illinois.

Kat Netzler

Leading from start to finish seems an uneventful way to clinch a championship, but considering the long, rocky road Jennie Brannigan took to the Wellpride American Eventing Championships, she was more than happy to win in such prosaic fashion.

The 20-year-old rider from San Diego, Calif., emerged the only double winner at this year's championships, held Sept. 12-16 at Lamplight Equestrian Center in Wayne, Ill.

Brannigan rode her own Cooper, a 6-year-old Dutch Warmblood, to the junior/young rider preliminary championship and scored the win in the junior/young rider training with Mona Munos' Plain Jane, a 5-year-old Oldenburg-Thoroughbred. But her season up to this point hasn't been so smooth.

"It's been a lot of heartbreak after heartbreak," Brannigan admitted.

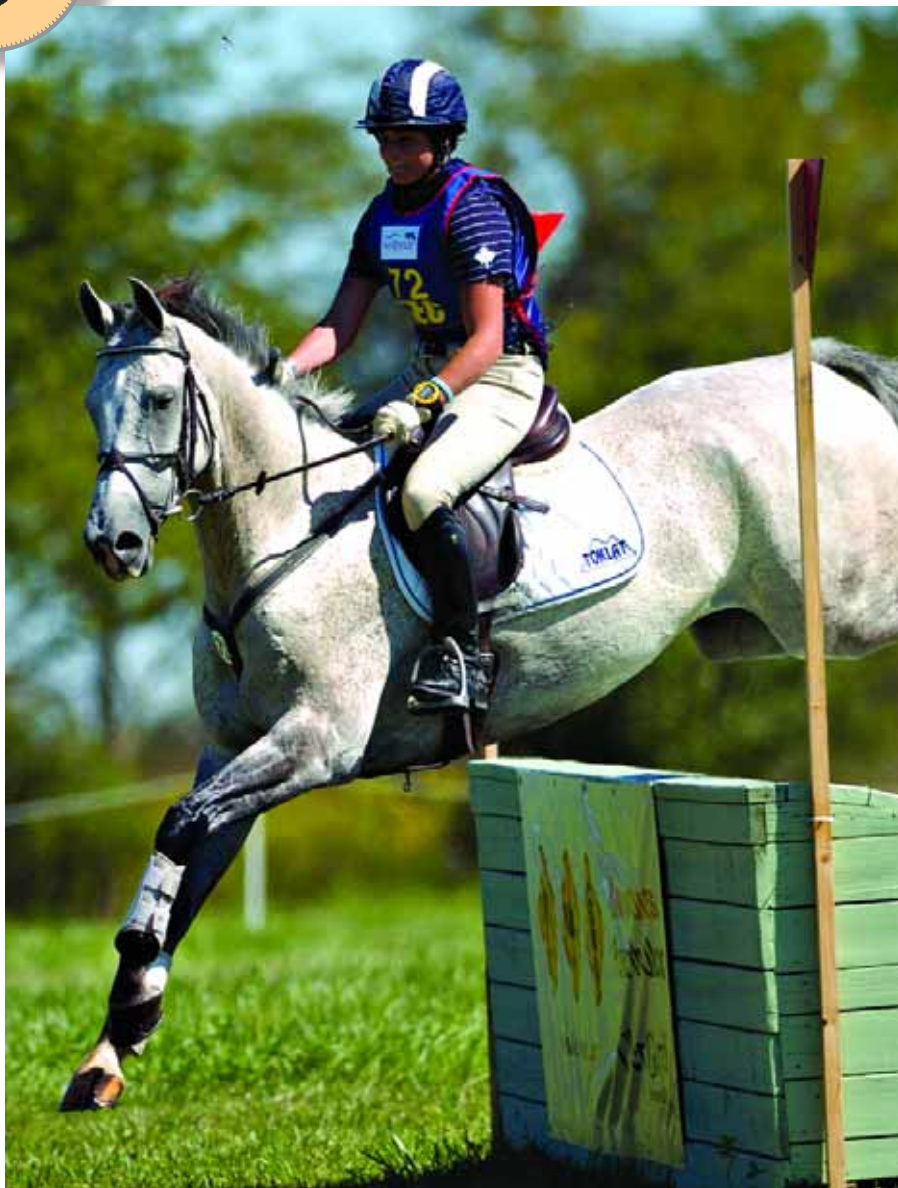
At the North American Junior and Young Riders Championships (Va.) in July, she had been in first place with her CCI** horse Kozmo going into show jumping, only to fail the final horse inspection.

"Young Riders was really hard for me not only because I was in first place individually but because my team also needed my score," she said.

Losing both team and individual gold medals was particularly stinging because Brannigan had endured a bevy of trials and tribulations already. In 2004, she lost her first NAJYRC mount to colic, and her new horse Kozmo later developed the same condition. While emergency surgery at Estrella Equine Hospital in Paso Robles, Calif., saved his life, the Brannigan family was unable to shoulder the massive, unexpected bill. So Dave Bogenrief, DVM, who also sponsors Brannigan, worked out an agreement in which the vet clinic would take ownership of the horse after the surgery, allowing Brannigan to continue competing him.

Jennie Brannigan of California led the AEC junior/young rider preliminary division from start to finish with her own Cooper.

"He was hit by a car before I bought him," said Brannigan of Kozmo. "He flipped over the roof and possibly broke a hip joint. I've actually never had a soundness problem with him because of that accident, but he has two completely different front feet. If you looked at them you'd think I was crazy for even eventing him, but he doesn't know it."



Other AEC Winners

- Corinne Ashton of Massachusetts topped the advanced division with her long-time partner Dobbin. The pair moved up from seventh place after dressage with a double-clear cross-country round and one rail in show jumping.
- Tiffany Lunney of Colorado rode My Tuition to a win in the amateur preliminary division, moving up from third after cross-country despite 4 jumping faults on Sunday.
- Emily Beshear of Virginia followed up her intermediate triumph at last year's AEC with a win in the novice horse division this year with Phinneus. The pair led the competition from start to finish on their dressage score of 22.6.

AMERICAN EVENTING CHAMPIONSHIPS

Wayne, Ill.—Sept. 12-16

ADVANCED

| HORSE/RIDER | DRESSAGE | CROSS-COUNTRY Jump/Time | SHOW JUMPING Jump/Time | TOTAL |
|----------------------------------|----------|----------------------------|---------------------------|-------|
| | | | | |
| 1. Dobbin/Corinne Ashton | 32.5 | 0/0 | 4/0 | 36.5 |
| 2. Windfall III/Darren Chiacchia | 29.2 | 0/1.2 | 8/0 | 38.4 |
| 3. Arthur/Allison Springer | 27.1 | 0/5.6 | 0/8 | 40.7 |
| 4. Rocket/Donna Smith | 30.0 | 0/6.8 | 4/0 | 40.8 |
| 5. Wonderful Will/Mike Winter | 36.3 | 0/5.2 | 0/1 | 42.5 |
| 6. Stoop/John Williams | 29.6 | 0/0 | 12/1 | 42.6 |

Also competed: 7. Livingstone/H. Bennett, 44.9; 8. Courageous Comet/B. Holder, 48.3; 9. Neville Bardos/B. Martin, 49.6; 10. Minstral, K. List, 52.9; 11. Radio Flyer/D. Crowell, 53.7; 12. Magic Carpet/V. Fenwick, 54.9; 13. Better I Do It/D. Chiacchia, 56.6; 14. Orion/C. Thompson, 60.5; 15. The Gingerbread Man/C. Eagles, 71.6; 16. Oz/M. Kuchta, 73.7; 17. Loughnatousa Max/E. Estes, 175.4.

Withdrawn before show jumping: Star Wars/M. Foster. Retired on cross-country: Tumble Dry/J. Schildmier.

With Kozmo finally in form to compete at NAJYRC, Brannigan headed to Virginia, only to have her rig break down on the interstate en route. But after hitching a ride with show jumper Jay Land, everything seemed to be working out.

"I was very emotional after his dressage test because to go into the ring and beat Nate Chambers or Kate Luce on the flat with their nice warmbloods with this dinky little Thoroughbred was amazing," she said.

But after a perfect cross-country round, he didn't jog sound. "I've been having trouble keeping shoes on him since. We tried to do the CIC*** at Poplar [Ga.] the week before the AEC, but we had more problems with his shoes, so he didn't end up even running cross-country. So it was nice to have the AEC!" she said.

► Sweet Victory

In Illinois, the road to victory finally rolled out like a red carpet for Brannigan. She tied for first in the preliminary dressage on a 29.6, and when fellow leaders Julie Wolfert and Wondaree Merlin were eliminated for missing a jump on cross-country, Brannigan got the win in her sights and never looked back.

"I really feel bad for her," said Brannigan, familiar with the sickening feeling of losing the lead. "That jump would have been easy to miss. I had to angle it just to make it, coming out of the woods. I thought the course was difficult but appropriate for championship level. My horse came off the course more confident than when he left."

Brannigan got Cooper last year as a gift from her grandfather.

"He decided to give me money for a new horse, since I had made the developing rider list, and [he recognized that] I was getting serious about it," she said. "So Hawley Bennett and I went out to Kelli Temple's in Virginia and were so lucky to have found him. Even though he was green, the minute I sat on him, I knew he had that something. I decided to go out and find the nicest young horse I could find, and Cooper was definitely it."

The horse has since won five preliminary events.

Canadian rider Bennett, who was

Brannigan's coach in California, introduced Brannigan to Georgia-based Mike Winter, who also rides for Canada, and his wife Emma several years ago.

"I went out to work with Emma for a few months while Hawley and Mike were in Athens [for the 2004 Olympics]," said Brannigan.

After returning to California, Brannigan began working with hunter/jumper trainer Susie Hutchison.

"I decided to go out and find the nicest young horse I could find, and Cooper was definitely it."

—Jennie Brannigan

"Susie has been a huge supporter of my riding for the past 2½ years and has given me so much more confidence in myself," said Brannigan. "She's an amazing person and the easiest, best person to work for. She'd come to the events and watch my advanced horse as well and always tried to make it affordable for me to bring my own horses to hunter/jumper shows. She really bridges the gap."

In her training level division at the AECs, Brannigan sat second after dressage with Plain Jane with a 27.9, and the pair added nothing to their score in the following days. When cross-country leaders Nina Ligon and Chai Thai dropped one rail in show jumping, Brannigan captured her second win of the day.

Plain Jane, who had only done two training level events prior to the championships, came from an auction in Del Mar, Calif. Munos bought the

mare on a whim, hoping she would become a good starter mount for her daughter, but "Jane" turned out to have a bit of a hot side. Munos took her to Hutchison's

Built Fjord Tough

SNF Maarta, a 13.3-hand Norwegian Fjord owned by Neil and Ruth Sorum of Lebanon, Ohio, topped the open beginner novice division on her dressage score of 23.0 with rider Lauren Chumley in the tack. The pair placed ninth at the AEC last year in a 50-horse class, so Chumley was thrilled to win this year's division of more than 70.

"I had never intended on jumping her or using her as an event horse, but I took her over a crossrail when she was 3, and she just ate it up, so we decided 'we're not selling this one!'" said 23-year-old Chumley, who has been working at the Sorums' Fjord breeding farm since high school. The rider also tied for seventh in the same division with Rung Rim's Gianne, a Connemara pony owned by Pat Reichle.

After Maarta's steady performances at the beginner novice level, Chumley plans to move the 9-year-old mare up to novice next year and hopes to make it back to the AEC.

"She gives 110 percent every day and jumps her heart out, and she's very expressive. She does drive, but she doesn't really care for it. She just gets this indignant look like, 'How dare you make me drag you along behind me?' She just loves to jump."

"She's very expressive,"
said Ohio rider Lauren Chumley
of her AEC beginner novice
champion, SNF Maarta.



barn for training, where Brannigan landed the ride.

"On our first cross-country schooling day, it took me 40 minutes just to get her through the water the first time," said Brannigan. At the AEC, however, "She was super cross-country. I thought it walked harder than it rode, but she just cantered right around."

This fall Brannigan will continue cam-

paigned on the East Coast, having returned to Georgia three months ago to train with Mike and get some teaching experience. "I really wanted to get to teach more and focus on my eventing more," she said.

"I really enjoy teaching, and I want to get better at it. And he's been really supportive of my riding, so I'm enjoying it out here right now."

Chiacchia Sweeps Young Horse Divisions

Darren Chiacchia of Ocala, Fla., was a winner twice over on Wednesday in the 4- and 5-year-old divisions of the Young Event Horse final at the American Eventing Championships. Jean Kopperud's Hanno, the 2006 4-year-old champion, claimed this year's 5-year-old title, while Chiacchia's own Dibelius followed his stablemate's lead with a win in the younger division.

"Truly, my passion is the young horses," said Chiacchia, who sits on the U.S. Eventing Association's Young Horse Task Force. "With the sport really requiring the super athlete, you've got to fill your barn by design, and I'm enjoying the process."

Hanno is the first American-born son of Chiacchia's advanced mount, Windfall II, and is out of the mare Hulta. Chiacchia purchased Dibelius (E.H. Michelangelo—Donnata) at auction in Germany as a 2-year-old.

Virginia-based Brit Leslie Law also found success in Wednesday's YEH competition, riding his two prospects to second and third places in the 5-year-old division. Java, a Hanoverian import from Germany, took the yellow ribbon, while Law's All The Buzz

claimed the reserve championship, as well as the training horse championship later in the week.

"He's a special, talented horse," Law said of All The Buzz, a Dutch Warmblood imported from England in May. "He has a fantastic brain and good movement, and I'd like to think that he'll be produced for the London 2012 Olympics, honestly. He's everything [my Olympic gold-medal mount] Shear L'Eau was at 5."

Cheryl Quick's La Tee Da (Judge Sefas—Miss Miki-moto) emerged as runner-up in the 4-year-old division with rider Tera MacDonald of Wisconsin. The pair also led the open beginner novice division of the AEC from start to finish, but MacDonald volunteered midweek to ride hors concours because she had competed another of Quick's horses through preliminary this summer. Although the AEC beginner novice division is classified as "open," qualification rules state that riders may not have competed above novice level during the qualifying period.



(Kai Metzler Photo)

Darren Chiacchia rode Jean Kopperud's Hanno to his second Young Event Horse championship, topping this year's 5-year-old division. The pair also finished ninth in the preliminary horse championship at the AEC.



(Kai Metzler Photo)

Michigan rider Ashley DeBoer and Safari finished on their dressage score to win the amateur training division at the AEC.

Michigan, And Again

The drive home from Illinois was a pleasant one for riders from the Shoeman Road Family Farm in Chelsea, Mich., as Ashley DeBoer and Taylor Foote took championship titles in the amateur training and junior/young rider novice divisions, respectively.

"I've come back down to reality now, going back to class," said DeBoer, a 24-year-old student at Spring Arbor University's Lansing campus, where she is pursuing a degree in elementary education. She also works as manager at the Shoeman Road Farm. "Everything I learn in teaching relates not only to my horses but to my students as well."

One of those students, Foote, was a first-timer at the AEC but had no trouble winning at novice with Lazerbeam, a 12-year-old Andalusian-Paint gelding. "It felt really good," said Foote, 11, after riding a fault-free show jumping round on Sunday to solidify their win. "He was really confident."

Foote and her three sisters compete in hunter/jumper shows and eventing, and her older sister Madison was on hand at the AEC to help Taylor one last time before she departs for Scotland to train with Ian Stark. Madison also helps coach Taylor, along with Robin Walker, the resident instructor at Shoeman Road.

"She rode very, very well," Madison said of

The AEC By The Numbers

578: The ultimate bridle number of the competition.

\$55,000: The amount of total prize money awarded to winners.

19.0: The lowest dressage score of the event, logged by Tera MacDonald on Cheryl Quick's 4-year-old gelding La Tee Da in the open beginner novice division.

\$7: The price per bale of hay at Lamplight Equestrian Center.

\$7.50: The price per bag of shavings.

0: The number of horses in the advanced division to finish on their dressage score.

6: The most horses ridden by one rider — Boyd Martin of Australia, by way of Pennsylvania.

10: The number of consecutive hours of cross-country rides on Friday.

67: The number of horses representing the home state of Illinois. Virginia sent 54, followed by Kentucky and Ohio with 33 apiece.

Taylor. "She works hard, she listens well, and she's a delightful sister."

Taylor and Lazerbeam scored a 27.4 in the dressage to take the lead and added no penalties in the jumping phases.

"There was one jump on cross-country that I thought might be hard," said Taylor. "One of them had water actually on top of it [in a trough], but he didn't even look at it."

"Everything I learn in teaching relates not only to my horses but to my students as well."

—Ashley DeBoer

The Foote family purchased Lazerbeam in January from Lauren Leavitt, who, along with Donna Smith, competed the horse up to preliminary. Foote plans to ride on a novice team at the Midsouth Three-Day Event and Team Challenge (Ky.) in October, then move up to training level in Florida during the winter.

Foote and her sisters are all home schooled, which allows them to travel south to compete on the winter circuit.

"My sisters all love horses," said Taylor, who wants to be a professional someday. She's not ready to pick between jumpers and eventing just yet, though. "I would do both professionally if I could," she said.

DeBoer may not be a professional just yet, but her win in the amateur training with Safari got her one step closer. On a 30.5, the pair tied for fourth place after the dressage and moved up in the jumping

Taylor Foote, 11, of Michigan rode Lazerbeam to win the junior/young rider novice division in her first appearance at the AEC.

phases with fault-free rounds.

"I thought it rode really well, and all the combinations were perfect," said DeBoer. "This is only her third training, and I was really nervous that we were going to get time penalties, so I took a really tight inside turn at the first water, and she was great. Stadium was awesome. That's definitely her strong point. She's a careful jumper."

DeBoer had plans to transition the 6-year-old Hanoverian mare from eventing to jumpers, but after their win at the AEC, she's not so sure. "But I think that's where Safari would definitely shine," she said.

DeBoer bought the gray mare 1½ years ago while on a trip to Germany with Alex Gerding.

"I wasn't even thinking about buying a horse, and when we saw her she was green. But he said that she had international show jumping ability. [If I switch her to jumpers] I would like to get a Thoroughbred to event. I will always want to event, and I've had Thoroughbreds before, so I'm used to them being a little crazy!"

She bought her first horse off the track when she was 14, with money she'd gotten from babysitting and paper routes. "I did dressage with him for awhile until I came to Shoeman Road four years ago and started jumping, and then that was it," she said.

Like Taylor, DeBoer plans to move her horse up a level in the near future. "Theresa Foote [Taylor and Madison's mother] and Robin Walker deserve thanks for everything that Taylor and I have done," she said. "They try so hard to make this all work for us."

WAYNE, IL—SEPT. 12-16.

JUDGES: Ulrich Schmitz, Sue Smithson, Sheila Strickler, Adrienne Pot, Cindy DePorter, Ana Schraevsandee.

TECHNICAL DELEGATES: Malcolm Hook, Deeda Randall.

▲ **Int.** - 1. Rolling Stone II, N. Chambers, 33.4; 2. Sweepee Dean, J. Williams, 41.4; 3. Under The Influence, E.T. Petersen, 47.6. ▲ **Am. Prel.** - 1. My Tuition, T. Lunney, 37.9; 2. Black Sox Shiraz, S. Baker, 39.5; 3. Johnny Be Good, S. Baker, 39.9. ▲ **Prel. Horse** - 1. Walk On The Moon, L. Kieffer, 29.2; 2. Unsteelable, M. Winter, 30.4; 3. Samson VIII, J. Dutton, 30.7. ▲ **Jr./Y.R. Prel.** - 1. Cooper, J. Brannigan, 29.6; 2. In Any Event, O. Upham, 33.3; 3. Leprechauns Rowdy Boy, M. Miller, 39.6. ▲ **Am. Trg.** - 1. Safari, A. DeBoer, 30.5; 2. Paxton Abbey, M. Jordan, 33.2; 3. Skyz The Limit, C. Ainsworth, 33.2. ▲ **Trg. Horse** - 1. All The Buzz, L. Law, 23.7; 2. Harrison, M. Huber, 26.3; 3. Rapport, C. Stoop, 26.8. ▲ **Jr./Y.R. Trg.** - 1. Plain Jane, J. Brannigan, 27.9; 2. Chai Thai, N. Ligon, 29.8; 3. Simplicity IV, J.T. Humphrey, 30.0. ▲ **Am. Nov.** - 1. R.Romeo, C. Lawton, 29.0; 2. Blue, R. Bystrom, 30.0; 3. For Play, J. Koltavy, 30.5. ▲ **Nov. Horse** - 1. Phinneus, E. Beshear, 22.6; 2. Legato, J. Montgomery, 25.3; 3. Safe Harbor, M. Payne, 27.9. ▲ **Jr./Y.R. Nov.** - 1. Lazerbeam, T. Foote, 27.4; 2. Fairycatcher, A. Read, 27.9; 3. Saint Liam, T. Stam, 29.0. ▲ **Open Beg. Nov.** - 1. SNF Maarta, L. Chumley, 23.0; 2. Poncho Villa, R. Smith, 24.5; 3. Independence II, S. Rust, 26.5.



(Kat Metzler Photo)



SALIRE

Training Level Eventer

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Gillian Clissold

703-675-5361

gillian.clissold@verizon.net