



The ParaEquestrian Division Championships

Who is qualified to participate in the ParaEquestrian Division Championships?

In order to qualify to compete in the ParaEquestrian divisions, riders 25 years old and under must provide proof of a permanent physical disability. Compensating aids and special equipment required in order for the athlete to compete fairly and safely will be allowed.

Why include ParaEquestrian competition at the Youth Dressage Festival?

Most competitions serve only the advanced or elite athlete, and very little opportunity has been available for the young and developing rider with disabilities. The Youth Dressage Festival has a long-standing tradition of serving as an important vehicle for development in the sport not previously available to youth riders. By offering ParaEquestrian divisions that provide quality competition, education and inclusion, the Youth Dressage Festival can now assist equestrian athletes with physical disabilities to develop to their fullest potential in the sport.

How will the ParaEquestrian Division Championships be contested at the Youth Dressage Festival?

Two divisions for riders with physical disabilities will be offered. ParaEquestrian Division A is an entry-level division allowing riders to compete at either the walk/trot (with minimal trot) or the walk only. Modeled on the Youth Dressage Festival Training Level Division A, competition in this division precludes cross-entering into other divisions.

ParaEquestrian Division B allows riders with a disability to choose the intermediate level walk, walk/trot or walk/trot/canter test that best suits their current skill level. Riders in this division are also allowed to qualify for any of the open divisions at the competition.

What is the benefit to riders with disabilities to compete in the Youth Dressage Festival's ParaEquestrian Division Championships? Why should they opt to compete in the Open Divisions?

For other national and international competitions, riders with disabilities must be classified, a process that defines their physical disability and then places them with others of the same level of disability.

The event organizers, however, firmly believe that disability does not mean inability. Therefore, at the Youth Dressage Festival, all ParaEquestrian riders are encouraged to ride at the highest *skill level* that they are able to achieve, regardless of their level of disability. In addition, ParaEquestrian Division B riders are encouraged to compete in the open division championship that best matches their current skill level.

How will excellence in the ParaEquestrian Division Championships be acknowledged?

As in the open divisions, gold, silver and bronze medals will be awarded to riders with the three highest scores. Prizes will also be awarded to riders finishing in the top ten positions in their respective divisions.

In addition, the Miss Jane Marple Perpetual Trophy will be presented to the rider with a disability who scores the highest, regardless of the division in which she or he has competed. Miss Jane Marple, retired in 2004 carried many of our U.S. ParaEquestrian athletes to championship honors, including two gold medals in Atlanta in 1996, several championships at the USET Festival of Champions and participation at every NAYRC competition through 2004.

