

# Judge's Perspective From DeDe Bache-Shumate

## One Of VHSA's Busiest Associate Show Judges Comments on Trends – Good And Bad – In Our Competitions

I see our Associate shows as generally healthy in terms of turnout. Showing at the recognized level has gotten so expensive that it's driven more people to the more affordable Associate shows.

There are, however, some divisions that aren't filling well everywhere I go. The first is green ponies. This has to do with the USEF change in the pony measurement rules, moving the age at which ponies can get their permanent card from six to eight years of age. This has made it almost impossible to sell a green pony these days because you can't get a card until later. It's crazy. It means a breeder has to hang on to a pony for a long time, making it less economically feasible to produce show ponies. A lot of top

Bache-Shumate.....from p. 17 are good models. I see kids there taking their wins and losses graciously. They congratulate their fellow riders and show respect. Sometimes, the more you win the harder it is to lose, but riders need to learn to lose well too.

A good thing about the Associate shows is the ability to accumulate points and compete at the VHSA Associate Championship show in November at Lexington. Clyde Poarch does a great job of producing a special show with great prizes, that gives kids a chance to work throughout the season to qualify for a bigger show. It gives local riders a sense of what it's like to compete all season and show against horses and riders from all over the state.

Clinics are also a great way to learn, and I highly recommend doing clinics to all riders. Everybody has a different opinion, something different they look for,

pony breeders are worried about that.

The other divisions I see getting smaller are the ones for younger kids. Pre-Short and Short Stirrup divisions used to be bombarded with entries, and now they are getting smaller. I think it has to do with all horse activities being expensive, and kids being involved in a lot of other sports as well. You don't see the kind of commitment to riding and horsemanship in kids and parents today that used to exist, the kind of dedication that it takes to succeed in this sport.

When I was coming along, I was at the barn every day. Kids need more saddle time than they often get now, and they need to learn to take care of their horses. That's why I like Pony Club and

different ideas. It's always good to go to a clinic and get someone else's take on something. It doesn't mean that your trainer's methods are wrong – you might just hear the same concept presented in a different way or learn some new exercises to achieve the same goal.

Another recommendation I have is for riders to spend a lot of time

4-H Clubs that emphasize care and knowledge of the horse.

Another big trend I see, and a bad one, is lack of horsemanship in the show ring. I see school horses used in division after division, all day long. I hate to see that. Or a pony who stops at a jump and is beaten by the rider. As a judge, I can enforce rules in the ring but I can't enforce horsemanship, and I can't police what goes on outside the ring either. In Maryland, shows have stewards to enforce rules relating to the welfare of the animals. This is true of dressage shows as well. It might be nice if we could work toward something like that.

I would like to see riders and trainers have better knowledge of the VHSA Associate rules. I think it's especially important for juniors, and we need to invest in their knowledge because they are the future of the sport. At a recent show I was judging, I had a rider fall off in the ring, and I excused her (according to the rules, you may not remount in the ring). She got back on anyway. I made her get off and lead her horse out of the ring.

the rail and watching these days, so they are missing out on a great learning opportunity.

Read more. Attend seminars (there are lots of free ones in our area). Spend more time at the barn.

My advice to parents in picking a trainer is similar. Watch a trainer at the shows and watch the kids who ride with that trainer. See how the trainer interacts with students in the warm-up ring and after the class. Watch how their students handle their horse or pony both in and out of the ring.

It's unfortunate that the cost of riding and having horses are driving kids into other activities. But our Associate shows offer an important opportunity for more affordable competition, and we need to make certain our participants are learning the proper horsemanship that applies at any level of competition.



PHOTO COURTESY: NAUECHO MELTON

**Bache-Shumate believes in investing in the knowledge of young riders -- they are the future of the sport.**

Trainers that focus on horsemanship place respect for the horse and safety of the rider above all else. Those trainers are knowledgeable about the rules. We don't see enough of that.

I would also like to see better sportsmanship at our shows. I think IEA and NCEL competitions continued on p. 21



PHOTO COURTESY: DEDE BACHE-SHUMATE

**DeDe Bache-Shumate aboard Lucky Number in 1982, on their way to a championship in the Small Junior Hunters and overall Grand Champion Junior Hunter at Upperville.**

standing on the rail and watching at shows. Watch how other riders ride every inch of the ring. Watch the pace, how they approach the jumps, how they ride the turns. I don't see as many kids standing on

### About the Author

On most weekends during the show season, DeDe Bache-Shumate can be found sitting in a judge's box, an activity she's enjoyed for 25 years. She's been riding since she was five years old, where she began at Summerduck Run Farm, getting a great foundation in riding and horsemanship by taking care of her pony there.

Over the years, she's enjoyed breaking and training young horses and showing them. Bache-Shumate has ridden for some great horsemen – J.A. Reynolds, Delmar Twyman, Oliver Brown, Bill Queen, Ethel Flynn – to name a few. She also works as a Dairy Microbiologist for the Virginia Department of Agriculture.