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## A Fabulous First Day of Dressage at 2019 Great American/USDF Region 3 Championships

*By Yellow Horse Marketing for the GDCTA*

With more than 350 horses entered in this year's **Great American Insurance Group/United States Dressage Federation (USDF) Region 3 Championships**, hosted October 11-13, 2019 by the Georgia Dressage and Combined Training Association, the Georgia International Horse Park was buzzing with activity on Friday as action got underway across seven rings of competition.

One of the first members of the new class of 2019 champions was adult amateur Tina Cook of Denton, N.C., who drove almost six hours to Conyers for her first visit to the site of equestrian competition in the 1996 Atlanta Olympics. And she wasted no time going straight into the winner's circle with her U.S.-bred PRE stallion Carbonero XCVI in the **Second Level Freestyle Championship** with a score of 69.550% ([watch their winning ride HERE](#), courtesy of Richard's Equine Video).

A lifelong rider who previously competed across multiple disciplines, Cook jokingly admitted "the older I got the bigger the jumps looked, so started riding dressage." With help from trainer Stacey Hastings, Cook took her first mount from a two-year-old to Grand Prix. Hastings then found Carbonero for her, and while some riders' preference may not be to have a stallion, Cook loves everything about her current partner. "My first mare was quite difficult," she remembered. "For 12 years we kind of butted heads, so Carbonero is easy compared to her! And all the geldings I've had have been a little boring, so I like his stallion attitude!"

But that feistiness almost backfired on Cook in the warmup where Carbonero displayed some impressive athletic moves as the pair prepared for their championship ride. "He was great yesterday so I don't know where that came from today, but he was a firecracker," she laughed. "He doesn't like having a lot of other horses around him, so I knew I just had to stick with it and let him get it out of his system."



*North Carolina's Tina Cook rode her PRE stallion Carbonero XCVI to victory in the Second Level Freestyle at the 2019 Great American/USDF Region 3 Championships in Georgia. Photo: Jennifer M. Keeler/Yellow Horse Marketing.*

Despite the theatrics in warmup, once in the ring the pair was all business for their challenging routine featuring rock music from Aerosmith, Guns N' Roses and AC/DC. "I like music that's fun – just like my horses, I don't like anything boring or ordinary," Cook chuckled. "For this freestyle, I made it a little hard on myself with the choreography going from counter canter to simple change which is still difficult for him, but we got through it and I was able to highlight how supple he is in the lateral work. He's just starting to figure out how to sit, and he tries so hard to please – he tries harder than any other horse I know."

With the first victory of the weekend under their belt, Cook will wait and see how the pair's remaining First and Second Level classes turn out, but she does hope to return to the US Dressage Finals in Kentucky next month where the pair earned a top ten finish in last year's First Level Freestyle. "It was pretty cold, but I'm willing to give it another chance," she grinned.

### **Twelve additional Great American/USDF Region 3 champions were crowned on Friday, including:**

- In the **Intermediate II Open Championship**, Jody Kelly-Baxley of Destin, Fla. rode the eight-year-old KWPN gelding Caymus to victory for owner/breeder Beth Godwin over a hard fought field of 12 competitors with a winning score of 66.103%.
- Two victors shared the spoils in the **Intermediate II Adult Amateur Championship** as Jennifer Huber of Wellington, Fla. rode her Danish Warmblood mare Madam Noir to a tie for top honors with hometown rider Hannah Hewitt of Atlanta aboard Tammy Pearson's KWPN gelding Fidens. Both competitors scored 64.926% for the win.
- Ciera Foley of Alpharetta, Ga. rode her own KWPN gelding Zephyr to victory in the **Intermediate II JR/YR Championship** with 60.515%.
- A huge field of almost 30 competitors vied for top honors in the **Prix St. Georges Open Championship**, but it was Anna Marek of Williston, Fla. who rode her Oldenburg gelding Snoopy Sunday to the win with 70.588%.
- As the only combination to break the 70% barrier in a 24-horse field of **Prix St. Georges Adult Amateur** competitors, Holly Such and her Swedish Warmblood gelding Stiletto will now take the champion's trophy home to St. Augustine, Fla. on a winning score of 70.662%.
- In the **Prix St. Georges JR/YR Championship**, Camille Molten of Mount Pleasant, S.C. rode her Danish Warmblood mare Heros to the win with 61.838%.
- Also for juniors and young riders, a huge field of 24 competitors fought their way to the top of the leaderboard in the **Training Level JR/YR Championship**, but ultimately emerging victorious was Erin Buckner of Woodstock, Ga. with her Hanoverian gelding Picassi on the strength of a score of 70.690%.
- After earning Reserve Championship honors in the Open Prix St. Georges division earlier in the day, Shelley Van Den Neste of Newberry, Fla. and Janet Simile's KWPN gelding Fire Fly returned to the ring Friday afternoon to claim the **Intermediaire I Freestyle Championship** with top marks from both judges for 72.575%.
- As the next-to-last competitor to enter the arena for the **Fourth Level Freestyle Championship**, Marjolein Geven of Columbus, Ga. had her work cut out for her in order to take the lead, but she

rose to the occasion with Susan McCoskey's KWPN gelding Gucci, earning top marks from both judges to cruise to victory with 74.333%.

- In the **Third Level Open Championship**, Jodie Kelley-Baxley earned her second win of the day, this time aboard her own KWPN gelding Grayton Beach as the pair earned the unanimous victory and impressed the judges for a top score of 74.813%.
- Leigh Kent-Scherzer of Vincent, Ala. rode her Dutch mare Encore CF to earn the narrow victory over 30 rivals with a winning score of 68.563% in the **Third Level Adult Amateur Championship**.
- Jordan Lockwood of Franklin, Tenn. and her PRE stallion Estudioso XLIV were the final ride down centerline in the main arena on Friday, but they made it count by taking over the lead to win the **Third Level JR/YR Championship** with 64.750%.

**For more information about the Great American Insurance Group/USDF Region 3 Championships, including news, schedules, ride times, and results, visit the [GDCTA website](#) and follow along with behind-the-scenes updates, photos and videos on the [GDCTA Facebook page](#).**

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