

**Region 9 Advanced Youth Rider Clinic with Gerhard Politz  
at Topsider Farm, College Station, TX  
Saturday, February 14 - Monday, February 16, 2004  
Report of Michele Voorhees, Region 9 FEI Youth Coordinator**

The first Region 9 FEI Youth Clinic with Gerhard Politz in 2004 was a resounding success !

Eleven Advanced Youth Riders from Region 9 participated in this first clinic. Eight were FEI level riders, one of them a Junior.

Participants started arriving from Dallas and Houston on Friday evening in pouring rain and a prediction of sleet and snow. All came anyway and arrived safely. The clinic began at 8:30 AM Saturday in cold rain. A portion of each lesson was spent with Gerhard teaching appropriate warm-up procedures for horses that had been kept in for a week of bad weather and now were being asked to perform in freezing rain, albeit in a covered arena.

At the lunch break all were warmed with chili and hot chocolate and chatted about their horses and plans. Afternoon rides were followed by a discussion session. Gerhard handed out copies of the new YR Team Test, diagramed it and went over it movement by movement explaining correct execution. After questions and answers the formal clinic day ended at 5:30 PM and all prepared for dinner.

Almost all participants and several parents gathered at 7 PM at Gattiland in College Station for dinner, games (the kids), and a meeting (parents). We had a room reserved. After dinner the parents, Gerhard, Nancy Hinz (trainer of two participants), and Michele Voorhees discussed fundraising, procedures for declaration and qualifying, passports, and plans for a Region 9 Team at NAYRC. The Region 9 FEI Youth Budget was shared and discussed. Plans were made to secure sponsorships and donations of items needed for NAYRC. Plans for the July fundraiser and Regional meeting were touched on. We adjourned at 9 PM.

Sunday the clinic resumed at 8:30 AM. At the lunch break in addition to soup and sandwiches the group was addressed by Joan Darnell, "R" judge, on issues that help or hurt scores in a test from a judge's point of view. How to ride corners (deep) and serpentines (no corners !), where to make transitions for accuracy points, "simple" movements to perfect (square halts !) that will give a 9 or 10 to compensate for more complex, difficult movements (pirouettes) that may get lower scores. We also discussed the process for declaring to qualify, submitting entries for qualifying shows, passports, etc.

Sunday afternoon rides followed. Most completed the day and traveled home with a few staying to ride on Monday.

Seven participants planned to declare their intent to qualify for the 2004 NAYRC.

The parents were eager for the opportunity to meet and learn from one another, make plans, share ideas. The kids really bonded as a group. They helped each other, stuck together, watched each other's rides, and were generally supportive of one another. Gerhard was his usual excellent trainer self but went beyond that, coaching, encouraging, explaining. He gave them homework to accomplish by March 13 & 14 when he returns to Topsider Farm for the next Advanced Youth Rider Clinic.

Asked for feedback the kids very much liked the whole format including lunches, discussions, playtime. They were amazingly attentive to all that was taught to them while riding as well as in discussion time.

In summary, it was a tremendous success in every way. We plan to be at least as successful in March when most if not all plan to return for the second clinic.

For information on programs for Advanced Youth Riders go to websites: [www.usdregion9.org](http://www.usdregion9.org) or [www.topsiderfarm.com](http://www.topsiderfarm.com) and go to NAYRC sections; contact Michele Voorhees at 979-690-6788 or via e-mail to [ginni@flash.net](mailto:ginni@flash.net) .