



A Young Rider's Journey to compete at
North American Young Rider Championships

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July

I arrived in Oklahoma, safe and sound. I've gotta tell you, this dry heat has got my number. I don't ever remember sweating this much back at home, none-the-less I am happy to be here! I came down with something like a "summer cold" and was MIA from training for 3 days. But, I am now up and at it -- ready for the real games to begin.

On Saturday, Mouse and I were on the road and headed for "practice ride time" at a day show. When we got there, we took advantage of what the show had to offer. Mouse and I reined around a jumping field! Not quite what I was expecting, but the experience was much appreciated.

As for the upcoming NAYRC, just being in this competition has been like walking on air. Whether or not this all happened by chance, I have to say there was a lot of thought put behind my efforts. Almost anyone would seize and "see" this opportunity as a wonderful opportunity to compete internationally. I am in the North American Young Riders Championship (NAYRC) for those reasons AND because I have the opportunity to show everyone what Morgans can do. This is a traditional breed just like many others but with the unique ability to rise to the occasion. No matter what kind of horse you have, you can do the same. In this particular blog I will share my thoughts about how you can reach your goals with the NAYRC in mind.

Riders qualified for the USEF National Reining Youth Championships by competing throughout the year at Qualifiers and earning points per their placing. The top twenty riders in each age division (13 & Under, 14-18 and 19-21) are eligible to compete in the Championship. Youth Champions for the previous year in the Morgans, Arabians, Quarter Horses, Appaloosas, and Paints are eligible to compete in the Youth Championships as well.

For the first time ever, a FEI CRI-Y was held concurrent with the USEF National Youth Reining Championships. The CRI-Y was the selection trial for riders that wanted to compete on teams at the NAYRC. There were 12 riders in the class, all trying to earn a spot on a team and head to Colorado! Well, that's about it in a nutshell. You can always check the USEF Reining website (<http://www.usef.org/Contentpage2.aspx?id=reining>) to find out more about how to qualify for both NAYRC and the USEF National Youth Reining Championships so that you can plan your show year to include these competitions.

As for Mouse and me, it's going to be an adventure and an experience of a lifetime. On Tuesday, we both leave for Colorado. It's a 10 hour drive and we are going to be in a higher altitude and drier part of the country. We've worked hard to be in good condition. So long for now. I'll write when we get to Colorado



May

Hey Guys! I've created this blog so you can follow me on my journey to Parker, Colorado for the North American Young Rider Championship (NAYRC). I'm Spencer-Shelby Conklin and I'm from Clearwater, Florida. I'm 16 and also currently a junior at Osceola Fundamental High school.

It's amazing how far I've come in the past year. It's going to be even more exciting when I go to the NAYRC in Colorado. It's hard to imagine that I just started reining last year and I can tell you where it all began:

I've had two passions in my life: Morgans and western riding. Out of all breeds and disciplines, these two have really been the driving focus in my life. I started off riding Quarter horses and not having a care in the world about showing! That was until I met 'Telly', a 14.1 hand Morgan, who is responsible for my infatuation with the discipline of western. I went from lead-line to walk-jog and from there to walk-jog-canter. I just couldn't get enough. By then I had fallen head over heels for the Morgans.

Since then, the Morgan breed has grown many ways and so have I. Both in size as horse and as a community. But one thing has remained the same; the versatility of the breed is still there. And, I have done just about every discipline – all with Morgan horses. But I've always had a thirst to do more with western and have been keen to find more ways to enjoy it.

I have been showing Morgans for 5 years. But I have never dreamed of this opportunity to land at my feet. Reining has changed my life.

Everything that has happened to me in the past few months have not only been a blessing but by chance. It was all an 'I just happen to be in the right place at the right time' sort of thing.

I caught a ride on a Morgan Reiner last summer. That led to competing in two reining classes at the Morgan Grand Nationals in October.

By this time I was captivated by reining. It took my western riding interest to whole new level. Then I found out I had qualified to participate in the 2008 North American Young Riders Championships Trials and the USEF Youth Reining Championship at the NRHA Derby in Oklahoma City.

I was determined to push myself to new heights. I know Mouse and I have a lot to work on and we both need many more miles in the saddle. But, there is no other horse I'd rather go on than my Morgan horse.

The trials at the Derby were incredible. It's the first time I was at a competition where everything focused on reining. I met a lot of people and was welcomed to the group. It was a lot of pressure, but a lot of fun, too.

I was ecstatic to find I was headed to the NAYRC championship in Parker. I'm so very honored to represent my breed, state, club and home organization (FMHA) as an individual on the NAYRC team. I can't wait to go to Colorado and meet again with all the other team members. I've met so many great people along the way and I am truly blessed.

I'll be writing update to my blog. My next stop is Oklahoma where I will pack in some riding sessions with Mouse.

