

# Fitting End

By mid-summer, Alisa Bernhard's lead in Youth 14–18 was impossible to overtake.

By LAURA JESBERG



Germantown, Wisconsin, equestrienne Alisa Bernhard and her gelding, Fleetstreet Max, claimed 580 qualifying points and the number one spot on the Youth 14–18 Top 20. They bested the second-place finisher by 129 points.

Alisa Bernhard's final season of Youth competition was short but sweet. The Germantown, Wisconsin, teen and her 1997 sorrel overo gelding, Fleetstreet Max, earned 580 qualifying points during 2003, placing Alisa in the top spot in the Youth 14–18 division.

The year started inauspiciously enough.

"I didn't do as well at the Dixie Nationals in February as I had hoped," said Alisa. "Several girls were ahead of me with a substantial number of points."

Alisa and "Max" found their stride by spring, however. After huge finishes at the Tulsa March Mania and the Fort Worth Memorial Day Classic, the pair was firmly in first place. Winning Youth 14–18 High-Point honors at the World Show put Alisa so far in front that she entered only two shows after that—the Fall Color Classic in Lansing, Michigan, and the year-end Copper Country Paint-O-Rama in Tucson, Arizona.

"People asked me why I was still showing after the World Show," said the 19-year-old. "I did it because I love to show my horse and I love the Paint circuit. It just didn't make any sense to me to stop showing. Max was off for two months after the World Show. He was ready to go."

"Besides," she added, "there were riders creeping up on me in some of the honor roll classes."

Alisa successfully fended off her competition and finished at the top of seven Youth honor rolls.

As sweet as the year-end number one finish was, Alisa admits the pinnacle of her year was winning the high-point Youth title at the World Show.

"It was my goal for the last three years," remembered Alisa. "And it came down to the wire. My reserve world championship in working hunter made the difference."

In their quest for the top slot, Alisa and Max added a couple of new classes to their repertoire.

"I taught Max showmanship, and we are still learning and improving in that class," said Alisa. "I also com-



Alisa and "Max" had an exceptional 2003 AJPHA World Show, finishing as High-Point 14–18 and High-Point English Youth, and winning a 14–18 hunter hack world championship.

peted in reining. I couldn't enter any of the events that featured cattle or goats," she added. "Max is too afraid of livestock."

Which brings up a noteworthy point. Alisa bred, raised, and, for the most part, trained Max herself, although Pilot Point, Texas, trainer John Briggs helped her prepare for the World Show and was instrumental in her success. The gelding's abilities have certainly exceeded her expectations.

"I didn't think he would be this good when I started him," said Alisa. "I thought he would just be my Western pleasure horse."

"I had to make him keep up with me because I do so many classes, and he just picked up things so quickly," she continued. "He is anything but my pleasure horse now. There's just something about him. He's always fresh and happy, even if it is a really long show."

This year, Alisa plans to show two other Paints. One, a full sister to Max, Mainstreet Molly, will be entered in yearling longe line.

"I showed Max in that event and we did pretty well," said Alisa. "Now, I have a better idea of how to teach it."

She also has a 2-year-old gelding that she will be fitting for futurities.

Alisa will see some familiar faces when she rides in the Amateur divi-

sion. A host of talented Youth riders moved up with her.

"Amateur will have incredibly tough competition this year," said Alisa. "I don't really know what to expect." P

## Alisa Bernhard's Year at a Glance

**Trainer:** Alisa trained her gelding herself.

**Horse:** Fleetstreet Max, a 1991 sorrel overo gelding by Fleet Machine and out of Cash Bar Maiden (AQHA). Bred by Susan Bernhard of Germantown, Wisconsin.

**Points Earned:** 580

**Awards Earned:** 2003 AJPHA World Show High-Point Youth 14–18 and High-Point English Youth; world championship in 14–18 hunter hack; reserve world championships in 14–18 hunt-seat equitation, trail and working hunter; led Youth honor rolls in seven events; APHA Youth Versatility award; Superiors in Western riding, showmanship and working hunter; Registers of Merit in working hunter, showmanship and reining.