



## Anthony Weathers The Storm To Claim Thermal Equitation Championship

*The R.W. "Ronnie" Mutch Championship moves west and crowns a new champion.*

*Beth Johnson*

While the announcement may have been delayed, there was no question Carly Anthony won the R.W. "Ronnie" Mutch Equitation Championship at HITS Thermal. Waiting to return for her second round Saturday night, high winds interrupted the class, forcing Anthony to claim her victory the next day during HITS Thermal VII, March 10-15, in Thermal, Calif.

While some riders would have found postponement nerve-racking, Anthony had opposite feelings. "Getting to sleep on it definitely helped," she quipped.

Anthony joined 12 other competitors for the class, including top equitation riders Shelby Wakeman and Tina DiLandri, who vied for the prestigious championship that had previously been held on the Winter Equestrian Festival circuit in Wellington, Fla.

The first course began with an option of four or five strides up the first line,

which caused problems for some riders. Some who attempted the four strides had refusals, and others struggled to fit in an extra stride.

Another difficulty included a triple combination toward the end of the course that caused riders to pull rails. Nicoletta Von Heidegger had a beautiful start to her trip until she added an extra stride in the combination, causing her horse to knock down the fence.

*"I kept telling myself to be patient with the trot jump."*

*—Carly Anthony*

Wakeman, riding San Francisco, began her course with a forward pace and carried it throughout her round, meeting each jump consistently. Third in the order, Wakeman posted the highest score with an

### HITS DESERT THERMAL CHAMPIONSHIP FOR THE R.W. "RONNIE" MUTCH TROPHY

Thermal, Calif.—Mar. 16

Judges: Matt Collins, Mandy Porter, Kim Dorfman, Chris Pratt, Otis Brown, Eddie Macken

RIDER	ROUND	ROUND	TOTAL
	1	2	
1. Carly Anthony	86.0	86.5	172.5
2. Shelby Wakeman	86.5	85.0	171.5
3. Hilary Neff	78.0	81.5	159.5
4. Tina DiLandri	79.0	74.5	153.5
5. Michelle Morris	72.5	73.5	146.0
6. Natasha Traurig	66.5	72.5	139.0

Also competed: 7. M. Earle, 127.5; 8. S Harrison, 123.5; 9. J. Neff, 116.5; N. Von Heidegger, 108.5; 11. J. Arnold, 88.5; 12. H. Selleck, 81; 13. C. Selchau, E.

84 and 85, plus 4 bonus points from the schooling area judges Otis Brown and Eddie Macken.

Riders aren't allowed to consult with their trainers during the class, but the stipulation didn't faze Anthony. "Going into the ring, I didn't have any expectations, because when I do, things don't turn out the way I want," she said.

Anthony went at the bottom of the order and pressed up the first line to do the difficult four strides. Her trip remained polished, with smooth turns and a strong gallop to the final single oxer. Judges Matt Collins/Mandy Porter and Kim Dorfman/Chris Pratt rewarded her accuracy with scores of 85 and 83, plus 4 bonus points as well, putting her behind Wakeman.

"I tried to stay focused, but it was hard because I would see people do things differently than what I wanted to do," Anthony said.

Riders returned for a second round that included a bending line to a trot fence. Riders then jumped a single vertical, followed by a counter canter and a rollback to an oxer. The trip ended with a triple combination, followed by a long gallop to an oxer.

Returning contenders struggled to meet the trot fence with patience, and rails fell again down the final line. Riders who didn't press forward to the final oxer were marked down as well.

Those with minor faults in their first trip made up for their mistakes, such as Hilary Neff, whose highlights included nailing the trot fence and a smooth transition to the counter canter. Even more impressive, Neff was the rider on course when the high winds blew in, and her horse, Mata Hari, remained calm despite jumps blowing over. Second-round scores of 79 and 84 put Neff into third place.

Going into the second round, all that separated Anthony and Wakeman was 1 point.



(Flying Horse Photography Photo)

"She's a great student with a lot of feel," said trainer Karen Healey of Carly Anthony, winner of the R.W. "Ronnie" Mutch Equitation Championship.



(Flying Horse Photography Photo)

Shelby Wakeman's polished performances put her second in the R.W. "Ronnie" Mutch Equitation Championship.

"Sunday morning I felt that my horse was ready," Anthony said. "The courses were pretty hard, but they gave you leeway and a nice opportunity to pick what you wanted."

Anthony wasn't allowed to speak with her trainers, including her mother, Cara Anthony, and Karen Healey, at all Saturday night. With the delay, Anthony felt pressure to repeat her performance from the night before.

*"All these top girls are good at thinking on their own, and the class is in a great format."*

—Karen Healey

"You had to rely on what you've learned, what you've walked, and it was difficult since you can't have any help from your trainers," she said.

"I told Carly [before the class began] that she had to have a plan for the schooling area. She'll jump more jumps than any other person," Healey joked.

The stipulation didn't faze her, though, and Anthony rode a consistent round to receive scores of 86 and 83, plus 4 bonus points from schooling, to put her into the lead. Even with the daunting trot fence, Anthony had no problems making her round smooth.

"I kept telling myself to be patient with the trot jump, because that's one of my biggest challenges," Anthony said with a laugh. "And for the final jump, I really had

to make myself gallop because I usually am too cautious."

Wakeman entered the ring as the coveted final entry, riding another rhythmic course to receive almost the same score as Anthony, earning an 85 and an 82. It wasn't quite enough, though, as Wakeman fell to second, giving Anthony the win. Wakeman didn't leave without an armful of awards, however, as her mount San Francisco received the best equitation horse and best turned out horse awards.

"I would've liked to see a work-off for a championship class," Healey remarked afterward. "With 1 point separated between 4 judges, it really was such a small difference."

Healey was pleased with the final results, though. "All these top girls are good at thinking on their own, and the class is in a great format. Carly and Shelby both rode beautifully," she said. "It was funny, because Carly was worried she wouldn't qualify for the class, and then she won the ASPCA Maclay the week before and again this week."

Anthony couldn't be happier with her horse, Vogue. Rescued two years ago, the mare began her equitation career as a difficult horse but now carries Carly and her younger sister, Alexa, to wins regularly.

"When we first got her, I'm not sure where she was rescued from, but she was very thin, and she would spook a lot," Anthony explained. "We've just worked with her, and she has a big heart and is doing the medals and everything now."

"She's very sensitive, and it's taken a lot of work to get her to trust the longer

distances. She really can be difficult," Healey said. "I try to develop them as riders to have a sense of their horses. But with these top riders, they've had a lot of mileage."

Carly also earned the circuit championship in the equitation, 16-17, division, and Alexa won the circuit title in the equitation, 14-15, division. With only one equitation horse in the family, both sisters trade off showing the mare.

"Since it's my last junior year I've been riding her more," Carly said. "I'm very grateful because my sister is being generous and lets me show her."

Healey appreciates Carly's work to turn Vogue into a top equitation horse. "She's a hard worker and a good natural rider," Healey said. "The mare is difficult, and it's all about having everything right, from her leg to the bit."

Carly will return home to Seattle, Wash., to train at her family's Potcreek Meadow Farm, with high hopes for her final year with Vogue.

"I want to win the USET [Talent Search Finals], the [USEF] Medal, the ASPCA Maclay...the whole trifecta," she said. "I'm going to take it one week at a time, but anything's possible." 🐾

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