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United States Equestrian Team Foundation's 2005 Maxine Beard Award Goes to Cayce Harrison

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Kenneth Kraus for Phelps Media Group, Inc.

MEDIA CONTACT: Mason Phelps, Jr. of Phelps Media Group, Inc. at (561) 753-3389 or at info@phelpsmediagroup.com

WEB SITE: Phelps Media Group, Inc. Press Releases and Photos are available for download at <http://www.phelpsmediagroup.com/>

PHOTO CREDIT: Olympians Lauren Hough and Lauren Kraut, left, with Cayce Harrison, on the right. Photo by Linda Wirtz.

United States Equestrian Team Foundation's 2005 Maxine Beard Award Goes to Cayce Harrison

Gladstone, NJ – March 18 – The United States Equestrian Team Foundation is proud to announce that Cayce Harrison of Wellington, Florida, is this year's winner of the Maxine Beard Show Jumping Developing Rider Award. The USET Show Jumping Committee awarded this rising young equestrian with this honor because of her competitive records to date and because of her promise for the future.

As recipient of the Maxine Beard Award, Harrison will receive a trip to the World Cup Final, which will be held in Las Vegas, Nevada, April 20-24. There she will get an insider's look at a major international show jumping competition, including the chance to observe operations in the horse show office, stabling, veterinary inspections and schooling. A highlight of the experience will be the chance to walk each course with the riders while receiving instructional comments from respected coaches such as George H. Morris.

"I'm so excited to win this award," Harrison emphasized. "I'm honored to have been chosen. It's the icing on the cake for a great circuit. It's something I'll cherish forever."

For a young equestrian making her debut with the big boys on Sunday afternoon, Harrison's success in 2005 was truly a remarkable achievement. During the first week of WEF, Harrison finished third in the \$20,000 1.50m Classic with Jashar. She followed that up with a second place finish to WEF's hottest rider, 2000 Olympian Laura Kraut, in the \$50,000 Kilkenny/ICH Internationale Cup on February 19th. Kraut's Olympic teammate, Lauren Hough, finished third. On March 6th, she took home third place honors in the \$75,000 Cosequin Florida Open. Again, it was two Olympians, Laura Kraut and Anne Kursinski, with the one-two finish. Harrison's mount for those top finishes was her newest gray, Coeur. A top ribbon on Jashar in the \$10,000 Acorn Hill Speed Challenge during the CSIO United States, the final week in Wellington, wrapped up her stellar season in South Florida.

"I never expected this kind of success, especially this early in my Grand Prix career," admitted Harrison. "My Dad and the people around me expected it, but not me. They had more confidence in me than I had in me."

For Harrison, the road she's traveled to success has not been a quick or easy one. It's been a battle, and as Harrison explains, the fight was for self confidence. "I had just purchased my new horse, Coeur, in Europe. I started out competing in Europe as an amateur and between the expectations of success with the new horse and the time period it takes to get to know a new mount, I really had a bad time," said Harrison. "It was really rough. I had very little confidence in my abilities and was fighting a constant battle in my own head."

With the help of trainer, McLain Ward, they were able to put things on track. "With McLain and his father's help, working gymnastics; going back to basics really, I was able to overcome all those demons in my head," revealed Harrison. "One day all that work we were doing just

clicked. And it's been great ever since that day. I've got confidence in myself now and I really believe in myself. That's so important," Harrison said smiling.

Ward doesn't take all the credit for Harrison's turnaround. "It's very exciting to work with someone as dedicated as Cayce Harrison," acknowledged Ward. "I began working with her last summer and it's a treat to help a rider with as much natural talent as Cayce has. She received a great base to build on. She developed a great foundation from riding first with Alex Jayne and then with Missy Clark, so for me, I started with a lot of potential," Ward said.

Ward explained that stakes were raised with Cayce's decision to move up to the big time. "This year we took on a major project. Cayce and her father told me it was time to step up to the next level, to the Sunday Grand Prix. That's the highest level of show jumping competition here in America. That's a huge step, the biggest step that any rider can take," Ward allowed. "Our goal was to just be consistent each Sunday and work our way up. So the results we got this year were very exciting."

Through her excellent results this year, Harrison has qualified to compete in America's richest and most prestigious show jumping event, the \$200,000 Budweiser American Invitational. It will be her first ever appearance at Raymond James Stadium in Tampa. "I'm thrilled about that," beamed Harrison. "That was a goal that McLain and I set for me at the beginning of the season, and I thought that it was a pretty lofty goal. But, then I finished second and it appeared the goal might be realized," she said. "Then I pretty much assured myself of a spot with the third place finish."

How excited was her father, Hunter? "My Dad was 'over the moon!'" laughed Harrison. "He was jumping around in the in-gate and hugging just about everybody in the area."

Harrison was quick to give credit to Ward. "McLain has been so generous with his time. He's been a tremendous help to me, as has my entire support team."

Generosity is something that Ward sees in Harrison, as well. "She's a great kid with tremendous riding talent and the dedication needed to go all the way in this sport. But looking beyond the riding, her charitable work for Just World is impressive," Ward said. "She's always been interested in the 'bigger picture.'"

Following a junior career that saw more disappointment and heartache than the joys of victory, it was one very special, clutch ride on a Sunday afternoon in 2002 that convinced Harrison that a career in show jumping was something she really wanted to do. In a nail biting, pressure packed, clean round performance, Harrison hit pay dirt with the Gold Medal in the Individual Finals at the North American Young Riders Championship at Tempel Farms in Wadsworth, Illinois. "There was a huge buildup to that Gold Medal ride. I had competed in Junior Jumpers for over four years with very little success," recounted Harrison. "Knowing that a clean round would win, and then getting it was very, very special. That ride that day was the turning point for me," she said. "Everything went my way that day, and I think right then and there, I decided I could make it."

Now, with that early confidence restored, Harrison's future seems bright. "With Coeur, it's been a learning process, but we're developing a wonderful partnership. I gain more confidence in him and I think he does in me, every day. And of course I've got Jashar and Alaska. I'm collecting grays," Harrison laughed.

The Maxine Beard Award was established by friends of the popular trainer Ronnie Beard in honor of Ronnie's mother. It was developed to assist riders in their quest for equestrian excellence. Observing international competition is a crucial component in the education of an equestrian athlete.

The recipients of the award are chosen based on their potential to represent the United States in international competition. A Show Jumping Developing Rider is defined as a U.S. citizen who has not represented the United States in Olympic, Pan American or World Championship competition. Alternates for the Olympic, Pan American and World Equestrian Games, as well as riders who have competed in the Show Jumping World Cup Final, are still considered Show Jumping Developing Riders and are eligible for the award.

The U.S. Equestrian Team Foundation supports the competition, training, coaching, travel and educational needs of America's elite and developing International High Performance horses and athletes in partnership with the US Equestrian Federation.

Previous Recipients of the Maxine Beard Award

2004 – Georgina Bloomberg
 2003 – Michael Morrissey and Paige Johnson
 2002 – Molly Warmington
 2001 – Kent Farrington and Richard Rinehart
 2000 – Kate Levy and Marilyn Little
 1999 – Kate Levy and Emily Williams
 1998 – Jamie Schmidt and Heather Caristo

For more information on the USET Foundation, please call (908) 234-1251, or visit USET ONLINE at www.uset.org.

PHOTO CREDIT: Olympians Lauren Hough and Lauren Kraut, left, with Cayce Harrison, on the right. Photo by Linda Wirtz.