

# ESME CHAPMAN IS CHAMPION IN CET MEDAL NATIONAL FINAL

Following two days and three rounds of tough competition, Esme Chapman, 17, of Mono, ON, captured the Running Fox CET Medal National Final title on Thursday, November 10, at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair in Toronto, ON.

Riding Melbourne Z, a 16-year-old Swedish Warmblood gelding (Eurocommerce Memphis x Leubus) owned by M.L. Equestrian Inc., Chapman topped a starting field of 16 up-and-coming athletes who qualified for the CET Medal Final from four regions across Canada (Atlantic, Ontario, Prairies, and British Columbia).

Following Wednesday's opening round of competition, a gymnastics phase, 19-year-old Anya Bereznicki of Calgary, AB, was sitting on top of the standings aboard Bugatti, a seven-year-old Dutch Warmblood gelding owned by Jennifer Tims. Sloane Betker was in second, Chapman was third, and Olivia Stephenson rounded out the top four.

On Thursday afternoon, riders returned in reverse order of standing to contest a competitive jumping phase before going head-to-head in the jump off. Chapman knew her position wasn't guaranteed, but she was happy when the results were called.

"I am still speechless," Chapman explained. "Standing in line, waiting to be called, is so nerve wracking. I had no idea what the order of pinning was going to be like because it was such a competitive class, and everyone had such a great jump-off. I was in complete shock when they called my name. I'm overjoyed."

The format of the CET Medal Final was changed in 2021 to better exemplify what riders will face in the future in the show jumping ring. Chapman was grateful to be paired with Melbourne Z, known as 'Melon' in the barn. Not only is the horse a seasoned Royal competitor but also a steadfast partner throughout the season to qualify Chapman for the national final. Chapman even watched videos of others who have ridden him in the Coca-Cola Coliseum in the past to better understand how he would be in the ring.

"'Melon' has been the best partner this entire year and I wouldn't have been able to do this without him," said Chapman. "Today, he felt really good; he seemed calm, he seemed ready. I think he wanted to win maybe more than I did!"

In addition to her horse, Chapman was quick to thank her coaches, Sandi Ballard and Courtney Bacso of Looking Back Farm for their support throughout the year.

"They've been amazing and so supportive this entire past year," said Chapman, who began training at Looking Back Farm in Tottenham, ON, this year. "I think the best part about them is that they make sure that I'm having a good time and that my confidence is always up. They know that if you have low self-esteem and low confidence, then you're not going to be able to go in the ring and ride your best. They make sure that I'm feeling on my A-game."

"I can't believe that this has happened and I'm so grateful for everyone that's been here with me through it all," continued Chapman. "I still can't believe it's real."

Rounding out the Running Fox CET Medal top four were Bereznicki riding Bugatti in second; Betker of Kelowna, BC, and Crack in third; and Stephenson of Calgary, AB, and Clearwater S in fourth.



Esme Chapman and Melbourne Z.



Esme Chapman of Mono, ON, riding Melbourne Z was crowned the 2022 Running Fox CET Medal National Champion at the Royal Horse Show. Presenting, from left to right, are Fran McAvity, Sam Walker, Pamela Law, Karen Hendry-Ouellette, Jennifer O'Neill, and trainer Courtney Bacso of Looking Back Farm.