

# Peninsula rider performs in skill, style

**IT TAKES PATIENCE** to train a horse well, and even more persistence to become an accomplished competitor in Performance Horse events.

Why? Because it is an exacting sport in which each step, each gait and each muscle moved is closely examined by the show horse judge.

Performance classes are held in both Western and English disciplines, in levels from beginning novice to the very advanced professional.

In essence, the performance horse itself is judged by how smooth and light it responds to the rider's cue and executes tasks.

Riders are judged by how effectively they've trained their horse to respond to subtle cues, if their own movements are fluid and on the overall look and attire of both horse and riders.

It's a skill and look that Port Angeles rider **Kyle Ellis**, 28, relishes. He enjoys dressing in various polished styles so much he's been able to make career and owns Steppin' Out Salon in Port Angeles.

I first noticed Kyle several years ago when he was 17 and a novice rider competing at local 4-H events.

Outside the show ring, he stood out as a quiet and gentle teen, yet inside the

## PENINSULA HORSEPLAY

**Karen Griffiths**



ring his veneer bore a look of fierce determination to win.

Now 28, Kyle is one of the state's top amateur competitors.

He rides both English and Western, and just placed first in English Pleasure Junior and Senior, plus Horse and Road Hack, for the Washington State Horseman Association on Nov. 13 in Spokane.

At the WSH year-end awards, Kyle and his horse, DandyShuJet (Jet), also earned second in Showmanship, third in English Pleasure Open, fourth in Hunter Seat Equitation Senior Amateur, fourth in Advanced English Pleasure, fourth in English Pleasure Hunter Type Senior, fourth in Quarter Horse Halter, fourth in Quarter Horse Hunter Under Saddle, sixth in Stock Seat/Western/Reining Seat Equitation Senior Amateur and sixth in Trail Horse E/W Senior Amateur.

Points for Washington State Horseman are tallied throughout the year from horse shows across the



**Kyle Ellis rides his horse, DandyShuJet. The pair won first place in English Pleasure Junior and Senior plus Horse and Road Hack by the Washington State Horseman Association on Nov. 13 in Spokane.**

state, and the best of eight shows are counted toward the year-end awards.

Kyle and Jet also competed at the local level in the Olympic Peninsula Zone Club and were awarded the following trophies for the year 2009: High Point Senior Exhibitor sponsored by Airport Garden, High Point English Horse Senior to Ride, OPZ Champion Amateur sponsored by the Winters family and High Point All Around Quarter Horse

sponsored by the Rentas family.

Phew! How does he do it and why?

He says he started riding at 16 when he mother drove him to a horse barn to get his mind on things other than school.

"My mom loves horses. It didn't take long for her interest in horses to become an interest of mine, also," says Kyle.

He credits his first trainer, **Vicki Foote**, and current trainers **Wendy**

and **Justin Petersen**, owners of JusWen Farm, for helping him perfect his winning style.

While most riders focus on either Western or English, Kyle rides both, saying, "A person like myself needs to challenge myself, to push to try something different. That's why I ride both English and Western, along with and a bunch of other styles."

His horse seems to enjoy the challenge, too, and has learned to correspond his

actions with what type of saddle or bit he wears.

"I find Performance Horse riding to be a challenging sport, the same as those playing basketball or football do. We're out competing against different people and trying to win first place, just like trying to throw the football as far as one can and hopefully winning the game."

He says nothing feels better to him than having a "good ride, having fun doing it and hopefully take home the championship."

His parents both ride, but when it comes to showing, the family is focused on helping Kyle win.

"We travel to shows around the state as a team," says Kyle of the 20 to 30 shows a year they travel to.

"We laugh, lose a lot of sleep, meet some great people and just have a great time."

Kyle welcomes people to drop by his salon anytime they want to learn more about riding and showing performance horses.

**Karen Griffiths'** column, Peninsula Horseplay, appears every other Wednesday.

If you have a horse event, clinic or seminar you would like listed, please e-mail Griffiths at [horseplay.kbg@olympus.net](mailto:horseplay.kbg@olympus.net) at least two weeks in advance. You can also write Griffiths at *PDN*, P.O. Box 1330, Port Angeles, WA 98362.