

## Maya Varga, 22/over Champion Essay

July 21, 2023. CPHA Foundation Finals for 22& over took place at the Blenheim Summer Festival for the first time. Special classes like this are not possible without the amazing people behind CPHA and the wonderful sponsors including Outdoor Outfitters and Ariat.

I came into round two sitting in 4<sup>th</sup> with a first-round score of 81. I was in unbelievable company with Emma Dawley on top, and Whitney Coleman and Kathy Nolan following close behind. While I had been in the top 10 before in a medal final, I had never made it to the top 4. I had to go early returning on day two and my goal was to remain consistent; a challenge I have when it comes to larger stages and high-stakes competition. I leaned heavily on my work with Tonya Johnson many years ago to help with performance anxiety. My second round improved upon my first round with a score of 86, staying on one rhythm the whole way through. My trainer, Victoria, had me focus on keeping things simple, and not overcomplicating the course.

I went into the work-off sitting in 3<sup>rd</sup> place, behind Emma and Whitney. When we exited the ring, Katie Taylor looked at me as awards started to be placed on each rider and horse and exclaimed, "Maya! Do you know what that means?" The 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> place ribbons had been awarded and all that remained were Kathy and me. At this moment, I had already won no matter what the final result was, because I already had accomplished my goal of making it to the top 4. As I returned back to the ring for the awards ceremony, Kathy and I held hands, in support of one another, walking proudly to the lineup for awards.

The CPHA Foundation Final has been a goal of mine since I began competing in the equitation with my horse Diego Garcia in 2012. Due to health challenges, I had to take a five-year hiatus and returned to competing in 2021 with my new mount, Il Divo. The win in this medal final represents the culmination of the many years of hard work and dedication from the team at Storia Stables. Victoria has always believed in me as a rider, even when I did not believe in myself. I am not only grateful for this accomplishment but also excited for the future that awaits with Divo. The CPHA Foundation Final has proven that dreams can be realized through hard work, sweat (sometimes tears), and the support of amazing friends and an exceptional team.