

# Irish young breeders on top of the world in IYB championship

BY WENDY CONLON / IYB

PHOTOGRAPHY: WENDY CONLON

*Hosted by JongKWPN at the KWPN headquarters in Ermelo, the Netherlands, last month's International Young Breeders' World Championship saw a well-deserved victory awarded to the Irish Sport Horse Studbook fielding Junior and Senior teams.*

The junior team of Camilla Snow Coyne, Shane Donohoe, Edward Hennessy, and Aoife Kirby were overall winners of their section: Aoife ranked second individually, Shane third, and Edward sixth, with Camilla finishing a highly respectable 12<sup>th</sup>. The senior team of Maria Cairns, Amy Finn, Colin Doyle, and Annie Madden finished in third place in their section: Maria – eighth, Annie 10<sup>th</sup>, Colin 26<sup>th</sup>, and Amy 45<sup>th</sup>.

Team manager Wendy Conlon, who also serves as secretary of the International Young Breeders (IYB) organisation, was absolutely thrilled and very pleasantly surprised by the extent of the win saying “After the junior team were announced as winners in their age category I would have gone home very happy, so to win the studbook accolade was a wonderful shock. I couldn't be happier for

the team members themselves and all involved in delivering the programme. It is a hard earned achievement demanding knowledge, skill, and mental stamina. The team were absolutely focused and delivered exceptional results against formidable competition. Their in-hand performances, which were a pleasure as trainers to witness, cemented the result.”

## *The Young Breeders' structure in Ireland*

Since 2005 Teagasc – the state agency providing research, advice, and education in agriculture, horticulture and rural development in Ireland – formed a joint program with Horse Sport Ireland, the national governing body for equestrian sport in Ireland; the latter also maintaining the Irish Horse Register (including the Irish Sport Horse Studbook), supported by the Department of Agriculture Food and Marine.

Training days, mainly focusing on conformation and athleticism assessment, take place at reputable sport horse farms around the country. Every other year a National Championship is hosted as a first step in identifying those young breeders who will have the opportunity to represent the ISH Studbook at World Championships. Further training and selection days are held with the addition of theory and in hand assessment to identify the eight team members.

The selection system is very transparent, everyone has a fair chance, while those who don't make the teams also benefit from the training provided. In the years between the Championships training events focus on other aspects of breeding/husbandry and can include visits to veterinary practices, competition events, or a focus on horse training/ production. Career-oriented workshops have also featured as part of the programme.



*Junior Team (l-r) Camilla Snow Coyne; Shane Donohoe; Aoife Kirby; Edward Hennessy*



*Senior Team (l-r) Maria Cairns; Colin Doyle; Amy Finn; Annie Madden*

### *Is there a secret to success?*

The success of the programme hinges on the wider industry collaboration, choice of farms with appropriate quality of horses; the openness of the trainers, working

alongside Teagasc Equine Specialists; and also, very importantly, the input of those who have been through the programme previously and are willing to help out and give back when it comes to the big events like National Championships.

According to Wendy Conlon; "In the beginning there was a massive learning curve to go through and others, especially the Westfalian young breeder managers Claudia Meckmann Dorsel and Georgia Schultze Lefert were instrumental in setting us on the right path, and we remain extremely grateful to them. I'd really like to encourage studbooks not currently involved to consider fielding individuals or teams at future championships. It was a real delight to see the Latvian Studbook representatives achieving results this year at their first championships. We are also here to help if others need a guide."

The real success comes when the appetite is there within the team members themselves to commit to the work, to support each other and remain focused.

### *Are there Young Breeder fringe benefits?*

In Ireland what tends to happen is that young people travel from across the island to geographically dispersed training events. Most of those attending are unfamiliar with each other at the beginning, or certainly don't know many



*(l-r) Edward Hennessy; Wendy Conlon – Teagasc; Shane Donohoe (winner of Junior in-hand) – Edward was his assistant handler who himself placed equal third with Aoife Kirby in the same discipline*

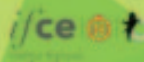
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others when they start training. As the months progress, those who manage to attend multiple training sessions see friendships grow, with the group that progresses beyond the National Championships stage – and with the ever-decreasing group size – getting to know each other very well and tending to stay in touch into the future.

Team members who travel together to championships, share tents, look out for each other, and form a special bond; also having the added benefit of meeting others from around the world. There have been many stories of contacts maintained both nationally and internationally beyond the championship events. Other benefits include opportunities to get involved with other Horse Sport Ireland activities such as studbook inspections or Championships, while informal mentoring has been made available to those sufficiently enthusiastic to seek it out.

### *Are participants all breeders themselves?*

The simple answer is “no”, and it’s strongly emphasised that the programme is open to all. There is no pre-requirement to even owning a horse, so an avid interest and the eagerness to participate and learn is all that’s required. However, there are breeders among the participants, as well as those who will become breeders in the future when circumstances align. Of the 2022 ISH team, almost all are involved in breeding either ponies or horses (sport horses and Thoroughbreds) either directly or through their families, which is wonderful.

### *Team member testimonials...*

**Aoife Kirby:** “The Young Breeders’ Programme has been a brilliant way to make friends. I also have a much better understanding of conformation and athleticism traits and how to assess them. It’s been hard work and demanded a lot of commitment from everyone, but being part of such an

amazing competition and doing so well (National and World Championships) has made it all worthwhile. I’ve enjoyed every minute of it.”

**Shane Donohoe:** “Competing at the World Championships was such a great experience and learning opportunity. The result we attained was the topping to the experiences we had during training and the Championships themselves. The ISH training programme was very well-rounded in its delivery, with an abundance of knowledge shared. I thoroughly enjoyed seeing and discussing the many horses viewed all around the country.”

**Edward Hennessy:** “Young Breeder training has taught me so much about horsemanship. It was incredible to represent the ISH Studbook at World Championships and even more incredible to be part of a World Championship winning team. The camaraderie was special and a significant contribution to our success.”

**Maria Cairns:** “I have so much more confidence judging and presenting horses as a result of the training received. The results achieved were a credit to how well the ISH training programme is run and the standard of coaching. Our trip to the World Championships was an amazing experience, the event was so efficiently run and provided a brilliant opportunity to meet fellow horse people from around the world.”

**Annie Madden:** “I had an amazing experience at the World Championships and met people from all around the world. The training over the last few months has been excellent. I am really looking forward to using everything I have learned in real life.”

**Colin Doyle:** “I’ve enjoyed meeting so many other people around my own age interested in horses and breeding. My confidence has grown and all the fantastic trainers have helped me learn so much.” ■

