

My name is Paige Walkenbach, and I am so honored to have won the 2023 CPHA 21/u Foundation Finals with my horse, Let's Go. Pedro, or Peter Pan as I like to call him, is a twelve-year-old warmblood gelding who loves to pose for any camera that comes his way. He has the attitude of a surfer boy or the chill-goes-with-the-flow vibe. I have had the pleasure of riding him for about two years now. Since then, I have met him at shows, while Elvenstar cares for him in California because I live in Arizona. I am lucky enough to have an incredible team behind me at Elvenstar who makes everything possible; I am endlessly grateful for the horsemanship I continue to learn from Jim Hagman and my other coaches.

Going into the first round, I was excited to execute my plan and show how Pedro and I have grown together since last year. I thought the course allowed for a nice open stride, which gave me more confidence stepping onto the intimidating grand prix field. Right when I stepped into the ring and pushed Pedro's elegant gallop up to the needed pace, I felt eager and excited. On day two, my nerves were a little higher since the order was reversed, putting me at the beginning, which has pros and cons. The tests asked in the second round, specifically, the two changes of lead, created a question for Pedro and me, and we debated whether we should do a simple or flying change of lead. However, I knew I needed to make the flying changes to grow, no matter how it went in the ring. Fortunately, I had a great round, which boosted me to the lead going into the workoff. No matter how experienced someone is, being at the top creates a different form of butterflies in your stomach, a feeling that's hard to explain. When I heard the test was to be completed with no stirrups, I immediately knew I wanted to push myself past my comfort zone and carry out the test to the best of my ability. I could feel Pedro was on the same page right when we stepped into the ring; we were ready to nail the test.

Pedro, who I am lucky enough to call my partner, is truly magical, hence why he is also called Peter Pan. He has made dreams come true for me and riders before me, including Abby Steller, Julia Stone, my sister Lanie Walkenbach, and many others. They would all agree with me when calling him the horse of a lifetime.

I want to thank Elvenstar Farm, my family, and my friends for supporting me through the early mornings as well as the great moments and struggles. Thank you to CPHA, Blenheim EquiSports, and all the horse show staff for making moments like these possible. I will forever be grateful to have won such a prestigious medal final with the names of incredible riders behind me.