



Susan Jones and Reliance enjoyed a winning weekend at the GAIG/USDF Region 2 Championships, topping the first level adult amateur class.

While Manibusan's career with Moonlight might be winding down, Susan Jones' partnership with Reliance is just beginning. Jones and Reliance took the GAIG/USDF Region 2 title in the first level adult amateur division over Megan Uhr and Adagio.

"He's just a great showman. He walks out, and he just comes up a whole notch," said Jones. "He also protects me in the schooling ring. He keeps his eye on everything and watches out for all the other horses. He's like an old soul."

Reliance went early in the morning, second in the order of go in the 34-horse championship class. Jones knew she had a good score—70.16 percent—but she settled in for a long day of waiting to see if anyone would match it.

"I had to wait all day to see if we'd won," she said. "We had to wait until 1 o'clock. By the end it was a little nerve-racking."

"It was a really solid ride, really straight and forward, and he was stretching to the bit," Jones added. "It was just lovely. I watched it on tape. It felt good, but in your head there are all sorts of things going on, and it was good to watch the tape and see that it did look really nice."

Reliance also topped the first level adult amateur Majestic Farms Championship (68.38%), and Jones placed

second in the Majestic Farms third level adult amateur championship with her other mount, *Connaisseur*. Jones, who rides with Nancy Baker, received the final scores for her USDF bronze medal at the show. "It took me 20 years, but I finally achieved my bronze medal," said Jones, 47.

Jones, Walton, Ky., bought the 8-year-old Oldenburg gelding (*Rohdiamant—Gesstine*) from Kathy Priest 1½ years ago. Reliance was second in the 4-year-old division at the Markel/USEF National Young Horse Dressage Championships in 2007.

"He's the coolest horse," Jones said. "He lives up to his name, and he's Mr. Reliable out there."

Though Jones started riding as a child—she started competing in dressage when she was in her 20s—she took a nine-year hiatus from showing to start a business. That business, Seed Strategy Inc., is now thriving. Jones is the CEO and manages to fit in riding around the full-time job. She gets up around 4:30 every morning and schools both horses, often with Baker, then heads to work.

"I get up and ride when everyone else is sleeping," she said. "We worked really hard this year. Our whole focus is on learning and getting better and not really on winning."

(Bob Tarr Photo)