

The National Veteran Championships 2023

Celebrating over 21 years of all aspects of the veteran horse and pony.

The National Veteran Championships show the equine world that veterans enjoy huge popularity within the showing circuit.

The Veteran Horse Society (VHS) once again hosted The National Veteran Championships at one of the UK's premier equestrian centres – Arena UK. The Show has become more successful each year and, now in its 10th year, seeing record numbers of competitors and horses once again. The Championship Show hosts over 150 classes ranging from fun classes to dressage, showing and jumping classes with a huge array of ribbons, prizes, trophies and prize money on offer.

The Society, founded by Julianne Aston over 22 years ago, aims to provide a high standard of education in care and management for every aspect of the veteran and now is truly a lifeline for owners, who have come to rely on the expert advice the Society offers.

The VHS gives older horses the chance to compete at various levels of qualifiers all over UK. The VHS Showing Series is kindly sponsored by *Allen & Page* and runs both in hand and ridden classes, each split into three qualifying age categories (Pre-Veteran, Veteran & Diamond Veteran).

Qualification begins at Area level and is open to non-members at this stage, progressing on to Regional Finals and then the much-coveted Supreme Finals held at the National Veteran Championships themselves.

Other routes for Supreme Final qualification are available through Direct Qualifier Shows and Golden Tickets at carefully selected Breed and Championship shows.

The first Supreme Final qualifications are awarded at the Society's own Spring Festival in Warwickshire along with CHAPS North East Show, both in April. A range of high profile shows during the season provide further qualification opportunities, with the final few qualification spots being snapped up at the National Veteran Championships themselves in both the Regional Finals on the Friday and Golden Tickets during the prestigious Gala Evening Performance on the Saturday.

The VHS Supreme Finals take place on the Sunday at the National Veteran Championships. With these six classes seeing over 150 entries throughout the day, the standard is high – just to reach this stage is a true achievement in itself! The top two from each of these hotly contested finals then go forward for the respective In Hand and Ridden Championships where the Supreme In Hand Champion and Supreme Ridden Champion of the Year are crowned – a huge accolade! These Champions, together with the respective Reserve

Champions then go forward to the coveted Grand Supreme Final – to find the very ‘best of the best’: the *Allen & Page* Veteran Horse of the Year!

We are thrilled to announce that this year, the title of 2023 Allen & Page Veteran Horse of the Year goes to 23 year old Glengoole Lad, ridden by 16 year old Isobel Kinvig.

Isobel’s Mum Nicola had this to say about the pair’s achievement: *“We are absolutely shocked, overwhelmed and overjoyed for Glengoole Lad, our 23 year old Irish Sports Horse to have won Veteran of the Year with my daughter Isobel. We have owned Lad for 12 years and he is a massive part of our family, he is very kind and charming and has the warmest of hearts. He did not miss a beat at our favourite show of the year and went into the Supreme and then the Grand Supreme like it was his first class of the weekend. He really loves his job and gives Izzy the best experiences and memories. We will never be able to put into words what this means for us.”*



Isobel Kinvig and Glengoole Lad (aged 23)

Reserve Overall Champion was taken by Bizzie B (aged 27), ridden by another junior, 12 year old Xanthe Banks.

We caught up with Xanthe’s Mum Jackie, who owns Bizzie B after their class: *“It’s such an honour to make it to the final, and even more of a delight to have been awarded Reserve Grand Supreme. BB has been coming to the show since she was in pre-vets and to make the Supreme let alone the Grand Supreme was just amazing. Xanthe was so, so thrilled, and we are all forever grateful to our special little brown horse, who takes it all in her stride. Like a fine wine, just gets better with age. She is a complete angel to carry her small jockey and they have formed such a partnership this season. Thank you to everyone at VHS for such a brilliant show.”*



(Zanthe Banks & Bizzie B)

The Society is rounding the celebrations off this year with a glittering ball held at Bromsgrove Hotel & Spa in November – a few tickets are still available for this fun event which brings together competitors, sponsors, trade partners and the VHS team from every part of the UK to celebrate (and party!) over 20 years of the VHS - contact the Head Office for further details.

Friday

After many months of preparations, the Show competition officially opens on Friday. This year with such a large number of horses, competitors and spectators you could really feel the show was buzzing with excitement and atmosphere. The weather was more than kind and the sun shone for most of the weekend with lovely warm temperatures. As with previous years, the show started with last minute opportunities to qualify for the afternoon's Regional Final Championship.

This year the veteran section had larger than usual entries while last year this was true of the diamond section, just showing you never do know what each year will bring.

The Area Qualifiers were very well supported and four competitors in each class gained their tickets to the Regional Finals that began in the Main Arena at noon. These scheduled Regional Finals each offer an extra 2 'Wild Cards' for their associated Supreme Final so two

became four chances to qualify! The Regional Finals had record entries this year with many competitors still hoping to bag their ticket for the much-coveted Supreme Final.

This year the winner of the Ridden Regional Championship went to Chantelle Smith and Mickey Finn II. Mickey is owned by Jane Scott and we spoke to Jane at home after the event. She said: *“We are absolutely over the moon in what was a huge class, in fact the largest of the day. We were shocked and stunned to be called forward. It is a wonderful show and it just amazing how many beautiful horses and ponies there are and also how large it has become from its humble beginnings. The team put on such a fantastic event and always make us feel so welcome.”*

This year's cups, trophies and shields were once again up for the taking, as well as prize money of over £1,000. With so many beautiful rosettes, sashes and prizes on offer, the lucky winners would not be disappointed. The Society would like to thank the main series sponsors, *Allen & Page*, who have supported the Society throughout the season and to all the companies, organisations and individuals who have sponsored classes, championships and arenas at the show. The Society wishes to express their gratitude for the generosity and support as this National Championship Show really would not be possible without them.

The outdoor arenas on the Friday host full days of competition, comprising of 2 dressage rings holding both long and short arena tests ranging from Intro to Medium level and 2 showing rings boasting a variety of open classes from Style & Performance, Foreign Breeds and Side Saddle classes to Judge's Choice and Fancy Dress – always a firm favourite with families.



Friday's Ridden Best Turned Out went to 5 year old Lincoln Russell riding Netherfield Olivine (Olly), aged 19. Olly was very kindly lent to Lincoln at the Show by owner Nicola Smith when Lincoln was unable to bring his own pony Maggie this year.

In the *PureFlax* outdoor Ring 4, Poppy Rutter and Crossfoot Pippin (aged 20) set the pace by winning the 70cm (20+) Style and Performance class. Mum Laura gave us her thoughts: *"Poppy and Pip love to jump and we entered, not expecting anything as we knew it would be stiff competition being the championships, so to win it was just fantastic! Poppy was thrilled, she didn't realise it was her that had won as she didn't know her number, and she only realised when me and my other daughter Annabel let out very excited shrieks! Poppy turned around and saw us and immediately grinned from ear to ear! Pip jumped a beautiful round, we couldn't be prouder of her, and I'm obviously very proud of Poppy too, she rode beautifully."*



Poppy Rutter and Crossfoot Pippin (aged 20)

Friday Evening

Those unable to attend the show were still able to enjoy the event with live streaming via Horse and Country throughout the weekend. A massive thank you goes to the VHS

volunteers and arena party who took such care in making the arena look spectacular for the event all weekend.

The first of the evening competitions started at 6pm in the main arena. The evening was sponsored by *Harry Hall*, of which the society is very grateful. It hosted the very enjoyable Dressage to Music competition as well as the hugely popular Strictly Fancy Dress-Age where competitors perform a freestyle routine in a themed costume relating to their chosen music where anything goes! The standard is always very high and a great deal of time and effort is put into the glorious costumes and splendid tests. It's a real crowd pleaser and not to be missed! The large crowd of spectators were so supportive of every competitor and the atmosphere was electric.

Winner of the dressage to music was Sarah Grindle and Saffron XII (age 20) and reserve went to Elise Cunningham and Nantlesg Allan (aged 16).



Sarah Grindle and Saffron XII (aged 20)



The hotly contested Strictly Fancy Dress-Age was won by Emma Taylor and her beautiful Spanish stallion Novato Salvatella (aged 19), performing the Rocky Horror Show and reserve went to Emily Strangeway and Mardruid Rainbow Treasure, also aged 19.



Emma Taylor & Novato Salvatella (aged 19)

One of the most sought after awards in the evening is the best costume and this also went to Emily Strangeway and Mardruid Rainbow Treasure, with her truly spectacular elephant costume from Aladin. We caught up with the family after the class "Thank you so much for putting on such a magical show. Since attended our first VHS champs last year in 2022, my two daughters have been planning their 2023 Strictly Fancy Dress-Age entry with their amazing little pony Daffodil (Mardruid Rainbow Treasure). Molly sat waiting for the entries to open, hovering over the keyboard in case it sold out, as it usually does very quickly. They practiced over and over in wind and rain and late at night. On Friday night they came out of the arena when they finished and said it was the best thing they have ever done. They were thrilled to come second overall, winning the junior section (with stunning sash) and also to win best costume for their Disney Aladin theme was the icing on the cake. They threw everything at it, including a lot of blue face paint! The VHS champs has become the highlight of their year and they are already planning next year's entry. Thank you to the VHS team for making her dreams come true.



Emily Strangeway and Mardruid Rainbow Treasure (aged 19)

The Cottrell Riverdance Memorial Trophy was a new award for this year and kindly donated by the Bowles Family, in memory of their hugely successful pony Ronnie who was sadly lost suddenly earlier in the year. This is to be awarded to the horse/pony giving their Strictly performance that extra little bit of cheeky sparkle that would have made Ronnie proud! For 2023, this went to Harriet Perry-Warnes and Greenferns Bentley (aged 16), who gave Harriet a few naughty moments during their performance! The crowd urged Harriet on and managed wonderfully with the help of her ground crew of farm animals which delighted everybody with their dancing and enthusiasm too!



Harriet Perry-Warnes and Greenferns Bentley (aged 16)

To round the evening off, the crowd were treated to a spectacular freestyle demonstration from GB rider Lindsay Hancock with her 15 year old Bacchus. Lindsay hasn't been to the Championship for a few years, but it was certainly worth the wait. They gave an absolute flawless demonstration, showing why they are one of the top dressage combinations in the country.



Lindsay Hancock & Bacchus (aged 15)

Saturday

A respectably early start of 8:30am saw the outside rings fill up early with some lovely exhibits and very excited supporters.

Sponsors for the early morning start in the main arena were *The Cowley family*. This arena included equitation classes and a range of concours classes which the society promotes. These included qualifiers for the Concours Society of Great Britain Finals. A colourful variety of beautiful In hand costumes as well as astride and side saddle costumes were displayed throughout the range of classes, all beautifully tailored, portraying sheer elegance and giving judge Katie Downing an unenviable job to do in choosing her winners! These classes are pure delight both to watch and take part in.

The Junior Ridden Concours winner was Lily Cowley-Bickenson and Sandboro Love Child (aged 18).



Lily Cowley-Bickenson & Sandboro Love Child (aged 18)

The very elegant Side Saddle Concours class saw a deserving win for Moya Payne and her very consistent 16 year old Derron Lad.

Karen Perkowski landed the Astride Pre Veteran title while Katie Naish won the Astride (20+) title with her 23 year old Veteran Dublin Lass. Katie's Georgian period costume, matching with the Society colours in burgundy silk with French inspired lace was made by RJR designs.

All the competitors looked stunning and these are always hugely popular classes.

The winners of every class, once again, received their special winner stable plaques which are kindly sponsored by *Harry Hall* this year.

The outside rings were also buzzing with excitement and again *Harry Hall* kindly sponsored ring 3 which hosted a variety of classes over the weekend including the dressage on Friday and range of showing classes on Saturday from Lead Rein through to Retired Racehorses. Willow Airey won the Ridden Part Bred class with Brookfarm Heaven Scent (aged 21). This class had large numbers forward and Willow was delighted to be placed 1st and go forward to the Evening Performance.



Willow Airey & Brookfarm Heaven Scent (aged 21).

The Lafond ring (ring 2) had a variety of classes through the day and ranged from our young handler competitions to foreign breeds, ridden hunters and show horses. The In Hand Show Hunter Pony had some fantastic entries forward and eventually the title was taken by *Phoebe Airey Brookfarm Mr Chips (aged 20)*



Phoebe Airey Brookfarm Mr Chips (aged 20)

The VHS is one of a few organisations that offer these types of classes at Championship level. The show sees many foreign breeds all come together to compete such as American Miniature Horses, Spanish Horses, Warmbloods, Morgans and Haflingers to mention a few! Members have always pulled out all the stops to display their breeds according to tradition.

As usual, the Championship show at Arena UK gave competitors the opportunity to compete in the Working Veteran classes, hosted in the *Pureflax* Ring 4. Classes are open to all and begin at an encouraging 'bottom hole' height, ranging up to 0.9m at the end of the day. These very popular classes were fully subscribed with the maximum jumping capacity reached for the day – keeping our judges very busy indeed! The jumping course is set up to be inviting but still requires skill, along with an individual show that each must complete to finalise their placings. This year saw some fabulous combinations embracing the challenge, leading to a very strong Championship in the Saturday Evening performance!



Over at the Main Arena the incredibly popular pairs class was underway. Even with 2 sections, this class fills within hours of entries opening. There were some beautiful pairs forward and everyone looked on nervously as the judge decided her final top 6 in each section to go forward to the championship in the evening performance in a couple of hours. Later that evening the Champion pair was announced and to great delight went to the Welsh Pony lead rein combination of Henry Hiscox and Shilbrook Mr Holly (aged 16) and his sister Emily Hiscox Cairngorm Commando (aged 19). Reserve went to Oscar Wellens and Dolrhedyn Bronson (aged 20) and Oliver Dixon and Dwylan Hebog (aged 18).



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Mountain & Moorland Supreme Final

In-hand

The much-anticipated M&M In Hand Supreme Final took place on Saturday Afternoon in the main arena. Judges Adam Pike and Christine Senior had a huge challenge to pick their winners with some beautiful exhibits forward, each vying for the top placing and giving super performances. The In Hand title went to Eleanor Smithers with the very consistent Pasadena Well Dun (aged 16).



Eleanor Smithers & Pasadena Well Dun (aged 16).

Heather Fisher took second place with Dunstruan Duich Mhor (aged 15).

Ridden

The Ridden M&M Supreme Final followed on with a range of breeds forward, all of them representing their breed beautifully. The ridden winner was Abbie Bayley and London Jack the Lad (aged 18) who gave a foot perfect show, with Katie Moulds and Ludworth Viking (aged 22) hot on their heels in 2nd place.

Abbie was overwhelmed and just couldn't believe she had won the title. She said: *"He truly is a special boy! He's given me a great season. I couldn't have asked for a more perfect way to end our partnership together!"*



Abbie Bayley and London Jack the Lad (aged 18)

The M&M Supreme Championship then took place with the top two forward from both the in hand and ridden finals. The crowd had gathered and finally both the judges were in agreement, Champion went to in hand winner Eleanor with Pasadena Well Dun and Katie Moulds gave an impeccable performance to bag the Reserve spot with Ludworth Viking.

Evening performance

This prestigious Gala Saturday Evening Performance was kindly sponsored by *Mobility Care* who have been tremendous supporters of the Society for the past few years. The Saturday evening, filled with glitz and glamour, sees 20 separate championships take place in the buzzing main arena. Winners and reserves from daytime classes across Friday and Saturday all go forward to the relevant championship in the Gala Evening Performance - it's a spectacular event and everyone loves to take part! The evening didn't disappoint, with some absolutely stunning veterans parading in the arena and giving it their all – the standard was truly exceptional this year and every champion was a worthy winner indeed! With the music, lights and atmosphere it was a truly dazzling experience. Commentator Carey Knox did a fantastic job over the weekend and spoke to many of the competitors as they received their awards.

Achievement Award

The 2023 Achievement Award winner presentation took place as part of the evening performance. This award is given by the VHS Committee to the combination they feel have achieved so much within the Society. It is not necessarily success in classes but every aspect of the partnership which is taken into account. This year the award was presented to Samantha Norris and her ever consistent Maesglas Lili Wen (aged 29). The pair have indeed won many competitions within the veteran world over many years, including overcoming injury to return to top level competition. They have been very consistent and supportive for many years – a true long term partnership flying the veteran flag together!



Samantha Norris & Maesglas Lili Wen (aged 29).

Champions of Champions

The climax of the Saturday Evening Performance is the Champion of Champions competition. As expected, the standard was extremely high, and this year the tough decision to select the winner fell to Mr Adam Pike. The atmosphere was electric as the judge took his time to carefully make his choices. A nail biting wait ensued with competitors and spectators alike, eagerly waiting for the results to see who would be Overall Champion.



You could hear a pin drop as the announcement was made by Carey Knox and a delighted Emma Armitage and her miniature Birchwood Flying Colours (aged 21), stepped forward to be crowned Champion of Champions for 2023. Reserve went to 7 year old Evie Jaworski-Needham and Yarpha Selina (aged 16) with Willow Airey and Brookfarm Heaven Scent (aged 21) taking 2nd Reserve.



Emma Armitage and Birchwood Flying Colours (aged 21)

Sunday

The last day of the show consists of 2024 qualifiers and a range of other open classes in the outdoor rings. The incredibly popular In Hand Groom's class was won by Mandy Phillips and Chocolate (aged 26). Second place went to Harry Crisp with Jackie Willis's Templedruid Jadeite (aged 21).

Proudly watching Harry's first showing class was Mum, Natalie Crisp, who was herself awarded the VHS Supporter's Award on Saturday evening as a thank you from the Committee for the countless hours she has worked this year for the show.



Evie Jaworski-Needham and Yarpha Selina (aged 16)

Supreme Finals

The much-anticipated 2023 Supreme Finals began at 8am in the Main Arena – this is the very pinnacle of the Veteran Showing year and what so many competitors have been hoping to qualify for.

Each of the six Supreme Final classes are judged by two separate judges each carefully looking over and marking each of the entries as they perform their individual shows in front of the crowd. With these six classes seeing over 150 entries throughout the day it was an exceptionally strong competition and the judges truly had their work cut out!

The top two from each of these hotly contested finals then go forward for the respective In Hand and Ridden Championships.

Finally, at the end of the day, the Overall In Hand and Ridden Champions, together with the respective Reserve Champions then go forward to the much-coveted Grand Supreme Final – to find the very ‘best of the best’: Allen & Page Veteran Horse of the Year!

These Finals are a line-up of sheer quality with hundreds having competed for the chance to stand in these places and all the exhibits forward were worthy of the title each presented to perfection for the judges. Mr Martin Jones and Ms Lorraine Rowntree both were both astounded and delighted by the quality of veterans presented to them on the day.

Diamond In Hand Supreme went to Bella Knaapen and Bowler Hat Trick (aged 25) and Reserve was Jack Wainwright with Laura Kenyon-Brodie’s Maysong (aged 26).

Jack Wainwright & Maysong (aged 26)



Veteran In Hand Supreme went to Emma Armitage Birchwood UK Flying Colours (aged 21) and Reserve was Alicia Houlihan and Tina (aged 23).



Pre-Veteran In Hand Champion was to Rochelle Green and Conker (aged 17). Reserve was Rachel Hampson and Sambuca Big Daddy's Batchelor Party (aged 15).



Rochelle Green & Conker aged 17.

The In Hand 2023 Overall Champion was taken by Bella Knaapen and Bowler Hat Trick, Reserve went to Emma Armitage and Birchwood UK Flying Colours, 2nd Reserve was Jack Wainwright and Maysong.



Bella Knappen and Bowler Hat Trick

Ridden

The Ridden Championship Classes followed shortly after and the classes were all split into section A & B as the numbers were too large to allow a complete go round.

Diamond Ridden Champion went to Xanthe Banks and Jackie Banks's Bizzie B (aged 27). Reserve Champion was Laura Kenyon-Brodie with her own Maysong (aged 26). Laura broke her leg in a terrible riding accident in March and had only been able to ride and qualify 2 weeks before the Championships, so achieving this was a delight for her, showing her determination and help from family and friends keeping Maysong in such a fantastic condition while she was side-lined herself.



Xanthe Banks and Jackie Banks's Bizzie B (aged 27)



Laura Kenyon-Brodie with Maysong (aged 26).

Veteran Ridden Champion was taken by Isobel Kinvig and Glengoole Lad (aged 23), Reserve was Kerry Mcfarlane and So High Society (aged 20).



Isobel Kinvig and Glengoole Lad (aged 23)



Kerry Mcfarlane and So High Society (aged 20).

Pre-Veteran Ridden Supreme had the largest number of the whole weekend and with over 15 horses in each section it took the judges a little longer than the other classes. With a double line up standing ready, they finally called the Champion – Charlotte Merrigan-Martin taking the title with Solaris Dwenqua (aged 15). This was a very emotional time for Charlotte having also won the title last year, only to so suddenly lose her beloved veteran very shortly afterwards. Reserve went to Wendy Harries and Stradey Hanna (aged 16).



Charlotte Merrigan-Martin with Solaris Dwenqua (aged 15).

The Ridden 2023 Overall Champion

The ridden championship saw juniors taking both Champion and Reserve. Isobel Kinvig and Glengoole Lad clinched it, with side saddle rider Xanthe Banks and Bizzie B taking reserve while second reserve went to the deserving Charlotte Merrigan Martin.

Veteran of the Year 2023

The Grand Supreme Final Championship sees the In Hand Overall Championship winners meeting the Overall Ridden Championship winners to battle it out for the *Allen & Page* Veteran of the Year title. The quality forward was outstanding and the judges faced a tough decision but they eventually agreed on their choices with the ridden winners reigning supreme. A delighted Isobel Kinvig and 23 year old Glengoole Lad took the supreme title of Allen & Page Veteran Horse of the Year 2023, with Reserve going to Xanthe Banks and 27 year old Bizzie B.



Isobel Kinvig and 23 year old Glengoole Lad

After the event we managed to speak to **Nigel Vale VHS Judge Co-ordinator:**

“Well I have to say this year’s event has to be the best ever, the buzz, atmosphere and friendliness was second to none. I have to thank all of our Judges, Stewards, Office staff and the plethora of helpers who all did a sterling job. A huge thank you must go to all of our competitors whose wonderful comments and positive feedback proves that organising this show makes it all worthwhile. Preparations are already underway for the Spring Festival, our judges assessment day will again be held the day before our Spring Festival at Rugby Riding Club, anyone interested in joining our panel or upgrading can find details and application forms on our website. We very much look forward to also seeing all our VHS friends at the Anniversary Ball in November.”

Clare King, the VHS National Show Organiser, is the person who makes all this possible, organising and managing every detail of the show. We caught up with Clare and spoke to her about this hugely successful event: *“We have been totally overwhelmed by the support for the VHS Championships this year and it’s a real privilege to be involved as this event grows from strength to strength. A huge amount of work goes on behind the scenes and I would like to thank everyone who has given up their time and effort to make the show the success it is, not forgetting our wonderful sponsors to whom we are greatly indebted. Sponsorship is vital for the continuation of the show. Not only did we have record breaking number of entries but the standard keeps going up and up. It is wonderful to see so many truly magnificent horses and ponies of all shapes and sizes – performing at the top of their game in their veteran years. Alongside this, the sheer love and support that our competitors show each other at this event is something truly special and unlike any other horse show. Thank you all for making a fabulous weekend to remember!”*

Julianne Aston the founder of the VHS, is the heart of the Society and spoke to us from their offices: *“The show has yet again shown the world that the interest in veteran horses and ponies is thriving and is now firmly part of the equestrian calendar, giving the chance for older horses to continue to compete to a high standard. Many shows now recognise the huge numbers of our affiliated qualifying classes we have and we are delighted to gain even more county shows for 2024. Thanks goes to each individual person who assists our Show Organiser Clare King as well as to the many behind the scenes who very often don’t get the credit they so deserve, so thank you to everyone who has helped throughout the year. There were so many new people there, and it was fantastic to see both new winners and some regaining their top places. 2024 preparations have already begun and we are already getting bookings for trade stands and sponsorships. Finally a massive thank you to Allen & Page and to all our sponsors both ring, class and Championship, the show really couldn’t happen without them. We are now all very much looking forward to the Anniversary Ball in November.*

Thank you everyone, it is lovely to have not only the friendliest society but also a thriving series culminating in a championship show!”

Photographs courtesy from SBM Photography.

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Full results are available upon request.

Photographs available from the SBM Photographic or available on request.

[The National Veteran Championships 2023 \(sbmphotographic.co.uk\)](http://sbmphotographic.co.uk)

Available for immediate release.

VHS. Logo available on request.

Please contact Julianne Aston for further information, quotes from competitors or photographs.

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