



**Gray Slipper** was one of the very first Future Hunter division winners at Capital Challenge before continuing an extremely successful professional hunter career with Louise Serio and amateur-owner career with owner Bridget Hallman.

Photo by Michelle Bloch

## Capital Challenge Future Hunters Produce Sport's Future Stars

*By Emily Riden/Jump Media*

Years before Gray Slipper was named the National Show Hunter Hall of Fame's 2007 Amateur-Owner, Regular Working and Overall Hunter of the Year, the 2006 Chronicle of the Horse Overall and Hunter Horse of the Year, and a three-time Grand Hunter Champion at the Capital Challenge Horse Show, the gelding captured the win in the very first Future Hunter Championship

at the Capital Challenge Horse Show in 2001 – giving a glimpse of his greatness.

Before Dream Date, Sambalino, or Declaration were winning grand hunter championships at major horse shows across the country, they too followed in Gray Slipper's footsteps, clinching victories in the Future Hunter division



**Sambalino** repeated his Future Hunter success at Capital Challenge Horse Show by winning the 2012 Performance Hunter 3'6" championship with Peter Pletcher  
Photo by Shawn McMillen  
Photography



Hollywood and Tim Goguen. Photo by O'Neills Photography

and showing signs of their bright hunter careers ahead.

With numerous hunter greats arising from the division, the Future Hunters at Capital Challenge have become the most heavily contested classes at the annual championship horse show, a proving ground for young, pre-green horses, and what Capital Challenge co-manager Oliver Kennedy has previously dubbed a 'star search' for the winners of years to come.

"We have the best hunter horsemen all congregated at Capital Challenge," said fellow horse show co-manager Billy Glass. "They all bring their best young horses and their future stars, so it's had an impressive history of being a great competition. It's a spectacular showcase as well as a challenge to see who has the best young horses."

The division was the creation of Glass and Kennedy and was introduced to the indoor final horse show more than 15 years ago, providing both the first major year-end championship for horses fitting the United States Equestrian



**Popeye K**

and Tommy Serio accept top honors in the Future Hunters at the 2006 Capital Challenge Horse Show.

Photo by Michelle Bloch



**Bacardi** and Havens Schatt, owned by Caroline Moran, were victorious in the 2012 \$20,000 Added North American Future Hunter Championship. The following year, Bacardi was named the Grand Green Hunter Champion at the Pennsylvania National Horse Show among numerous other accolades.

Photo by James Parker/The Book LLC

Federation (USEF) pre-green hunter qualifications and the unique showcase and proving grounds for young horses that continues today.

This year, Glass and Kennedy expect to accept approximately 150 entries into the Future Hunter divisions – a large quantity that can be greatly attributed to the popularity and championship format of the Capital Challenge Horse Show, host of the World Championship Hunter Rider (WCHR) Finals.

“That high-level competition is what Capital Challenge is all about,” Glass said. “We are fortunate to have all of those great horses under one roof. Particularly for the young ones, if you’re winning all the time in California, you think you’ve got the best one. If you’re in Florida and you win all the classes, you think you’ve got the best one. Ours is a rare show where all of these geographic representatives meet head-to-head to see who really has the best one. Nobody comes to Capital Challenge to show up. They come there to compete.”

This year’s edition of the Capital Challenge Horse Show will be held October 1-9 at the Prince George’s Equestrian Center in Upper Marlboro, Maryland, and will offer five sections of Future Hunters including Future Working Hunter 5 & Under, Future Working Hunter 6 & Over, Future Working Hunter Mares, Future Working Hunter Colts & Geldings and Future Working Hunter 3’3”.

The \$45,000 Future Division culminates with the \$25,000 Future Hunter North American Championship, sponsored by the Wheeler Family and Madison Hills Farm, to be held this year on Wednesday, October 5. The top six horses from each of the Future Hunter sections are invited to compete in the championship for the chance to join the list of accomplished past winners.

“Initially we just had two giant divisions,” Glass explained. “Now we’ve gotten more specific in regard to their ages and with sections for mares and colts and geldings. That’s made it even more interesting for people to watch. I personally enjoy the young hunters more than anything else. It has certainly been a proving grounds for so many horses.”

Glass isn’t alone in his sentiments, as the division has been highly praised by many of the country’s leading hunter riders.

“The Future Hunter division is amazing, and I’m truly impressed with how it has grown over the past few years,” said three-time United States Hunter Jumper Association (USHJA) International Hunter Derby Finals champion Liza Boyd. “I think it is the best thing that has happened to our industry because it has made people want to go out and buy young horses. Horses from this class have always gone on to be famous horses, and that is something really amazing for the sport.”

Scott Stewart, a six-time winner of the WCHR Professional Finals at Capital Challenge, previously voiced similar opinions, “The Future Hunter division is just great. These are going to be the horses that are here next year doing the big classes, and that is always a highlight, to see how they progress throughout the year.”

Spectators and exhibitors can expect to see riders like Boyd and Stewart returning to this year’s Capital Challenge Horse Show and again contesting the Future Hunter classes aboard mounts they hope will one day join the likes of Gray Slipper, Sambalino, Dream Date, Hollywood, Bacardi, Popeye K, and numerous others who got their start to greatness in the Future Hunters.

“I’m personally very proud of so many of the horses that have come through the ranks in that division,” Glass concluded. “If you’re the best future hunter at Capital Challenge, chances are that you’re a star down the road.”

To learn more about the Capital Challenge Horse Show, visit [www.capitalchallenge.org](http://www.capitalchallenge.org).