

# Capital Challenge Returns Home for Elite Hunter, Jumper, and Equitation Competition

By Sabrina Brashares/Jump Media

*After a change of venue in 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic, the Capital Challenge Horse Show returned to its familiar venue, Prince George's Equestrian Center in Upper Marlboro, Maryland, October 1 through October 10, 2021. The nation's top hunter, jumper, and equitation riders competed for historic titles during the 28th edition of the show.*

*The 10-day event offered more than \$400,000 in prize money and had a record-high number of entries in its return home. Capital Challenge held five year-end equitation finals, five North American League (NAL) Finals, nine World Championship Hunter Rider (WCHR) Challenge classes, the \$10,000 WCHR Professional Finals sponsored by the Rein Family, and the \$25,000 KASK Green Hunter 3' and 3'3" North American Championship sponsored by the Wheeler Family.*



## Professionals Compete for Coveted Titles

The WCHR Professional Finals is one of the highlights of Capital Challenge every year. Six of the country's best hunter riders qualified for the class and the top four continued to The Final Four Ride-Off. Scott Stewart, John French, Jimmy Torano, and Victoria Colvin all secured a spot in the final round where they returned to each jump four courses on horses generously donated by their owners. Stewart of Wellington, Florida, scored a 90 or above in all four of his rides to capture his seventh victory in the class.

"I always get nervous for these types of classes," admitted Stewart. "Excited, but a little nervous. So many things can go wrong for any of us. Whoever wins the class is always the luckiest. They are the luckiest draw, the luckiest for not hitting a jump or swapping. Obviously, everybody rides great, so it's just who was the luckiest that night."

Stewart took home another top win in the \$25,000 KASK Green Hunter 3' and 3'3" North American Championship sponsored by the Wheeler Family riding Betsee Parker's Ackergill Castle.

French of Wellington, Florida, earned his own headline after piloting Babylon, owned by Marnell Sport Horses, to the top prize in the \$25,000 WCHR Professional Challenge, sponsored by the Gochman Family, which took place earlier in the week. This marked French's fourth win in the class.

"For him to come here at six years old and show against those horses and win is pretty special," said French. "I never dreamed that he would win this. I just thought this would be a good class to go in for experience and see how he did, and he ended up winning the whole thing. Having started him from the beginning makes it more special."

French and Babylon made it a week to remember by also claiming the Grand Hunter, Grand Green Hunter, and Grand Green Hunter 3'6" Championship titles.

"I've always had good luck at this horse show; it's always been a good show for me," commented French, who is originally from Maryland. "I think this is the best show there is for the hunters with all the special classes and awards they give that showcase the owners, the horses, and the riders."

## Equitation Stars Rise to the Challenge

Junior and amateur equitation riders kicked off the Capital Challenge with Equitation Weekend, sponsored by Bigeq.com. One of the largest and most competitive classes was the fifth-annual EMO Insurance/United States Hunter Jumper Association (USHJA) 3'3" Jumping Seat Medal Final – East. The class consisted of three challenging phases and 153 horse-and-rider combinations fighting for the top prize. Riley Hogan



of Warrenton, Virginia, and Donald Stewart's Wengen ultimately topped the leaderboard and led the victory gallop.

Hogan climbed 16 places to return for the final round sitting in second. She did not let the pressure get to her and navigated Wengen around the final course with ease to earn a high score of 93. Hogan saw this victory as a huge confidence builder going into the remaining indoor finals.

"I was ecstatic; I mean it was unreal," said Hogan. "This class was a pretty big goal, and it definitely gives me a boost of confidence going into the [Dover Saddlery/USEF Hunt Seat] Medal Finals, ASPCA Maclay National Championship, and Washington International Horse Show Equitation Finals."

Other top equitation finishes included:  
 THIS Children's Medal Finals –  
 Abigail Gordon  
 Ariat Adult Medal Finals – Jaden Olson  
 Palm Beach International Academy North  
 American Junior Equitation Championships –  
 Grace Debney  
 North American Adult Amateur Equitation  
 Championships – Claire Stevenson

### Jumpers Fly in the Show Place Arena

Jumper riders took a turn in the spotlight with the \$10,000 NAL Children's Jumper Finals sponsored by EquiFit. Taylor Landstrom of Excelsior, Minnesota, piloted her own Colina SN to the win in the NAL Children's Jumper Finals out of 31 horse-and-rider combinations.

After 16 riders successfully cleared the first round and qualified for the jump-off, Landstrom knew she was going to have to go all out in order to win the competitive class. Last to return for the jump-off, Landstrom kept her cool and stuck to her plan to produce the winning time of 33.021 seconds.

"Going into the jump-off I had to make sure that I kept my mind mentally calm," explained Landstrom. "There were some

fast rounds so I just had to trust my horse. I also had to trust myself and mentally calm myself down through all of it."

The winner of the \$10,000 NAL Adult Jumper Finals sponsored by Smartpak was Hope Batchelor DVM of Chester Springs, Pennsylvania, riding her own Byolga. In the \$10,000 NAL Low Junior/Adult/Amateur Jumper Finals, Emma Blumenkrantz of Colts Neck, New Jersey, and her own Collin W were victorious.

### Hunters Close Out a Successful Week

Amateur hunter competition did not disappoint at Capital Challenge. As a result of a stellar performance in the Amateur-Owner 3'6" 18-35 division, Callie Seaman of New York, New York, and her own Silver Lining secured the division championship, which led them to the Grand Amateur-Owner Hunter 3'6" Champion title, presented by Finally Farm.

Seaman was thrilled to earn her first grand championship at Capital Challenge with Silver Lining, her partner of three years. She originally purchased her mount right before badly breaking her leg. Seaman renamed the gelding because he became her silver lining in an unlucky situation.

"I think everyone sees Capital Challenge as the hunter spotlight show," remarked Seaman. "It's the most exciting horse show for me for the hunters every year. It really is the culmination of all the hard work that you have done."

Other Grand Champions during the 2021 Capital Challenge Horse Show included:

Grand Amateur-Owner 3'3" Champion – Airport 48, ridden by Martha Ingram and owned by John and Stephanie Ingram, LLC  
 Grand Junior Hunter 3'6" Champion – Commentary, ridden by Augusta Iwasaki and owned by Bikoff Equestrian LLC  
 Grand Junior Hunter 3'3" Champion – Arabesque, ridden by Clara Propp and owned by Aquitaine Equine  
 Grand Children's Hunter Champion – Catbird, ridden by Alexa Karet and owned by Glade Run Farm LLC  
 Grand Adult Hunter Champion – Per Se, ridden by Laura Karet and owned by Glade Run Farm LLC  
 Grand Pony Hunter Champion – So Enchanted, ridden by Lauren Padilla and owned by Highland Farm, LLC

To learn more about the Capital Challenge Horse Show and to view a full list of winners from the hunter, jumper, and equitation competition offered, visit [www.CapitalChallenge.org](http://www.CapitalChallenge.org). See lots of great winning ride videos and winner interviews on the Capital Challenge YouTube page. For additional updates, visit the CCHS Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter pages.