



Carlee McCutcheon bested 147 other competitors to win the Palm Beach International Academy North American Junior Equitation Championship aboard Chacco Star at the Capital Challenge Horse Show.

# Renewed Focus Gives McCutcheon A Big Win At Capital Challenge

She tops the Palm Beach International Academy North American Junior Equitation Championship on Chacco Star.

By **Mollie Bailey** And **Lindsay Berreth**  
 Photos By **Shawn McMillen Photography**

Carlee McCutcheon couldn't have had a much better start to her fall season. In September she won the warm-up class for the Region 4 ASPCA Maclay qualifier at the Kentucky National, and then she won the regional there as well. And at the Capital Challenge Horse Show, held Sept. 29-Oct. 9 in Upper Marlboro, Maryland, she kept that winning streak going, outriding 147 other competitors to win the Palm Beach International Academy North American

Junior Equitation Championship. McCutcheon came back on top after Round 2 and nailed the test, which included a hand gallop and a counter-canter, to win aboard Chacco Star.

"I trust my horse so much," said McCutcheon, 16. "Chacco" makes me so brave, and he's so much fun to show. He likes a

challenge, so the test was fun, and I knew he'd be good at it. It was a great way to start finals season."

McCutcheon paired up with Kennedy McCaulley's 12-year-old Oldenburg (Chacco-Blue—Carieny Z, Caretano Z) halfway through this year's Winter Equestrian Festival (Florida), and in their first time showing together won an ASPCA Maclay class and the Washington International Horse Show Equitation Classic hunter phase.

"He's very careful, which is what gives him such a great jump," she said. "He likes more of a soft ride. He's a little sensitive, and I like to ride soft, so it works out well for both of us."

This fall season is a nice change for the Aubrey, Texas, rider after she faced some disappointment over the summer. When she was at the Gotham North FEI North American Youth Championships (Michigan) preparing to compete, her partner, MTM Unexpected, slipped in the open water and fell. While he wasn't seriously hurt, she had to scratch from the competition, returning to the ring a few weeks later at the Hampton Classic (New York) to earn ribbons in the high junior classes. She's hoping to compete him in the Neue Schule/USEF Junior Jumper National Championships and Prix des States competition at the Pennsylvania National Horse Show.

McCutcheon trains with Max Amaya and T.J. O'Mara of Stonehenge Stables, as well as with her grandmother,

Palm Beach International Academy North American Junior Equitation Championship Upper Marlboro, Md.—Oct. 2	
Rider	Hometown
1. Carlee McCutcheon	Aubrey, Texas
2. Isabella David	Holmdel, N.J.
3. Skylar Wireman	Bonsall, Calif.
4. Nicole McMillion	Huntington Beach, Calif.
5. Augusta Iwasaki	Calabasas, Calif.
6. Ariana Marnell	Las Vegas
7. Madison Nadolenco	Calabasas, Calif.
8. Sterling Malnik	Ocean Ridge, Fla.
9. Grace Shipman	Ridgefield, Conn.
10. Reese Merna	Mendham, N.J.
11. Kyla Sullivan	Wallingford, Conn.
12. Annalise Manoog	Centerville, Mass.
148 riders competed.	



Katherine Simonds and Notorious won the WCHR 3'3" Junior Challenge at Capital Challenge.

Colleen McQuay, who's been training her since she started.

"T.J. mainly helps me in the equitation and Max with the jumper ring," she said. "It's so nice to have them. We work really hard, which I love, because going to the ring feeling prepared makes you ride better and feel more confident."

McCutcheon was born into reining royalty. She is the daughter of Tom McCutcheon, double gold medalist from the 2010 Alltech FEI World Equestrian Games (Kentucky), and Mandy McCutcheon, who won team gold and individual bronze at the 2014 Normandy WEG in France. Her older brother, Cade McCutcheon, also won team gold and individual bronze at the 2018 WEG (North Carolina). For years Carlee competed in reining as well as at hunter/jumper shows, breaking several records on reiners in her division.

"This year I've really taken a step back from reining," she said. "I've shown twice this year on reiners—I haven't really practiced at all. My parents know that this is my passion. I want to turn professional in the jumpers, and they really support me in that. I love to ride reiners whenever I can, but this is what I focus on more."

### A COMPETITIVE PARTNER

Last year Katherine Simonds was set to compete in the 3'3" junior hunter division at Capital Challenge with Timon, who'd won the 3'3" small junior hunter, 15 and under, championship at USEF Junior Hunter National Championships—West (California) two months prior. But shortly after they got off the plane from Los Angeles, disaster struck.

"We weren't sure the exact point of his injury, but E. coli and strep had infected his coffin bone," said Simonds, 17. "He got here, and he was very

uncomfortable. Dr. CJ Caniglia [DVM, DACVS-LA] of Wolf Creek Equine Hospital took out a big chunk of bone and saved his life, then he stayed [in Maryland] and was nursed back to health for six weeks."

This year Simonds returned and piloted West Coast Equine Partners' Notorious to the top of the WCHR 3'3" Junior Challenge. The pair also earned the 3'3" junior hunter, 15-17, section A reserve championship.



Hard work at home helped Charlotte Clivio and WT Scorsese earn the \$10,000 North American League Low Junior/ Amateur Jumper Finals title at Capital Challenge.



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Lily Epstein piloted Cumano Boy Z to the win in the Taylor Harris Insurance Services National Children's Medal Final at Capital Challenge.

Taylor Harris Insurance Services National Children's Medal Final Upper Marlboro, Md.—Oct. 1	
Rider	Hometown
1. Lily Epstein	Coral Gables, Fla.
2. Emma Brody	New York, N.Y.
3. Violet Tatum	Pacific Palisades, Calif.
4. Camilla Jerng	Woodside, Calif.
5. Talia Kirson	Barrington Hills, Ill.
6. Kennedy Teasdale	Guilford, Conn.
7. Jordyn Scelsa	Islip, N.Y.
8. Erin Morera	Greenwich, Conn.
9. Faith Schuttemeyer	Boynton Beach, Fla.
10. Anna Markcrow	Manchester Center, Vt.

40 riders competed.

“He’s super competitive,” said Simonds of the 8-year-old Hanoverian (Stakkato Gold—Lalina Granna). “He’s pretty straightforward. He has no flaws. I think he’s amazing. He gives you so much confidence in the ring. If you can get it right and do your part, you know he’ll be backing you up.

sat on him for the first time and immediately fell in love with him. He’s so kind, and he wants to win as much as I do. We got on great from the very first moment.”

Though Simonds only leases “Wally” for major shows, the pair’s wins included the 3’3” small junior hunter, 16-17, title at the Adequan/USEF Junior Hunter National Championships—West (California) this year. Simonds trains with Shari and Rainie Rose of Rose Hill Farm, as well as getting help from Nick Haness and Julia Rossow. Rose Hill Farm is about 45 minutes from Simonds’ home in Thousand Oaks, California, but Simonds and her twin sister, Victoria, get out to the farm five days a week to practice.

Wally will go to the Pennsylvania National, then will head to the Marshall & Sterling Insurance/USHJA National Championships in Las Vegas in November.

“We’re still deciding if we should stay in the 3’3” division next year or if we should move up,” said Katherine. “Rainie and Shari will guide me to the correct decision.”

## AN INSTANTANEOUS CONNECTION

Charlotte Clivio may not have had the most conventional trial with WT Scorsese, but as soon as she sat on him, she knew it was a match.

“It was during COVID, so my mom and I drove up to [Wendy Peralta’s Seabreeze Farm] with my saddle and videoed the whole thing then sent it to my trainer,” she recalled. “At that point I wasn’t as experienced, and it wasn’t as common for me to get on a horse and see the jumps. With him, the connection was instantaneous. I found the jumps and felt confident right off the bat.”

After purchasing WT Scorsese, Clivio, 18, started in the training jumper division so they could get to know each other and work on his rideability. While he was forgiving and trustworthy, Clivio described his ride as “unorthodox.”

“[Trainer Tiffany Morrissey] will occasionally ride him, and obviously she’s a great rider, and she can give me extra insight,” said Clivio, Miami. “Sometimes I feel things that are hard for me to explain or hard for me to figure out how to fix them. He’s big, and we joke that it’s

like riding a boat. He can’t do things the same as a 16-hand supple horse. The first time she rode him she was like, ‘Everything makes a lot more sense now.’”

Morrissey and Maggie Gould, both of East Wind Farms, set exercises to help with his control.

“At home practicing they put a lot of emphasis on small technical things, so you get in those habits, so you don’t have to think of it the day of the show,” said Clivio. “That helped me immensely.

“A lot of the times they’ll set up courses that have different striding options, so you’re adding strides or leaving them out,” she added. “They set up courses with different turns—ones that are difficult because they’re tight. It’s not just making me turn; it’s about riding every aspect of the turn, a more equitation way of thinking about it.”

That hard work paid off at Capital Challenge this year, where they won the \$10,000 North American League Low Junior/Amateur Jumper Finals. After 14 riders made the jump-off, Clivio decided to cut out a stride from a line heading into a combination, relying on the 13-year-old

## CONGRATULATIONS *Jackie Stary!*

Winner of the USEF/NCEA Junior  
Hunter Seat Medal Final - Midwest  
on Conenzo



*Best of luck at Maclay Finals!*

Thank you Lori Scott-Hollands and  
Tina Judge Boyle of Judgement Farms





Emma Brody's increased confidence resulted in a win in the \$10,000 North American League Children's Jumper Finals with Nicarmargue at Capital Challenge.

Holsteiner gelding (Sir Shutterfly—Grandessa, Carthago) bred by Wild Turkey Farm to show off his massive stride and scope to get it done.

With WT Scorsese done for the season, Clivio is switching her focus to equitation. She'll be competing at the Dover Saddlery/USEF Hunter Seat Medal Final and USEF/NCEA Junior Hunter Seat Medal Final—East at the Pennsylvania National, then it's on to the ASPCA Maclay Final at the National Horse Show in Lexington, Kentucky, to wrap up the year.

### CLOSING A CHAPTER

Lily Epstein found the perfect way to celebrate the end of her time with her partner Cumano Boy Z: by winning the Taylor Harris Insurance Services National Children's Medal Final, their final class together.

Epstein beat out the 39 other competitors, all of whom qualified for the class over two rounds, edging out second-placed Emma Brody.

"I was happy not to be going last in the second round; there was a little less pressure," said Epstein, who came back second-to-last for Round 2. "I did an inside turn from [Fence] 1 to 2. There weren't any other inside

options, so I just hugged around the other jumps, and it worked out well."

Epstein paired up with Ainsley Wade's Cumano Boy Z during WEF this year, winning the first Taylor Harris class they contested in Week 9. She said she appreciated the smoothness of his gaits and his rideability.

"He's a really good boy," said Epstein of the 15-year-old Zangersheide by Cumano. "He's been doing this for a while, so it's a really good horse to do in my first [Taylor Harris Final]. He's kind of a big horse, but he rides on the smaller side, which is good for me because I'm able to be connected with him. He's super sweet."

Epstein lives in Coral Gables, Florida, and trains with Ali Sweetnam and the team from Sweet Oak Farm, as well as Hanae Leeman of Forever Equestrian LLC. She said she's been working on keeping Cumano Boy Z straight in her lessons.

"He goes left, so I need to practice keeping my left leg on, which is my weaker leg, and I worked on that a lot before the final," said Epstein, 13. "It's all about keeping him focused and straight, plus keeping my reins short and keeping him in a frame."

Epstein started riding at a summer camp near her

grandparents' home in Utah. When she was 7 she began training with Leeman, who introduced her to her longtime medium pony partner, Deja Blue. These days she rides with Leeman at home and with both Leeman and Sweetnam at shows.

While her time with Cumano Boy Z has come to an end, Epstein is looking forward to competing Deja Blue at the Pennsylvania National and then at the Washington International (Maryland). The highlight of her fall season will come at that last show.

"I'm excited to do the pony hunt teams at Washington," she said.

## FIRST INDOORS, BIG VICTORY

Before she got the ride on Nicarmargue, Emma Brody felt timid riding in the jumpers.

Since starting to compete "Nico," a 14-year-old Danish Warmblood gelding (Carmargue—Nileenda) about two years ago, Brody's confidence has been on the rise, and it culminated in winning the \$10,000 North American League Children's Jumper Finals at Capital Challenge during their first trip to the fall indoor circuit together.

### EMO Insurance USHJA 3'3" Jumping Seat Medal Final—East Upper Marlboro, Md.—Sept. 30

Rider	Hometown
1. Maddie Tosh	Milton, Ga.
2. Vivian Golden	Wyomissing, Pa.
3. Isa Jensen	Albany, N.Y.
4. Cecelia Perry	Boynton Beach, Fla.
5. Abigail Gordon	Statesville, N.C.
6. Maxine Boeding	Sag Harbor, N.Y.
7. Lily Epstein	Coral Gables, Fla.
8. Eva Mackenzie	Darien, Conn.
9. Annabelle Brown	Oxford, Pa.
10. Grace O'Connell	Wellington, Fla.
11. Cassidy Exner	Goffstown, N.H.
12. Isabella Mullan	Bend, Ore.

156 riders competed.

## TIDBITS

• Fifteen-year-old **Isabella Fioretti** piloted **Counselor** to the top of the \$10,000 North American League Children's Hunter Finals for owner Arden Stromnes in her first trip to Capital Challenge.

She said she and her barnmate, Ansley Sparks riding Spectre 007, who came in third, prepared extra hard with trainers Michael Britt-Leon and Isabella Randall of Windsor Stables.

"Michael always sets challenging courses at home, so it takes a lot of the stress out of going to a show," said Fioretti, Milton, Georgia. "I felt really prepared. I'm so grateful to have had the opportunity to participate in this show, let alone win. I've never been able to go to indoors before; it's really overwhelming."

• **Skylar Wireman** couldn't have had a much better trip to Capital Challenge. The Bonsall, California, rider piloted MZ Farms LLC's **Bonne Starlight** to the top of all four small junior hunter, 16-17, classes on the way to the division championship and the grand junior hunter championship, then they topped it off by winning the WCHR 3'6" Junior Challenge together. The judges also selected her for Best Junior Rider honors.

"I thought he was a star," said Wireman, who started riding the 10-year-old Hanoverian (Bonne Chance—Lughana) in the baby green hunters last year. "I can always count on him. He's so brave, and I can trust him and know that he's always going to perform for me."

Wireman also won the 17-year-old equitation, section B, championship on Famous.

• **Vivian Golden**, 13, broke a streak by winning the WCHR Pony Challenge aboard Betsee Parker's **Brixton**, a 12-year-old German Riding Pony (Charivari—Vorr).

"I've always wanted to win the WCHR Pony Challenge because I've done it four years in a row, and I've been fifth every time," said Golden, Wyomissing, Pennsylvania. "I was so excited to win it; it was such a big win for me."

• **Elle Boyd**, Camden, South Carolina, galloped to the top of the WCHR Children's Challenge aboard Katherine Ellis' **Kensi**.

"She's the best," said Boyd, 12. "She has such a kind heart."

Boyd also won the Stewart-Warner Cup—presented to the rider who judges decide exhibits the best style on a pony throughout the competition—after rides on Loafer's Lodge Melody and Sun's Up.



Isabella Fioretti's preparation at home paid off with a win in the \$10,000 North American League Children's Hunter Final with Counselor at Capital Challenge.



“I was definitely nervous in the first round, but I started to have more fun once I made it to the jump-off,” said Brody, 13, New York City. “It was amazing. I was so excited.”

The ninth grader rides at Glen Eden with Eleanor Kunsman in Chester, New Jersey, alongside her mother, Elena Brody.

“She started as a timid rider—didn’t really want to canter or jump,” said Kunsman. “She rode with my mother [Kathy Kunsman], and I came back into the picture and helped her on some ponies and made the suggestion to try a jumper to boost her confidence and create a little bit more of a confident, forward rider.”

Eleanor thought Nico might be a bit much for Emma at first, but after they leased him for a Florida season, the

pair clicked, and he was purchased for her.

“I was horrified to go fast,” Emma said. “I was coming off of ponies, so everything felt like the jumps were bigger, the stride was bigger, and he had more blood than I was used to, so I was always pulling. I was much smaller too, so it made him even scarier. As soon as I started to show the first year I went to Florida, everything kind of clicked, and I learned that he’ll do anything, and he really doesn’t care what I’m doing. He took me from the .60s to the low juniors.”

Elena rides Nico regularly to keep him going for Emma, who’s busy with other horses in the jumper and equitation ring. This year, she went to the Gotham North FEI North American Youth Championships on Pablo Mejia’s Carentino Z. 🐾

Capital Challenge

Upper Marlboro, Md.—Sept. 29-Oct. 9

**Small Jr. Hunter, 15 & Under CH:** Babylon, Marnell Sport Horses.

**RES:** Inquisitive, Aquitaine Equine.

**Small Jr. Hunter, 16-17 CH:** Bonne Starlight, MZ Farms LLC.

**RES:** Commentary, Bikoff Equestrian LLC.

**Large Jr. Hunter, 15 & Under CH:** Trademark, Shadowfax Equestrian LLC.

**RES:** In Writing, Sterling Malnik.

**Large Jr. Hunter, 16-17 CH:** G. Eleven, Donald Stewart.

**RES:** Paisley Park, Little Brook LLC.

**3’3” Jr. Hunter, 14 & Under CH:** Aubergine, Anna Markcrow.

**RES:** Casino Cash, The Hagerty Family.

**3’3” Jr. Hunter, 15-17, Sec. A CH:** Tiesto, Cecelia Perry.

**RES:** Notorious, West Coast Equine Partners LLC.

**3’3” Jr. Hunter, 15-17, Sec. B CH:** C’est Jolie, BR Farms LLC.

**RES:** Chance Of A Lifetime, Shannon Maguire.

**Children’s Hunter, 14 & Under CH:** Profound, Rein Family LLC.

**RES:** Coppertone, Sweet Oak Farm.

**Children’s Hunter, 15-17 CH:** Everglow, Gerald Ford.

**RES:** Midas, Paul McCracken.

**Children’s Pony Hunter CH:** Blueper, First Blue LLC.

**RES:** I Spy A Rainbow, Emilie Rucci.

**Small Pony Hunter CH:** Heavenly Patch Of Blue, Highland Farm LLC.

**RES:** So Enchanted, Sprucedale Inc.

**Medium Pony Hunter CH:** Paris Charm, Megan D’Amico.

**RES:** Empire’s Strikes Blue, GHF Hamptons LLC.

**Large Pony Hunter CH:** Goldmark, Take 3 LLC.

**RES:** Prestige, Ava Barnes.

**Equitation, 12 & Under, Sec. A CH:** Vivian Golden.

**RES:** Emi Richard.

**Equitation, 12 & Under, Sec. B CH:** Marielle Walrath.

**RES:** Mimi Maddock.

**Equitation, 13-14, Sec. A CH:** Anna Markcrow.

**RES:** Emily Jurnovoy.

**Equitation, 13-14, Sec. B CH:** Taylor Cawley.

**RES:** Paige Walkenbach.

**Equitation, 15-Yr.-Old, Sec. A CH:** McKayla Brombach.

**RES:** Maddie Tosh.

**Equitation, 15-Yr.-Old, Sec. B CH:** Ariana Marnell.

**RES, Tie:** Taylor Landstrom & Sterling Malnik.

**Equitation, 16-Yr.-Old, Sec. A CH:** Grace Shipman.

**RES:** Joe Craver.

**Equitation, 16-Yr.-Old, Sec. B CH:** Carlee McCutcheon.

**RES:** Amira Kettaneh.

**Equitation, 17-Yr.-Old, Sec. A CH:** Victoria Zahorik.

**RES:** Ruby Ransco.

**Equitation, 17-Yr.-Old, Sec. B CH:** Skylar Wireman.

**RES, Tie:** Isabella David & Elizabeth Cram.

**THIS Medal Warm-Up Equitation CH:** Abigail Roberts.

**RES:** Jordyn Scelsa.

**EMO Trip Of The Show, Jr. Hunter:** Babylon, Marnell Sport Horses.

**EMO Trip Of The Show, 3’3” Jr. Hunter:** Hobbs Lane, Sunset View Farm LLC.

**EMO Trip Of The Show, Pony Hunter:** Prestige, Ava Barnes.

**EMO Trip Of The Show, Children’s Hunter:** Coppertone, Sweet Oak Farm.

**EMO Trip Of The Show, Jr. Equitation:** Skylar Wireman.

**Grand Jr. Hunter CH:** Bonne Starlight, MZ Farms LLC.

**Grand Jr. Hunter, 15 & Under CH:** Babylon, Marnell Sport Horses.

**Grand Jr. Hunter, 16-17 CH:** Bonne Starlight, MZ Farms LLC.

**Best Jr. Rider:** Skylar Wireman.

**Grand 3’3” Jr. Hunter CH:** Tiesto, Cecelia Perry.

**Best 3’3” Jr. Hunter Rider:** Cecelia Perry.

**Stewart-Warner Jr. Cup CH:** Isabelle Ehman.

**Grand Children’s Hunter CH:** Blueper, First Blue LLC.

**Best Children’s Hunter Rider:** Chloe Cairns.

**Stewart-Warner Children’s Cup CH:** Olivia Sweetnam.

**Grand Pony Hunter CH:** Goldmark, Take 3 LLC.

**Best Pony Rider:** Olivia Sweetnam.

**Stewart-Warner Pony Cup CH:** Elle Boyd.

**Harper Taskier Wright Memorial Trophy:** Kathryn Padilla.

**Tampa H.S. Trophy:** Olivia Sweetnam.

**Best Medium Jr. Jumper Rider:** Stella Wasserman.

**Best Low Jr. Jumper Rider:** Charlotte Clivio.

**Best Children’s Jumper Rider:** Maya Rahaim.

**WCHR 3’6” Jr. Challenge CH:** Bonne Starlight, MZ Farms LLC.

**RES:** Babylon, Marnell Sport Horses.

**WCHR 3’3” Jr. Challenge CH:** Notorious, West Coast Equine Partners LLC.

**RES:** Simply Irresistible, Kate Parker.

**WCHR Pony Challenge CH:** Brixton, Betsee Parker.

**RES:** Goldmark, Take 3 LLC.

**WCHR Children’s Challenge CH:** Kensi, Katherine Ellis.

**RES:** Highlight, Kylee Kurz.

**Best Equitation Rider:** Carlee McCutcheon.

**Leading Equitation Trainers:** Max Amaya & T.J. O’Mara.

**NAL Children’s Hunter CH:** Counselor, Arden Stromnes.

**RES:** Legacy, Ashley Vogel.

**NAL Children’s Jumper CH:** Whiskey Business, Renaud Farm LLC.

**RES:** Nicarmargue, Emma Brody.

**NAL Low Jr./Amateur Jumper CH:** WT Scorsese, Charlotte Clivio.

**RES:** Diamond, MMK Equestrian LLC.

**Glena Wirtanen Sportsmanship Trophy:** Nicolette Perry.