



# Capital Challenge 2022

## A Look Inside the Storied First Stop on the Indoors Circuit

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**ABOVE:** Tracey Gorin-Byrne catch rode Checker 69 to victory in the North American Adult Amateur Equitation Finals on the first day of Equitation Weekend, presented by BIGEQ.com

**NEAR RIGHT:** John French and Babylon earned a repeat victory in the \$25,000 WCHR Professional Challenge, sponsored by The Gochman Family

CAPITAL CHALLENGE KICKED OFF the Indoors season this year once again, bringing the best in the nation to Prince George's Equestrian Center in Upper Marlboro, MD.

The 29th edition of the horse show started on September 29 with top hunter, jumper, and equitation riders taking center stage. The show offered an extra day of competition during Equitation Weekend, sponsored by BIGEQ.com, to accommodate the high number of entries in the four year-end equitation finals on the schedule.





Ollivia Sweetnam and Goldmark outshined more than 100 ponies to earn the Grand Pony Hunter Championship, sponsored by Pegasus Show Stable and The Endicott Family

Shawn McMillen '22

## HORSE SHOWS

Following an action-packed Equitation Weekend, Capital Challenge held a full slate of classes including five North American League (NAL) Finals, nine World Championship Hunter Rider (WCHR) Challenge classes, the \$25,000 WCHR Professional Finals, sponsored by the Rein Family, the \$25,000 KASK/Vogel Green Hunter 3' and 3'3" North American Championship, and the ARIAT National Adult Medal Finals.

### PROFESSIONALS RISE TO THE CHALLENGE

The country's best hunter riders spend all year qualifying and preparing for

the WCHR Professional Challenge and Professional Final. For the second year in a row, John French of Wellington, FL, piloted Babylon, owned by Marnell Sport Horses, to victory in the \$25,000 WCHR Professional Challenge, sponsored by The Gochman Family, on Oct. 5.

French and the seven-year-old Oldenburg gelding held the lead through both rounds of competition and topped the leaderboard by more than nine points.

"We had a pretty good lead, so I didn't want to take any daring risk and run or hand gallop really fast to the last jump," French said of his second-round ride. "I sort of played it safe. I just counted on him jumping the way he did, and I think the judges rewarded him for how smooth and well he jumped."

Earlier in the day, Scott Stewart of Wellington, FL, and Betsee Parker's Florian proved unbeatable in the \$25,000 KASK/Vogel Green Hunter 3' and 3'3" North American Championship. This was Stewart's second year in a row winning the class aboard one of Parker's horses.

"I love these special classes at Capital Challenge," said Stewart, a seven-time WCHR Professional Finals winner. "The best riders are here with their best horses, so I think it's a spectacular horse show."

The professional hunter classes ended on Oct. 7, with Nick Hanes winning the \$25,000 WCHR Professional Finals, sponsored by The Rein Family, in his debut in the competition.

### EQUITATION RIDERS GO HEAD-TO-HEAD

Tracey Gorin-Byrne of Wellington, FL, started her week on a high note with Reid Arani's Checker 69. Although Gorin-Byrne swung her leg over Checker 69 for the first time just days earlier, that did not stop her from claiming the top prize in the North American Adult Amateur Equitation Finals.

"This is my favorite horse show of the year," said Gorin-Byrne. "I've been coming here since I was a little kid, and even though I've enjoyed a lot of success and had a lot of fun, I've never actually won. Obviously, it means a lot to win anywhere, but to win here is particularly special."

Gorin-Byrne continued her winning ways to top the ARIAT National Adult Medal Finals aboard Sweet Oak Farm's Ustica later in the week.

After accumulating points throughout the year to qualify for the Taylor Harris Insurance Services (THIS) National Children's Medal Finals, Lily Epstein of Coral Gables, FL, took home the victory. Epstein and Ainsley Wade's Cumano Boy Z teamed up at the beginning of 2022 and quickly formed a strong partnership.

"This win is a really big one," she said. "I've been working so hard to qualify for this, doing all these classes to get here, so it's just amazing that I even got here and then was able to win. I'm super grateful. It was so fun."

Maddie Tosh of Milton, GA, and Carlee McCutcheon of Aubrey, TX, both bested fields of more than 140 entries to top the EMO Insurance/United States Hunter Jumper Association 3'3" Jumping Seat Medal Final—East, and the Palm Beach International Academy North American Junior Equitation Championships, respectively.

### JUMPERS CRUISE TO SUCCESS

Jumper competition did not disappoint at the 2022 Capital Challenge Horse

*"I love these special classes at Capital Challenge. The best riders are here with their best horses, so I think it's a spectacular horse show."*

—SCOTT STEWART, SEVEN-TIME WCHR PROFESSIONAL FINALS WINNER



ABOVE: Scott Stewart piloted Florian to the top of the podium in the \$25,000 KASK/Vogel Green Hunter 3' and 3'3" North American Championship

RIGHT: Lily Epstein and Cumano Boy Z in their victory gallop after winning the THIS National Children's Medal Finals



*“We’ve been working for this all year, and I’m thankful for my whole team that got me here.”*

—EMMA BRODY

LEFT: Emma Brody and Nicarmargue on their way to winning the \$10,000 NAL Children’s Jumper Final, presented by EquiFit

BELOW: Skylar Wireman and Bonne Starlight ended the 2022 Capital Challenge Horse Show on a high note by receiving the Grand Junior Hunter 3’6” Championship honors, sponsored by Shadow Ridge

Show. In the \$10,000 North American League (NAL) Children’s Jumper Final, presented by EquiFit, 29 horse and rider combinations contested the first track with 15 combinations qualifying for the jump-off. In the end, Emma Brody of New York, NY, earned top honors with her own Nicarmargue.

“I’m so excited to win at Capital Challenge,” she said. “We’ve been working for this all year, and I’m thankful for my whole team that got me here. I love being at Indoors. I feel like ‘rising to the challenge’ is always so fun, and just being able to ride at such an amazing event is special enough.”

Lindsey Tomeu of Wellington, FL, and her longtime partner, Gold Lux, captured the top prize in the \$10,000 NAL Adult Amateur Jumper Final, presented by SmartPak.

**GRAND HUNTER CHAMPIONS CROWNED**

Olivia Sweetnam of Wellington, FL, made her mark in the pony hunters, riding Take 3 LLC’s Goldmark besting a field of more than 100 small, medium, and large ponies for the Grand Pony Hunter Championship, sponsored by Pegasus Show Stable and The Endicott Family.



“I’ve been kind of knocking on the door for Grand,” said the 14-year-old rider, who has been competing at Capital Challenge since she was six years old. “Two years ago, I was champion and I missed Grand by a half-point. Then last year I missed it by two points. This year it just feels really great to get it.”

The 2022 Capital Challenge Horse Show came to a close with Skylar Wireman of Bonsall, CA, and Bonne Starlight, owned by MZ Farms, claiming the Grand Junior Hunter 3’6” Championship, sponsored by Shadow Ridge. The pair earned champion in the

Small Junior Hunter 16-17 division with a clean sweep of all four classes on the way to earning grand honors.

“It means a lot,” said Wireman. “This is my fourth time coming to Capital Challenge, and this is my first time ever getting any sort of grand champion. To be all three—16-17, overall grand, and high score—is really amazing, and I couldn’t ask for a better partner to do it with.”

Learn more about and view a full list of winners at [CapitalChallenge.org](http://CapitalChallenge.org). For additional updates, visit the CCHS Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, and YouTube.