

Scott Stewart

Makes It
Eight
in the
WCHR
Professional
Finals

He masterfully catch-rides four Hunters to a convincing—and historic—milestone in this coveted class.

By Tricia Booker

Basketball superstar Michael Jordan won six NBA championships with the Chicago Bulls, legendary quarterback Tom Brady threw to seven Super Bowl wins, and the great Babe Ruth batted to seven World Series victories for the Red Sox and Yankees. But when Scott Stewart jumped to his eighth victory in the \$30,000 USHJA Wight Professional Finals at the Capital Challenge Horse Show, he surpassed them all and made history in our own sport.

"Everything just worked out perfectly for me. I found each horse really easy to ride, and they just did everything I asked them to do," Stewart said with a humble smile.

"Scott just gave us all a riding lesson. It was great to see him be so magical out there," said Nick Haness, who placed fourth in the Finals but topped the WCHR Professional National Championship rankings. "It was really admirable to see what he could accomplish with those horses, and that inspires me

as a young professional to look forward to trying to do more."

This year's Finals, held on October 4 in Upper Marlboro, Maryland, featured a streamlined format that received positive reviews from riders, spectators and judges. The top three riders in the WCHR National Professional standings—Haness, Geoffrey Hesslink and Stewart—along with Wednesday's WCHR Professional Challenge winner Amanda Steege qualified

for Friday night's featured class. They each rode four unfamiliar horses over four different courses under the watchful eyes of judges Tony Sgarlata and Tom Brennan, Rob Bielefeld and Tammy Provost, and Scott Hofstetter and David Beisel.

The riders competed on horses chosen from a donated group presented to the judges and ground jury. They were schooled in the ring prior to the class; four were selected to compete, and two were reserved as alternates.

Stewart, at age 60, has competed in 23 of the 31 Pro Finals, and this year he received

scores of 94 or above on all four mounts. He captured the title by more than 20 points over Hesslink, Steege and Haness. Despite his extensive experience, Stewart never approaches this class without some butterflies.

"I still get nervous," admitted the Wellington, Florida, horseman. "It's a great honor to be included in this group of riders. I'm hopeful that I'll get to keep doing it. I've won it enough, and I just enjoyed doing it. I've won't really expecting to win. But I was, I would say, probably the most relaxed I've ever been."

Stewart started out strongly. He piloted Chantino PS, owned by JT Equine LLC, to a score of 94.33. He then followed with a score of 96.33 on his second ride, Ton Amd. Van Spieveld, owned by Ellie Goodfriend. From there, he only expanded his lead.

"The first horse was awesome," said Stewart. "I couldn't remember seeing him school, even though I did, so I sort of went in and didn't really know what to do. He was absolutely perfect and relaxed for me, so he gave me a lot of confidence."

With a 95.66 on Goodfriend's RSH Kallahan and his highest score of 96.66 on



his final horse, Hello Houston Z, owned by Williams Sport Horse, Stewart couldn't be caught and showed the "youngsters" how it should be done.

"I grew up riding a lot of very nice horses, but maybe not as talented as the ones we are riding today," said Stewart. "From my junior career up to my early professional career, I had lots of horses that probably couldn't even jump higher than three feet. I had lots of hours in the saddle doing that, and schooling ponies and horses for all kinds of jobs, so I think I have a little age and experience."

Hesslink, who was 3 years old when Stewart won his first Pro Finals in 1998, finished second. This was the Wellington, Florida-based rider's fifth time in the Finals, and he also placed second in 2020.

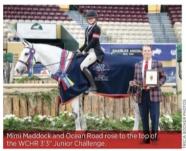
"I was just happy to be in the top three," said Hesslink, who earned the show's Leading Hunter Rider title and Grand Hunter Championship. "I grew up watching this class as a young kid and remember idolizing every rider, literally dreaming of one day doing it, and thinking it was so out of reach. To be here means a lot to me, and I'm really grateful for every time I get to do it."

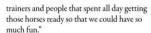
"All the horses were wonderful," said Steege, who qualified after topping the \$50,000 WCHR Professional Challenge aboard Lafitte De Muze on October 2. "We were so thankful to the owners and

10 USHJA IN STRICE / NOVEMBER 2024 WWW.USHJA.ORG NOVEMBER 2024 / USHJA IN STRICE 11









For his win, Stewart's name will once again be engraved on the All The Way Perpetual Trophy, donated by Elizabeth Busch Burke and Lisa Burke. For his impressive consistency, Ton Amie Van Spieveld earned The Far West Farms Perpetual Trophy as the high-score horse with scores of 87, 96.33, 94 and 92.66.

"To be still competing at this level with these great riders is a fantastic feeling," Stewart continued. "I'm very appreciative of it, and I don't take it for granted, because it's not going to last forever. I'm thrilled to do it each time, and it means a lot."

Goodfriend donated two of her horses for the class, and she shows Ton Amie Van Spieveld in the 12-14 Equitation. The recently imported gray was competing in only his third show in the United States.

"It was really exciting to see all the pros ride them and see them able to ride different courses and how the horses adjusted to them," said Goodfriend. "I saw them being able to balance and then loosen and flow up to the jumps, which I thought was really nice. He kept jumping in really good form, so it was really exciting to see."

Goodfriend's trainer, Colleen Brombach of Silver Fox Farms in Wimberley, Texas, agreed. "I love it; every year I try to donate a horse because I like to see a really good rider on my horse."

Sweet Redemption

The spectators at the Capital Challenge made it a point to hold their cheering when the final competitor performed in the \$50,000 WCHR Professional Challenge—and for good reason.

Amanda Steege and Lafitte De Muze returned on top for the second round as they'd done in August during the Platinum Performance/USHJA International Hunter Derby Championships. But this time the results were different. Steege and "Lafitte" jumped the last fence beautifully and finished without the overexuberance of the Derby Championships, when raucous cheering had startled Lafitte and dropped them from first to fifth.

"I was really happy with both of the rounds today in the Pro Challenge," said Steege, who earned scores of 93.66 and 91.16 and the Little Brook Perpetual Trophy donated by Gary Duffy. "We pick certain classes throughout the year that we really aim for and try to have him peak at. And Derby Championships was obviously one of them, as was this class. So, I just felt so happy that the plan came together.

"We have this motto of 'calmly, confident.' I try to go out there and pick up my canter and show a little pace without overdoing it and attacking the jumps," Steege continued. "So, the first round, I really don't think there's anything I would have done better. It was so smooth. Every stride felt perfect. I was also very happy with the second round. Maybe I was a little long to the second jump,







but he jumped it so amazing, and I just wanted to be a little careful to that triple combination at the end."

Steege, of Ocala, Florida, praised the two courses, designed by Kenny Krome and Meghan Rawlins, for their ingenuity. "I loved that the first round allowed you to show off a little bit and allowed the judges to pick out the horses that they thought had the best style. The second round had a few more tests and allowed the horses to really rise to the top. There were a lot of places in the second round where things could go wrong, and a lot of different things that did go wrong for different people. I just tried to go out there and execute my plan the best I could, and, overall, I was thrilled with all of ir "

Steege has been partnered with Cheryl Olsten's 13-year-old Belgian Warmblood (Darco—Everlychin De La Pomme) for seven years, and the pair won this same class during their first year together in 2018.

"I think it's remarkable to have a horse like Lafitre for seven years and have him still be at the top of his game," she said with a smile. "Every round that I do on him, he tries so hard.

"The Derby Championships was so disappointing in some ways, but it still was such an awesome experience for me. I mean, of course, I wish that that hadn't happened for him, because he should have won that class. But I didn't walk away from that class feeling deflated. And I can't wait to get back there and try that class again."

Steege noted the support that she received after the Derby Championships was unbelievable and made a huge impression on her, perhaps even more than a victory would have done.

"Countless people came up to us and gave us ideas and advice on what to do next time so it doesn't happen again," she reflected. "I've had people tell me that they're going to come to Derby Finals next year and stand in the stands with signs saying, 'Quiet please!'

"So, yes, that was of course disappointing for both Cheryl and I and our whole team, because we've tried for his whole career to win that class. But there was so much good that came out of it. Each time we have a class like that our partnership grows, and we feel more connected. So, even though the Derby Finals didn't end up the way I wanted, I left that event feeling confident in myself, confident in my horse and also so proud."

Words From the WCHR Challenge Winners

\$10,000 WCHR Developing Professional Challenge, presented by the John R. Ingram Fund: Ryan Kenny and Outshine, owned by Michael Britt-Leon

"It feels so amazing to have reached this goal," said Ryan Kenny, 21, of Alpharetta, Georgia, who is in his first year as a professional and received the Bittersweet Perpetual Trophy donated by

12 USHJA IN STRIDE / NOYEMBER 2024 / USHJA IN STRIDE / NOYEMBER 2024 / USHJA IN STRIDE 13





Rachel Kennedy, "It's something I've always wanted to win since watching it as a little kid. These classes are so important to me, and winning it was definitely a dream come true.

"I was a nervous wreck because I wasn't planning on actually being able to win this class, but [Outshine] was on fire," said Kenny, who had never before earned a score in the 90s until the first round of the Challenge, "He was jumping high, and I just knew that we were going to have another big score. It was extremely fun. That was probably one of my favorite rounds I've ever done

"I'm so extremely grateful for all of the horses I get rides on," he continued, noting how Britt-Leon purchased the 17-yearold veteran Hunter and Equitation horse for him to gain mileage. "They're such incredible animals, and I'm so thankful that they do what they do for us, and [I'm able] to learn from them and to get these experiences."

\$5,000 WCHR Amateur-Owner 3'6" Challenge: Sophie Gochman and Colter

"This [win] means so much," said 21-year-old Gochman, who also earned the WCHR Amateur-Owner 3'6" National Championship, the show's Amateur-Owner, 18-35, 3'6" Championship, the EMO 3'6" Amateur-Owner Trip of the Show and the Amateur-Owner Challenge Perpetual Trophy, donated by the Texas Hunter Jumper Association. "I try not to set goals that are about winning, but [my trainer] Scott [Stewart] sent me a screenshot of the standings, and I was like, 'OK,' so, I had it in the back of my mind. I don't think I've gotten this [national championship title] since I was on a pony. I stopped doing the Hunters when I was 16 and just came back last year. So, this is amazing.

"This horse is probably my Hunter horse of a lifetime," added Gochman, a senior history major at Harvard University. "I've never gotten so many 90s on a horse. Every time we're in the ring, we just click. We're so in

sync, and he's the sweetest horse ever. This is the first time I've missed a lot of school for riding, but I felt like this was such a special show, and I'm graduating, so I don't know what my life will be like afterwards.

"I always feel a lot of pressure. I don't want to let him down because he always puts in 110 percent," she said of Colter. a 10-year-old Hanoverian gelding (Fanziscus-Sophie) who also earned the show's Grand Green Hunter championship with Stewart. "I want to thank the team at River's Edge and Baxter Hill for taking such good care of my horses, and of course my parents, for enabling me to do this."

\$2.500 WCHR Amateur-Owner 3'3" Challenge: Stephanie Danhakl and **Tufton Avenue**

"It was kind of like a fairy tale," said Danhakl of her Challenge victory aboard Tufton Avenue, her 12-year-old Holsteiner gelding (Sparacus TN-Pialotta VII) who came back from a catastrophic injury. "This is our first indoor show ever. I had him as a young horse, and we just instantly clicked from the first time I sat on him. It was like we'd known each other for our whole lives.

"We had success from the very beginning," said Danhakl, who resides in Dover, Massachusetts and trains with Stewart. "I was pregnant with my son when he got hurt, and that was three years ago. We didn't think it was that serious. But I remember getting a call on my birthday. I'd given birth to my son a week before, and the vet said, 'This is not looking good. You have to put him down.' And I was completely dumbstruck. So, I said, 'I'm going to come down to Florida to see him.' And we got a few second opinions. Everyone said the same thing: He's not going to make it. He's not going to even be sound enough to be turned out to be retired. Then, I went into his stall, and he looked at me. He couldn't walk, but his eyes were bright, and he nickered at me. I thought to myself, 'This is not a horse that wants to die. This horse has so much life left in him.'

"So, over the past three years we just took it really slow, and there were no guarantees on anything," she recalled. "But I wanted to be optimistic. I thought, 'Well, if we can give him a chance to be retired, let's do everything we can.' We started hand walking him a little bit, then turnout with

medication, because they said if he moves the wrong way his leg will just shatter. But the more he did, the sounder he got. And after about a year, he was sound, and I was in disbelief.

"In the back of my mind, I was always hoping I'd be able to ride him again, because we never got our shot to go to indoors, to Devon to do the things that I knew he could do," she continued. "After about a year, he was in the big turnout, so I knew he was going to be OK. Then, we decided to turn him out for another whole year just to be extra sure.

"We started him back in February, and I've been relearning how to ride him and getting his fitness back. He's a very particular ride and different from some of the other horses I have. He's always going to be good, but to get that extra special round, those 90s. you have to let him do it. You can't do it for him

"Here I was a little disappointed with myself because I didn't feel like I rode him the way he deserved [in the division]. I missed a lead change in the first class, and in the second class, we got high 80s, but it wasn't enough, and same with the stake. So, I really wanted to go into this last Challenge class and ride him the way I know that I can, and everything went perfectly. He jumped amazing, and I was so happy with the round. It was a dream come true."

\$2,500 WCHR Adult Amateur Challenge: Glenda Monkarsh and **Hush Money**

"The first time I showed at Capital Challenge was about 10 years ago." Monkarsh recalled. "The first jump on the first day I fell off and broke my pelvis. A true capital punishment!

"I came back two years ago, but I still couldn't put it together. I imported Hush Money as a 4-year-old, and he was very green, as in maybe 60 days under saddle," said Monkarsh of the 7-year-old Hungarian Sport Horse (Lasino-Gracey). "From the first time I saw him, I opened his stall door and just knew he was the one.

"We moved to Nick Haness in March. I'd just started in the Adults, and we were struggling," she continued. "We worked at home for about two months, and then we left for Traverse City

2024 WCHR Awards and Trophy Winners

In Disguise Perpetual Trophy, presented to Charles Johnson Perpetual Trophy, the trainer of the WCHR Amateur-Owner 3'6" National Champion—Scott Stewart

Spiff'N Polish Perpetual Trophy, donated by Elizabeth Busch Burke and Lysa Burke-Sophie Gochman

There'll Be Times Perpetual Trophy, donated by Elizabeth Busch Burke and Lysa Burke—Paige Walkenbach

\$50 Fine For Loose Dogs Perpetual Trophy, donated by The Paxton Corporation-Emi Richard

Professional American Style of Riding Award—David Wilbur

Developing Professional American Style of Riding Award—Pieter Luyckx

Derbydown Trophy, donated by Louise Serio-Samantha Schaefer and Kenzo. owned by the Maher Family LLC, with a score of 93

Urlala Perpetual Trophy, donated by Kimberly and Terry Maloomian—Glenda Monkarsh and her own Hush Money

Rox Dene Perpetual Trophy, donated by Elaine and Chanda Boylen-Lynn Olson, owner of Modern Man, ridden by Nick Haness, Shelley Campf and Emily Perkins

Jeffrey Katz Trophy, donated by Lisa Cudahy-Geoffrey Hesslink and Monarchy, owned by Shadowfax Equestrian LLC and Lacy Howell

Alabama Clay Conformation Hunter Perpetual Trophy, donated by the Weisman Family-Lynn Olson, owner of Modern Man, ridden by Nick Haness, Shelley Campf and Emily Perkins

Small Town Perpetual Trophy, donated by Iwasaki & Reilly-Ceil Wheeler, owner of Cerano, ridden by Maddie Tosh donated in memory of Charles Johnson-Brooke Hagerty

Winter's Run Sportsmanship Award, donated by Patricia Bosley in memory of her mother and presented by WCHR membership vote to a person who best exemplifies the ideals of sportsmanship-Chris Payne and Lisa Hankin

Daniel P. Lenehan Perpetual Trophy, in memory of Daniel P. Lenehan and presented by the WCHR Committee to a person who exemplifies dedication and lifetime commitment to judging Show Hunters-Walter "Timmy "Kees

David Peterson Perpetual Trophy, donated by Kavar Kerr and Jim Anderson and presented by the WCHR Committee to a person who exemplifies dedication and commitment to the care and well-being of horses-Duncan Peters and Lori Bidwell

Old Springhouse Perpetual Trophy, donated by the Old Springhouse Corporation and presented by WCHR membership vote to the winner of the WCHR Lifetime Achievement Award—Carleton Brooks

USHIA/WCHR Course Designer Perpetual Trophy, presented by USHJA to the Course Designer of the Year-Kevin Holowack

Stewart Warner Perpetual Trophy,

donated by Don Stewart and Louise Serio in memory of Laurie Gilbert Stewart and Mary Warner Brown and presented to the Pony, Junior and Children's riders who, in the opinion of the judging panel, exhibit the best Hunter style and show potential as a Hunter-style rider:

- Junior 3'3"/3'6"—Gabriella Anzelc
- · Children's-Kenzie Smith
- Pony —Cisy Zhou

Rider	Round 1	Round 2	Round 3	Round 4	Final Total
1. SCOTT STEWART	94.33	96.33	95.66	96.66	382.98
2. GEOFFREY HESSLINK	87	93	88	94.66	362.66
3. AMANDA STEEGE	88.33	90.33	89.66	92.66	360.98
4. NICK HANESS	91	88.33	94	86.66	359.99

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2024 WCHR National Champions

Professional Nick Haness Professional Owner Glade Run Farm LLC Developing Professional Emily Perkins

Developing Professional Owner Lauren and Kelly Campbell

Amateur-Owner 3'6" Sophie Gochman

Amateur-Owner 3'3"

Brittany Warden

Adult Amateur Glenda Monkarsh

Junior 3'6" Paige Walkenbach

Junior 3'3" Lily Sonneborn

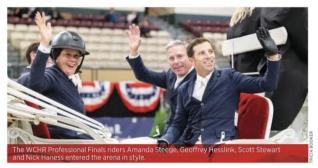
Children's Sienna Smith

Pony Emi Richard

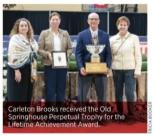
[Michigan]. Nick worked with him and taught him how to nicely do lead changes and showed him all of the great distances and how things are supposed to go. And because I live in Las Vegas, I've left him to Nick to do his madic.

"This horse has come so far in the past six months, and this show was never even on our radar. I mean, we really were struggling to jump a 3' course, and I knew that he needed something different. From the time he got to Nick's, he just started shining. It was like he smiled and loves his job now," said Monkarsh, who received the Pat Thompson Memorial Perpetual Trophy, donated by Paige Tredennick.

"My family has made a huge sacrifice for me to do this, and when I told them I needed to get 'Lotus' into Nick's program, they were like, 'We will go wherever they go.' And when I moved to Nick's, I didn't even ask him if he'd take me. I said, 'My horse is coming to you.' As soon as Nick got on him, I was like, 'Oh, my God. Lotus has met his person!' So, Nick didn't have a choice whether we were coming to him. I told Nick, 'I'm like the first date that won't go away!







"What they've done for this horse is beyond anything I could have ever dreamed of," added Monkarsh, who also won the WCHR Adult Amateur National Championship. "And I tell him all the time, but I will never be able to thank him enough. This is just so magical. We were Grand Adult Amateur champions at the Hampton Classic [New York] and Grand Adult Champions at the Middleburg Classic [Virginia], and then we came here. This is just beyond words."

\$5,000 WCHR Junior 3'6" Challenge: Brooke Hagerty and Casino Cash

"I'm so thankful for everything. I had the best week last week on my Equitation horse [Astro De Ravel], so I was like, 'OK, this week is just fun and no pressure.' And Cash just performed so amazing every time. I'm just so grateful," said Hagerty, who also won the EMO Insurance Agency/ USHJA 3'3" Jumping Seat Medal Final-East and the THIS National Children's Medal Final during the Equitation Showcase.

"I've had Casino Cash for three years, and I got him from Ariana Marnell. We started the Children's Hunters, and he's just

the best horse. He tries so hard every time," continued Hagerty of Terrebonne, Oregon, who trains with Val Renihan and Chris Strucker at Findlay's Ridge. "I was already really happy with my division results, so I wanted to go into the Challenge and just finish out the show on a good note.

"There were already some high scores, so I wasn't putting a lot of pressure on myself; I just wanted to have fun," said Hagerty, who also earned the Large Junior Hunter 3'c", 15 and under championship.
"I thought it was a really nice course. I'd watched the ponies do it in the morning, so I knew it rode well. I feel like we've gotten really consistent, so I don't have to worry as much. I just know him, and he knows me, so we can kind of just go in and lay it down almost every time out."

\$2,500 WCHR Junior 3'3" Challenge: Mimi Maddock and Ocean Road

"Well, I was really nervous, but he felt so amazing warming up and just throughout the weekend, so I felt really confident going into the Challenge," said Maddock, IS, of New York City, who trains with John French. "And I have such a nice team be-







hind me helping make sure everything goes smoothly.

"I've had Ocean Road since, I'd say, December. His former rider was Ariana Marnell, and I'm just so thankful to be able to take over the reins this past year. He was really good and consistent over the two days, and we had some nice rounds," added Maddock, who also earned the EMO Junior Hunter 3'3" Trip of the Show with a 91.

"My goal this year was to just be really consistent in the 373", because I know my horse was fully capable of doing that. And, yes, this Challenge has always been a really big goal. It's such a prestigious class, and I'm so honored to be able to win it. I've shown here ever since I've been doing ponies, but this is my second year on the horses, and first time doing the Junior Hunters and the Challenge. I'm very grateful to everyone for supporting me."

\$2,500 WCHR Pony Challenge: Grace Stenbeck-Werner and Prestige

"I was really nervous going into the Challenge, because I already had a really good week, and I just tried to control my nerves and do the best I could," said 11-year-old Stenbeck-Werner of North Salem, New York, who also earned the Foxlair's Poker Perpetual Trophy, donated by Cindy and Nancy Amling. "I just tried taking deep breaths and trusting my pony, because he's such a good boy who knows what he's doing.

"We've been together almost two years now, but from the first time I rode him, I knew that he was the one," she added of the 13-year-old Belgian Riding Pony whom she rides with trainers David Belford and Madeline Flocks. "He's the best pony ever, and I don't know; I couldn't imagine doing this without him.

"I really wanted to win this because I haven't won, you know, a lot of big things at this show," continued Stenbeck-Werner, who had earned the Grand and Large Pony Hunter Championships at last summer's USEF Pony Finals. "And it was great."

\$1,500 WCHR Children's Challenge: Clara Burnham and Ravello

"I leased him over the summer for Traverse City [Michigan], but we are going to lease him for a little longer," said Burnham, 12, of Boulder, Colorado. "He's so perfect; I love him so much. This is one of my first Children's Hunter shows, and I train with Jacob Pope and Nick Pongracz at Hickory Ridge. I have a home barn, too; that's Capall Glen, with trainer Brannon Moonev.

"We won the first round, placed third under saddle and the second round was rider error," she continued with a smile. "It's tough competition. If you mess up once, you're not placing. He's a great mover, and his expressions are amazing. He's so smooth; it's like you're on a cloud when you're riding him.

"This was my first time at the Capital Challenge, and I love it so much. I love the tough competition and the environment. Everything about it—it's really pretty, too. There's nothing you couldn't like about it! It's awesome to win," said Burnham, who also claimed the Grand Children's Hunter Championship, the EMO Children's Hunter Trip of the Show and the Children's Challenge Perpetual Trophy, donated by the Applegate Family and Arwen Stables. "It's insane; this is the biggest win I've ever had—I've never won a grand championship before."

16 USHJA IN STRIDE / NOVEMBER 2024 / USHJA ORG NOVEMBER 2024 / USHJA O