

Inside the Minds of Course Designers: THE EMO INSURANCE/USHJA 3'3" JUMPING SEAT MEDAL FINAL-EAST

Story and photos by Tricia Booker

The EMO Insurance/USHJA 3'3" Jumping Seat Medal was developed as a stepping stone for riders who aspire to compete in the Platinum Performance/USEF Show Jumping Talent Search Finals. The USHJA class specifications mimic those of the Talent Search but at a lower fence height and with fewer technical questions in the Flat, Gymnastics and Show Jumping phases (with no open water element).

Unlike the Talent Search, in which the top riders swap horses in the "Final Four" work-off, the USHJA Jumping Seat Finals judges must test only those riders who are within 3 points of the leader after the three phases conclude.

The USHJA Jumping Seat Medal, now in its eighth year, holds finals on the East and West Coasts (see p. 18), and has become one of the most popular championships. This year's East Coast Final, held September 25-27 at the Capital Challenge Horse Show in Upper Marlboro, Maryland, featured 174 riders who vied for the title, with judges David Beisel and Julie Winkel officiating.

Brooke Hagerty, 16, of Terrebonne, Oregon, topped the East Coast Final over Katherine Mercer, 13, of Wellington Florida. After winning the Gymnastics Phase with a score of 90 aboard Astro De Ravel, Hagerty stood second in the standings going into the Jumper Phase. When Mercer won the Jumping Phase aboard Goyard with an 89 and Hagerty scored 87.75, the two worked-off for the title.

In the third installment of this series, Kenny Krome and Meghan Rawlins explain the process of designing the jumping phases of this popular final. Then the winner, Brooke Hagerty, shares her thoughts.



Meghan Rawlins and Kenny Krome

Course designers Kenny Krome and Meghan Rawlins, who designed the jumping phases, shared their thoughts and the plans they considered to determine the champion.

The Gymnastics

"It's always a little challenging to come up with something for this Gymnastics Phase, because this is their first indoor competition of the year," said Krome. "But we wanted to see rideability with lengthening, shortening and competent steering. This is a first finals for a lot

of riders and a first Gymnastic Phase for many, so we wanted it to be a good introduction. The well-polished riders could show off, and we wanted everyone to survive and thrive—and hopefully be happy going into the next finals they have."

The course began with an oxer on a bending line 85' to a bounce (13'), so immediately the riders had to establish pace and know their horse's stride length to properly balance them for the bounce. A left-hand turn to Fence 3 asked for another accurate bending line (94') to a triple bar to a vertical two-stride in-and-out (4ab). Riders then could take a breath as they transitioned to the trot going into 5abc.

"We included a trot fence into a combination because we were really looking for control of the horse," explained Krome. "We wanted to have equal balance of combinations off of the right and left leads so that we gave a fair test to everybody. And we wanted to make it look difficult, but it really rode pretty easily if they were in control."

From Fences 6 to 7ab were the bending line (72') and combination off the right lead, and Fence 8 came up quickly even though it measured 88'. A nice left rollback to Fence 9 offered a good place for riders to balance and prepare for what turned out to be a challenging final fence at 10. Here, the riders needed to set up carefully because the vertical with cut-out decorations caught some horses by surprise after they turned around the standards of Fence 5c.

"The rideability factor is important for me," added Rawlins. "The idea of having a vertical into an oxer or an oxer into a vertical isn't really a scope test, but it shows their ability to adjust and keep their position in the air. The bounces were helpful for seeing where the rider's leg stays, and adjustability was a big test throughout."

With 174 riders, Krome and Rawlins also had to consider the time factor in their design.

"It had to be an efficient course, for sure," said Krome. "It was pretty straightforward.

"Everything was laid out, and the strides were obvious and how the combinations were going to ride was obvious. But as a rider going into an indoor ring for the first time, you don't know how your horse is going to react, so they really had a lot to deal with, more than just piloting around a course."

The Jumping Test

The Flat and Gymnastics phases were held on the first day, with the Jumping Phase the next day. For this course, Krome and Rawlins again had to balance keeping less experienced riders safe while allowing the top riders to show their talent and style.

With a time allowed of 73 seconds at 350 m/minute, riders needed to be efficient and prompt to avoid time faults. "It was a full Jumper build," said Krome. "The kids had to listen for the timer. There's a lot going on, especially if you're not a regular Jumper rider. So, yes, Equitation over Jumper jumps is quite technical, with lots of numbers to adhere to, and then a few question marks as to what you're going to do as well."

The course started with a triple bar 98' to a vertical headed toward the in-gate, which asked riders to immediately establish pace and rhythm. This line proved to be challenging for many, with frequent swapped leads, rails and even refusals.

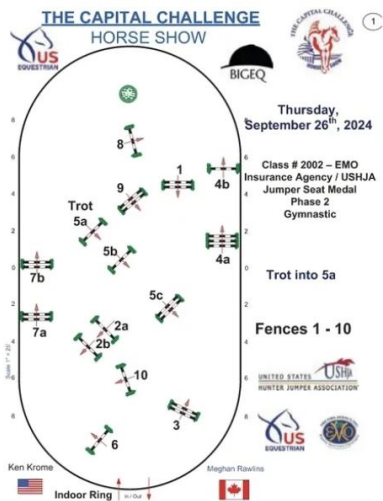
"A lot of riders mis-rode that line," said Krome. "To me, the triple bar is a question mark. You don't know if your horse is going to land far on the other side, which would make your plan ride shorter, or if he's just going to land in a heap on the backside, which would make your plan ride longer. So, right off the bat, they have to be in sync with their horse[s] in order to do that well."

Fences 3 to 4 (76') came up nicely for most riders who jumped into the line with impulsion and then balanced. The Liverpool at Fence 5, set in a darker corner, was spooky for some horses, so riders needed to be aware and react accordingly.

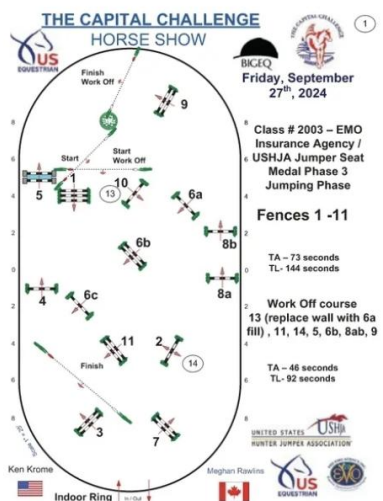
"We wanted them to come forward and then come back again to show their adjustability," said Rawlins. "They had to shorten a little bit to the Liverpool but not get lost there. And then it was just a nice two-to-two [strides] across the diagonal with the triple combination, which is actually sometimes harder for the kids to ride than at



Brooke Hagerty trotted into the combination (top and middle) and jumped through smoothly, keeping her position. She set up well over Fence 9 for the challenging final Fence 10.



The Gymnastics Phase



The Jumping Phase

the higher level of Equitation, because the horses can get strong and take over. So, they had to balance in the combination while keeping their position."

Rawlins and Krome chose the vertical-oxer-vertical triple, as well as some of the materials they used such as heavier rails and abundant fill, to keep the course "friendly."

"We wanted to test them, and we wanted a full course in there, but we were still cognizant that this is the first finals of the season, and they came back in reverse order of preference," Krome noted. "I think of it like a bell curve. So, if we have 100 riders, you're going to figure 20 are going to struggle. The middle group of 60 are going to do just fine, and then there'll be maybe 20 that really show off. So, that helps the judges out. We want the riders to finish this course saying, 'Wow, I could have done it better, but I'm still ready to go, and I can look forward to my next finals.'"

Rawlins agreed: "Yes, we really want to encourage success. We want the riders to feel and the horses to feel that they were successful. So, that's really important to us in the design."

Fences 7 to 8ab (85') to 9 (74') once again asked for lengthening and shortening, and then the riders could regroup around the turn to the wall at Fence 10.

"So, the wall was, for sure, a test at this level, because a lot of these kids don't practice jumping walls," said Rawlins. "So, we wanted it to be later in the course, and coming home is nice for them, as well, and encourages them to jump it."

"The wall ups the pressure on the riders, too," added Krome. "Their horse might jump it beautifully, but they're going to be worried about it. So, it's kind of 'Can you handle the pressure there?' And we had a wide variety of materials. We had beautiful jumps from Steve Stephens—there were hurdles, planks, there was a gate we call the Batman gate. There were all kinds of strange things that the horses probably haven't seen. So that really demanded that the rider[s] keep their horse[s] in the frame and between their legs and hands and still ride accurately."

The Work-Off

"We wrote the work-off to help the judges, because they're under pressure to get the scores out, and they don't really have time to focus and come up with a nice work-off," said Krome. "We took the wall out and made a different fill for the work-off. It's supposed to be like a jump-off with a tight time allowed, so we wanted to see them work at pace. We gave them a variety of tight turns and open galloping turns and just let them show off."

Mercer, competing in her first medal finals, had the disadvantage of being the pathfinder and wasn't quite as smooth as Hagerty, who could observe the striding and how the new lines rode.

"We wanted to give them a taste of a jump-off style of riding. Equitation kids generally go very slowly around the course, so we wanted to encourage them to show their skills in turning promptly and moving forward, and hand galloping in places that they could," said Krome.

"They both had 2 time faults," recalled Rawlins, who also noted that they went around some of the islands when they could

have turned inside. "The time was a little bit tight, because it's written in the rules that the first round is 350 m/minute, but the second round is 375 m/minute. The people that designed the class really wanted them to go for it and do the work-off in jump-off fashion."

Rawlins and Krome were pleasantly surprised by the level of riding throughout the competition and noted that each year they've designed the courses for this class the quality of riding has improved. They also credited the Capital Challenge team members for their support and collaboration.

"These classes really are a team effort," said Krome. "Like I said, we have a great jump supplier who gives us variety. Joe Carnicom and Meghan and I—we bat all the courses around all week long. We all throw in our ideas and help each other out. The jump crew is amazing here, and the management gives you all the tools you need to come up with a great track like this. It really is in the end the result of a large team of people."

Words From the Winner

Hagerty rode Olivia Robertson's 11-year-old Selle Francais gelding Astro De Ravel (Corofino—Prima De Ravel) to the victory and described him as a seasoned Equitation horse. They became partners earlier in the year and clicked right from the start under the tutelage of Val Renihan and her Findlay's Ridge team.

"He's smart, so I tried to keep it calm because he picks up on everything," said Hagerty of her approach to the competition. "I wanted to keep my nerves at bay and not get in his way. I knew he could do it, and I knew I could do it."

After walking the Gymnastics course, Hagerty was confident it would be a good course for her horse.

"The lines were a little more on the quiet side, and he has a really adjustable stride," she noted. "I just wanted to make sure to get down the first line because 2ab was a bounce. I wanted to meet it a little quieter so that I could just curl around the bounce and then open [his stride] back up."

"Fence 3 was right next to the in-gate, so I kept my leg. And then that next line was pretty quiet, and it was to a triple bar, so I wanted to get right to the base," she continued. "And then again, 4ab was a little on the quiet side. So, I wanted to stay tall with my body because it was a vertical out, so I didn't want to have the rail."

Hagerty was one of the few who chose to go inside the island from 4b to 5, which showed off her confidence and her horse's adjustability. She had a smooth trot fence into the combination and made it look easy.

"After the combination, I got my pace back again, because Fence 6 was next to the in-gate. There wasn't a time allowed, so I didn't feel pressured. That line (from Fence 6 to 7ab) was a little more open, as was 7b to 8, but it rode well, and I got it done. Then, it was back around, nice to Fence 9. I thought that one rode really well."

"Fence 10 was off a little bit of a blind turn, and definitely people had trouble with that," she recalled. "My horse has a bit of a right shift, so I thought it worked out nicely. I kept my leg on and didn't plan on doing a specific number [of strides], and it worked out well."

Hagerty's winning score of 90 moved her up to second in the



The Jumping Phase started with a triple bar that required Brooke Hagerty to establish pace immediately. Fence 2 required an accurate ride to avoid a swap, and she kept her leg on for Fence 3 adjacent to the in-gate.





Brooke Hagerty's winning work-off ride included the challenging broken line from Fences 13 to 11, top left, that she navigated well. Her smooth rollback from Fence 6b, top right, was tidy to Fences 8ab to 9 and resulted in the win. Course designer Kenny Krome went over the courses with judges David Beisel and Julie Winkel on the final day.



standings going into the Jumping Phase behind Grace O'Connell, 18, of Long Grove, Illinois, aboard Capitolino DVE, who ultimately placed third overall.

"The Jumping Phase course started with a triple bar, so you wanted to get enough pace for it," she said. "And then this line was kind of quiet. I went late, so I saw a lot of people kind of chip the second jump, so I wanted to make sure it was balanced.

"And then Fence 3 was next to the in-gate again, so I kept my leg on," she continued. "I remember this line being a little forward, so I made sure to stay straight and get it so that I could meet it nicely, because the four strides to the Liverpool was a little quieter. I made sure to get down the first part of the line so that the four could just be nice.

"Fence 6abc across the ring was a little quiet, so you could just kind of melt over it and just hold the [horse's] lead," she recalled. "And then you had to pick up the pace again because of the time allowed. I kept my leg for Fences 7 and 8a. My horse actually landed right after 7, but it was totally fine. He held the lead the whole time. And then it was a little inside for Fence 9.

"For Fences 10 and 11—it was kind of spooky," recalled Hagerty. "It was a wall to kind of like a field jump. So, I just kept my leg for the wall, and then I stayed in [the bend] for the last line. I kept my leg there, too. I wanted to make sure if he backed off, I got down there, but it turned out really nicely."

For the work-off, Hagerty returned on top and was able to watch Mercer tackle the course first.

"They replaced the wall with a regular jump, so that was nice," she said. "I went around the island, and then it was the same line, so I knew how it rode. I went inside to the end jump, but around Fence 7 to 14. I walked that earlier in the day, so I knew it just was nice in nine strides, and I got to watch Katherine do it, so I knew better how it rode. Fence 5 was still a Liverpool, so I just kept my leg on, and then I went inside everything to keep in the time allowed. Fence 6b was the oxer, and then I tried to be tidy as I could to Fences 8ab, and then it finished with 9.

"I really liked the courses. I thought they asked a lot of questions, but I feel like it was good for the number of people in the class who had a bunch of different experience levels. It wasn't too hard; it wasn't too easy. It definitely asked all the right questions. I was really happy with the class and don't think it could have gone any better." 🐾

USHJA 3'3" Jumping Seat Medal Final-East Results

Rider	Horse	Trainer	Owner	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Overall
1. BROOKE HAGERTY	ASTRO DE RAVEL	VAL RENIHAN	OLIVIA ROBERTSON	83.75	90	87.75	394.25
2. KATHERINE MERCER	GOYARD	SAVANNAH TALCOTT	ASK FOR THE MOON LLC	85.35	87.25	89	394.225
3. GRACE O'CONNELL	CAPITOLINO DVE	ABIGAIL BLANKENSHIP	DUTCH VALLEY SPORHORSES	86	89	85.85	391.2
4. WRENN WARREN	BRAVO ZULU	RIDLEY WARREN	WRENN WARREN	81	86.25	88	386.375
5. LILLIAN VALIQUETTE	CHAROLETTE	STACIA MADDEN	LILLIAN VALIQUETTE	85.75	83.33	87.5	385.745
6. ELIZABETH RINEHART	HALOUET	RICHARD RINEHART	DONALD STEWART	85.5	83.63	87.25	385.445
7. IVY BONDS	SUPER VISION	CATHERINE CRAM	IVY BONDS	83	84.65	87	383.975
8. HELENA TIMPANY	ASTRO RW	ABBI SELEY-FERRIGNO	ROBERTSON FAMILY LLC	79	86.75	86.5	382.125