



IN STRIDE

The Official Magazine of the United States Hunter Jumper Association

*The Power of Prevention:
Minimizing Leg Injuries in
Sporthorses*

*Michael Andrade and
Forever Romance*

ANDRADE ACES DEVELOPING PRO CHALLENGE

THE ORIGINS OF
THE MACLAY TROPHY



FALL CHAMPIONS
PHOTO GALLERIES

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PERSEVERANCE AND POISE PAY OFF FOR NICK HANESS IN THE \$30,000 PROFESSIONAL FINALS

Even after a less-than-ideal start, the California rider claims his second Pro Finals title.

BY TRICIA BOOKER

The thud of a rail hitting the ground was a disappointing moment for Nick Haness as he navigated the first round of the \$30,000 USHJA/WCHR Professional Finals, a highlight event at the Capital Challenge Horse Show.

But the resulting score of 87 only seemed to propel Haness to ride better and with more determination while catch-riding his remaining three horses to a Friday-night victory on October 3 at the Prince George's Equestrian Center in Upper Marlboro, Maryland. His highest score came in the final Handy Round, where he impressed the judges and earned a score of 95.33. His four-round total of 371.65 couldn't be surpassed, and he won by 7 points.

"They were all really, really nice horses," said Haness. "They all had different traits. Part of the fun of this class was being able to adjust to each horse and try to study each of these riders. This panel of riders are terrific each in their own ways, and we all have our strengths and weaknesses, just like the horses do. It's also just a bit luck of the draw and being able to just roll with the punches as they come in and figure it out. We're really grateful for this class and for the supporters



TRICIA BOOKER PHOTOS

Top: Nick Haness waves to his fans after winning his second WCHR Professional Finals.

Middle: Nick Haness rode Daily Planet to the high score of a 95.33 on his way to the Pro Finals victory.

Bottom: Peter Pletcher (center, with trophy) was accompanied by his many friends upon winning the WCHR Lifetime Achievement Award.



Below: Nick Haness won the WCHR Professional Finals and earned his fourth WCHR Professional National Championship.

Bottom: Rindy Dominguez and her Frosted topped the WCHR Amateur-Owner 3'3" Challenge with beautiful jumping.

\$30,000 WCHR Professional Finals Results

Rider | Round 1 | Round 2 | Round 3 | Round 4 | Total

1. Nick Haness | 87 | 94.33 | 94.66 | 95.33 | 371.32
2. Amanda Steege | 90.66 | 91.66 | 91.66 | 90.33 | 364.31
3. Geoffrey Hesslink | 91 | 79.33 | 93.33 | 92.33 | 355.99
4. John French | 85.33 | 92.33 | 95 | 82.33 | 354.99



TRICIA BOOKER



TRICIA BOOKER

Amanda Steege and Lafitte De Muze earned their second consecutive \$50,000 Professional Challenge victory.



SHAWN McMILLEN PHOTOGRAPHY

and the people that gave us horses to ride tonight."

In the end, his intuition guided him to the top over Geoffrey Hesslink, John French and Amanda Steege, winner of Wednesday's WCHR Professional Challenge. The foursome went head-to-head on four unfamiliar horses chosen from a pool of seven for the class. They were: Daily Planet, owned by Marlene Holland; O'Neal, owned by Val Renihan; Klutch, owned by Caitlyn Gidley; and Ton Amie Van



TRICIA BOOKER

FUN FACT

The Holsteiner stallion Connor sired three WCHR Challenge winners this year, all in his 2014 foal crop: Gochman Sport Horses LLC's Forever Romance, in the Developing Professional Challenge; Rindy Dominguez' Frosted, in the Amateur-Owner 3'3" Challenge; and Northern Ridge Stables LLC's Positano, in the Junior 3'3" Challenge.

Connor was also the grand sire of Chilled, the Adult Amateur, 50 and Over champion with Dominguez.

Words From Our WCHR Challenge Winners

\$2,500 WCHR Amateur-Owner 3'3" Challenge: Rindy Dominguez and her Frosted

"He just felt so comfortable in there today, and his rideability was amazing," said Dominguez of her 11-year-old Holsteiner stallion (Connor—Zuchtbuch). "He was jumping in great form, super high, and was very focused and lovely everywhere."

"I imported him when he was 9, so this is my third year with him," said the Zone 1 rider from Barrington, Rhode Island. "I actually own one of his sons [Chilled] now who was champion in the Adult Amateurs. He just keeps getting better and better as he gets older.

"[Frosted] has four foals on the ground this year and more next year, and we're really excited to see those coming along. We definitely know that the one I have got his incredible brain and talent, so I think he will pass that on to all his babies. They're very special, and I feel honored to be able to be a part of their lives."

\$2,500 WCHR Adult Amateur Challenge: Erin Morera and Symbolique, owned by Morera Equine LLC

"I've had 'Simba' for four years. I got him when I was doing the Juniors, and now I'm a sophomore at Cornell University. He was 5, so we were both learning together," Morera said of the Irish Sport Horse (Cazador LS—Karina).

"I don't get to ride as much being at school, so we stepped down to the Adult Amateurs, and we've had a pretty successful year," said Morera, 19, who also earned the Adult Amateur, 18-35, reserve championship. "Today was one of those rounds where I jumped the first jump, and I was like, 'OK, we got this.' And the rest of the round just flowed.

"This is my first year riding with Jenny Dunion, and it was my first time going down to Florida for the winter," added the Greenwich, Connecticut

rider from Zone 1. "We were grand circuit champions in the Adult Amateurs at WEF [the Winter Equestrian Festival circuit], and we kept showing over the summer, and then here we are. It means so much to win here at Capital Challenge. I grew up in Washington, D.C., and rode at Meadowbrook, so this was the horse show [venue] that I went to every weekend. And, so, to come back here and win this means a lot, especially with Simba, whom I've had for so many years. It's really like we grew up together."

\$5,000 WCHR Junior 3'6" Challenge: Ava Barnes and Atlas, owned by Stephanie Ring

"Ever since I've been riding him, he's always been a special horse," said Barnes of the 10-year-old KWPN (Carrera VDL—First Buresco). "He's very determined, and he wants to win, which is nice because I do, too. So, being able to go into the ring on a horse like him is great.

"I've been riding with Dave [Belford] and Chris [Payne] for six years now. I started with them when I was 10, and they've really been able to find such great ponies and horses for me, and that's helped me become the rider I am today," said Barnes, of Zone 5 in Liberty Township, Ohio, who also

earned the 3'6" Large Junior Hunter, 15 and Under, championship aboard Unprecedented.

"This is my favorite horse show of the year, so I definitely love coming here. I wasn't able to be here last year, so being back and putting in good, solid rounds was great. And being reserve WCHR National Junior Champion means a lot," Barnes added.

\$2,500 WCHR Junior 3'3" Challenge: Natalia McCarthy and Positano, owned by Northern Ridge Stables LLC

"This was really exciting. The second I landed from the last jump I just had this big smile on my face, and I couldn't stop smiling, even before I knew what my scores were," said McCarthy, who received 86.33 for the victory.

"My horse is super sweet. His nickname is Bruno, and he's really honest. He never lets me down, and I have so much faith in him," she said of the 11-year-old warmblood (Connor—Zoe De Revel). "I started riding him [last winter], and we've definitely gotten better over the summer. The course today was really straightforward, and I really liked how it rode. I got a nice gallop to the first jump and just tried to let go around the corners so that I could give him the best shot, and he jumped

Spieveld, owned by Ellie Goodfriend.

Steege, of Ocala, Florida, placed second and was the only rider to score more than 90 in every round. She thinks part of her success has come from simple "equine etiquette."

"I love horses, so when I walk up to them in the chute before we get on, I introduce myself, pet them, and look them in the eye,"

she said. "You walk around a little bit and try to get a feel for what their mouth feels like and things like that. It's funny how much you can learn about the horse when you're standing there or when you walk up to them. But all the horses were experienced enough that we didn't ride anything that was super difficult."

Haness, of Temecula, California, clinched his win aboard Daily Planet during the fourth Handy Round. The "take-your-own-line" type of course, designed by Meghan Rawlins, Ken Krome and Joe Carnicom, allowed the riders to be creative over the final half of the course and entertained the spectators who cheered them on.

everything the best that he could. I couldn't ask for anything better.

"I started riding at a pony camp when I was around 6. I wouldn't stay in any summer camps, and my parents tried so many, and I hated them all. And the second I got on a pony, I knew it's what I loved, and I've never stopped riding," said the Zone 4 rider from Boca Raton, Florida, who trains with Samantha Ramsay and Merry Harding. "This is my first year here, and I've always dreamed of coming, and I followed this horse show for years. It just feels crazy that I'm here and that I won!"

\$2,500 WCHR Pony Challenge: Kenzie Smith and On Tour, owned by Charlotte Kelly

"I just went into the Challenge to have fun," said Smith, who had collected so many honors with the 12-year-old Welsh (Mon Cherg ERP—Orderly Queen) that winning was icing on the cake.

"I was Grand Pony and Large Pony Champion and Best Pony Rider [Smith also won the Marshall+Sterling Best Pony Trip of the Show

with a score of 90].

"It was really nice to be grand. I like how consistent we were all weekend," added Smith, of Shoreham, New York in Zone 2. "The [Challenge] course was really easy; probably the hardest part was the bending line because there was a mixed number [of strides] you could take there. It was really special to win this class because I was second last year."

\$1,500 WCHR Children's Challenge: Grier Van Rooyen and Biarritz, owned by Laura Van Rooyen

"We've actually had 'Ritz' for four years now. My mom [Laura Van Rooyen] showed him in the 3'3" Amateur-Owners, and I just started him this past year. He's such a good boy. He's kind of been everywhere and won everything with my mom. He's so special to me, because this is the biggest win I've ever had," said the 12-year-old from Far Hills, New Jersey in Zone 2, who trains with Jennifer Tirrell.

"And it's super nice that she got to be able to experience that dream, and now I get to experience it with

him, too. His personality is probably the funniest thing about him, because he'll walk into a ring, he'll feel the [shadbelly] tails on his back, and he knows that it's showtime and it's time for him to be perfect.

"The Challenge course was super. I was a little worried, just because I'm not the best with bending lines, but Ritz knew exactly what to do," she said of the 17-year-old Dutch Warmblood (Berlin—Olav-sca). "He had so much confidence, and it was just a super nice round; all the lines were really just flowing. This is my third year at Capital Challenge, and I feel like each year it just keeps getting better. We say Ritz has a superpower, and it's his canter. He just has this magical canter. It's very special to win here because [the show] has been around for a pretty long time, and I get to have my name on that trophy."

The USHJA extends special thanks to the Capital Challenge Horse Show team for hosting the Finals; Official Sponsors Herm Sprenger, Nutrena, and Parlanti; and Supporting Sponsor Essex Classics.

"This is a very fun class, and I'm fortunate just to be here," said Haness. "I think we all are. This is a fun part of our lives, the horses are great, and events like this are special. It can go any which way, so to win this for the second time is a great accomplishment and super fun."

For his victory, Haness received the All

The Way Perpetual Trophy, and Daily Planet was honored with the Far West Farms Perpetual Trophy as the high-score horse.

"This is my fourth year in a row being the WCHR Professional Rider National Champion, which feels amazing," he added. "Qualifying and keeping that lead through this whole week has been a struggle because



TRICIA BOOKER

Kenzie Smith's friends celebrated her victory in the WCHR Pony Challenge aboard On Tour.

there are so many quality horses and riders here, and they're very competitive. I'm so grateful for the support of all my owners, clients, trainers and mentors in the past that were also here with me tonight or texting saying they're rooting for me. That was really nice to feel that support. This is my life; this is my world. I love this."

Decisive Wins

Michael Andrade, of Poughquag, New York, showed off his own catch-riding skills during the \$10,000 WCHR Developing Professional Challenge when he rode Gochman Sport Horse LLC's Forever Romance to top honors.

Although Andrade had watched Forever Romance compete for years, he first showed Becky Gochman's 11-year-old Holsteiner gelding (Connor—Bona) in the class, earning scores of 91 and 87.83 in the two-round competition, topping both.

"He's just an incredible horse. I'm grateful and lucky enough that I got to show him this evening," he said.

The 28-year-old former Intercollegiate Horse Shows Association rider credited his time at Centenary University for helping him hone his catch-riding skills under the guidance of Michael Dowling and Heather Clark. As a student at Centenary, he won the IHSA Individual Open Over Fences and Open Flat National Championships and earned the American National Riding Commission Individual Championship, among other titles.

“Being adaptable—and I think just being soft and riding the horse that you have underneath you—is very important,” said Andrade, who worked at Heritage Farm for more than three years after graduating. He currently freelances and helped Sarah Barge and the Gochman family over the summer,



TRICIA BOOKER

Kelsey Epperson received the Developing Professional Style Award and was reserve champion in the Developing Professional Challenge with Glade Run Farm LLC's More Fun.

2025 WCHR AWARDS AND TROPHY WINNERS

In Disguise Perpetual Trophy presented to the trainer of the WCHR Amateur-Owner 3'6" National Champion—**Geoffrey Hesslink and Brendan Williams**

Spiff 'N Polish Perpetual Trophy donated by Elizabeth Busch Burke and Lysa Burke—**Irene Neuwirth**

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—**Grace Stenbeck-Werner**

Professional American Style of Riding Award—**Joie Gatlin**

Developing Professional American Style of Riding Award—**Kelsey Epperson**

Derbydown Trophy donated by Louise Serio—**Victoria Colvin and Odette, owned by**

John and Stephanie Ingram, with a score of 92.5

Urlala Perpetual Trophy donated by Kimberly and Terry Maloomian—**Chilled, owned and ridden by Rindy Dominguez**

Rox Dene Perpetual Trophy donated by Elaine and Chanda Boylen—**Betsee Parker, owner of Fidelio, ridden by Scott Stewart**

Jeffrey Katz Trophy donated by Lisa Cudahy—**Scott Stewart and Fidelio, owned by Betsee Parker**

Alabama Clay Conformation Hunter Perpetual Trophy donated by the Weisman Family—**John and Stephanie Ingram LLC, owner of Odette, ridden by Victoria Colvin**

Small Town Perpetual Trophy donated by Iwasaki & Reilly—**Spoken, owned by Andesite Equestrian**

Charles Johnson Perpetual Trophy donated in memory

of Charles Johnson—**Jamie Planck McRee**

Winter's Run Sportsman-ship 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—**Matt Cyphert**

Daniel P. Lenahan Perpetual Trophy in memory of Daniel P. Lenahan and presented by the WCHR Committee to a person who exemplifies dedication and lifetime commitment to judging show hunters—**Mark Jungherr**

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—**Tim Delovich**

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—**Peter Pletcher**

USHJA/WCHR Course Designer Perpetual Trophy presented by USHJA to the Course Designer of the Year—**Nancy Wallis**

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" – **Elizabeth Rinehart**
Children's – **Serenity Wolk**
Pony – **Ava Crolick**



Top: Ava Barnes and Atlas captured the Junior 3'6" Challenge.

Middle: Natalia McCarthy and Positano won the Junior 3'3" Challenge.

Bottom: Erin Morera and Symbolique secured the Adult Amateur Challenge victory.

2025 WCHR National Champions

Professional – Nick Haness of Zone 10
Professional Owner – Andesite Equestrian of Zone 3
Developing Professional – Sarah Moberg of Zone 10
Developing Professional Owner – Lynn Olson of Zone 9
Amateur-Owner 3'6" – Irene Neuwirth of Zone 10
Amateur-Owner 3'3" – Martha Ingram of Zone 4
Adult Amateur – Glenda Monkarsh of Zone 10
Junior 3'6" – Paige Walkenbach of Zone 8
Junior 3'3" – Taylor Matalon of Zone 4
Pony – Grace Stenbeck-Werner of Zone 2
Children's – Evie Becky of Zone 10

when he was able to qualify for the Developing Pro Challenge.

"It means a lot to win this class. It's such a fun class, and over the years of doing it, there's so much camaraderie," said Andrade, who also finished fourth in 2022 and sixth in 2023. "It means a lot for us. We're watching the professionals go out there and do it, and it makes us strive to be better and ride like them, and hopefully one day win the Pro Challenge, too."

Once again, longtime partners Steege and Laffite De Muze topped the \$50,000 WCHR Professional Challenge with superb performances. They were the only competitors to score above 90 in both rounds (91 and 92.33). John French reunited with Walkenbach Equestrian LLC's Babylon to place a close second, while Haness and Circa, owned by Wade Equestrian Farms LLC, took third.

"It's always such a thrill to win this class, but it was extra special to win it back-to-back on Laffite," Steege said of the 14-year-old Belgian Warmblood (Darco—Everlychin De La Pomme). "It's one of the classes that we all plan for all year long. Actually, this is his third year winning the class. [And] with the quality of the horses that end up in this class— and the crowd and the atmosphere here at Capital Challenge—I feel like the horses and the riders really rise to the challenge."

Steege and Cheryl Olsten's talented bay have been together for eight years and continue to impress with performances regularly scoring in the 90s. She attributed his continued success to his huge heart and willingness to please.

"I've never had another horse who wants to go in the ring as much as Laffite," she said. "In addition to that, it's his whole team, starting with owner Cheryl and my boyfriend and groom, Tim Delovich, and Laffite's vet, farrier and bodyworker. He's basically had the same support staff [during his career]. Cheryl, Tim and I are very careful about what shows and what classes we do, and we make a plan for him. We really try to never overuse him."

Designing a Victory

It all started with a forelock. That's what caught Irene Neuwirth's eye when she was scrolling through social media during the 2023

MICHELLE BLOCH HONORED

The Capital Challenge family lost a dear friend, Michelle Bloch, this year. Michelle was a creative writer, designer, and photographer who loved promoting Capital Challenge and the sport to the public (See *Letter to Members*, p.4).

In her memory, the “Michelle Bloch Excellence in Expression Award” was created to recognize a rider who gives the best interview at the show and is a good spokesperson for the sport and the love of the horse. The winner of the award is chosen by members of the Capital Challenge media team and members of the press at the show.

Irene Neuwirth was named the inaugural recipient of the Michelle Bloch Excellence in Expression Award. Starting in 2026, the Award will be expanded to include one rider from the Equitation Showcase, one from the Professional Hunter divisions, and one from the Junior/Amateur/Pony/Children's divisions.

Below: Brian Lenehan, left, presented Mark Jungherr with the Daniel P. Lenehan Perpetual Trophy for his lifetime commitment to judging.

Bottom: Owner Becky Gochman enjoyed Michael Andrade's Developing Professional Challenge title with Forever Romance.



TRICIA BOOKER



TRICIA BOOKER

FLAXEN MANE MEDIA



From left: Jennifer Glass, Lara McPherson, Tricia Booker, Irene Neuwirth and Jennifer Wood

Capital Challenge and came across a photo of a 5-year-old that California trainer Savannah Jenkins had posted.

“He had this huge, fluffy forelock and this gorgeous little face, and I was like, ‘Who is that?’ Savannah said, ‘I think he might be a Hunter.’ I flew home and tried him, and that was it,” she recalled, laughing, of finding Scout’s Honor, her 7-year-old Holsteiner (Diarado—Aur lie De Co). “I showed him in Young Horse classes, and I feel really proud that I’ve mostly brought him along myself. And he’s jumping better and better every single year.”

Scout’s Honor showed off his talent as the pair captured the \$5,000 WCHR 3’6” Amateur-Owner Challenge. “This is something I’ve never won,” said Neuwirth. “So, if I was going to win one class and big thing here, it was this, and it worked out great.”



TRICIA BOOKER PHOTOS

Top: Grier Van Rooyen rode her mother's Biarritz to win the WCHR Children's Challenge.

Middle: Irene Neuwirth and Scout's Honor rose to the top of the WCHR Amateur-Owner 3'6" Challenge.

Bottom: Tim Delovich, Lafitte De Muze's longtime caretaker, received the David Peterson Perpetual Trophy from (left to right) Louise Serio and USHJA Executive Director Whitney Allen.




Paige Walkenbach earned her second consecutive WCHR Junior 3'6" National Championship and received the There'll Be Times Perpetual Trophy.

Neuwirth, of Culver City, California, balances her show ring aspirations with her jewelry designing business. She began training with East Coast-based Hesslink Williams LLC earlier this year. "We've been having a ball. They're really patient, kind and supportive; just what I needed," she said. "I have a jewelry store in New York, and so I spend a lot of time out here anyway, and it's been a dream riding out here. The competition is out of this world, and everyone has such nice horses and are so competitive that it raised the bar. So, when you do win, you're like, 'OK, wow.'"

Although she was born and raised in California by an artist mother and businessman father, Neuwirth isn't actually new to the East Coast. "I went to University of Vermont and studied environmental education," she said with a laugh. "My parents were like, 'What are you doing?'"

Neuwirth didn't find her career in teaching but instead in creating art. What began as a fun labor of love turned into a vibrant business. One day, on a whim, she sent 10 beaded necklaces to Barneys New York. "I went to the local bead store and strung up these crazy necklaces, sent them, and wrote in magic marker saying, 'I hope you love it!' And I hit redial on the phone until somebody finally answered. And I was like, 'I was wondering if you received my package?' So, then I flew out there, and they were my very first account."

"And as obsessive as I am with the horses is how obsessive I was, times 10, with my business," she continued with a smile. "I was so interested in learning how to be a better designer, a better boss, a better partner. When I get really heavily into something I like to learn I'm very curious. And, you know, I'm really lucky that that's kind of how I built my business. My parents were like, 'One day when you can afford a horse of your own ...' I was like, 'Well, that's never going to happen!' So, I feel very grateful. I also think things can go away as fast as they come, so I've always worked really hard and am grateful for all the wonderful things that I have." 

AVERY FAYE SMITH SHINES IN MARSHALL+STERLING/USHJA 3'3" JUMPING SEAT MEDAL FINALS—EAST

The Zone 4 rider dominates in a competitive final while figuring out a new mount.

BY TRICIA BOOKER

When Avery Faye Smith stepped into the indoor arena for the Marshall+Sterling/USHJA 3'3" Jumping Seat Medal Finals—East, she not only faced more than 200 other contenders but also the challenge of getting to know a brand-new equine partner.

It was a daunting place for Smith to make her debut with Terrapin Hill Farm's Keep Calm, but the 17-year-old had experience at the Capital Challenge Horse Show in Upper Marlboro, Maryland, and was confident in her preparation.

"Recently, I moved to Florida, where I train with Hunter Holloway, Caroline McLeese and Don Stewart," said the Oregon native. "It's really changed my life. I have opportunities I never thought I'd ever get."

Smith made the most of those opportunities with victory in the Flat and Gymnastics phases. She then sealed the deal with a strong performance in the Jumping Phase on September 26, the third day of competition at the Prince George's Equestrian Center.

"I was super, super nervous," said Smith. "I really wanted to win, especially with it being my third time competing in this class and because I won the first two phases. All day I was pacing around the barn and just trying to find things to do. I was really nervous, but I performed well under pressure tonight, so it worked out."

Calm Under Pressure

The Flat Phase was the sole featured event on the first day of the Equitation Showcase on September 24, with judges Ginny Edwards and Mark Jungherr presiding. The riders were split into 17 groups of 11 or 12 riders who worked at the walk, trot, canter and counter-canter. Each received a numerical score, with Smith earning 91.5 for her top performance.

"I really wanted to win the flat because I know I excel there," said Smith, who also won the 17-year-old Equitation A Section flat on her way to that age-group championship. "In past years, it hasn't gone as well, so I really, really wanted to do well this year."

A field of 201 returned to the arena on Thursday for the Gymnastics Phase, which was designed by Meghan Rawlins, Ken Krome and Joe Carnicom. The challenging course featured 15 jumping efforts and included a trot fence into a one-stride, as well as a bounce on a bending line. The riders were also asked to canter a two-stride and a one-stride combination in addition to navigating single fences throughout.

The riders returned in reverse order of standing, and despite the pressure, Smith kept her cool and again earned the day's high score of an 89 to maintain her overall lead.

Edwards was impressed with Smith in the first two phases and said her beautiful position and feel of her horse were noticed. "I'll take a soft, accurate position over a stiffer person," said Edwards. "Her position was very good and correct, and she answered every question on the tests, both on the flat and in the gymnastics. She demonstrated great lengthenings and transitions on the flat and a lovely connection with her horse, which helped her stand out. In the gymnastics, she understood all the many questions and demonstrated it beautifully."



Avery Faye Smith celebrated her victory in the Marshall+Sterling/USHJA 3'3" Jumping Seat Medal Finals—East with Keep Calm.

TRICIA BOOKER

Although Smith was nervous heading into the final Jumping Phase on Friday, she knew that her relationship with “Scotty” was improving each day. “I think we’ve definitely adjusted to each other. I feel like even in a couple days, he’s really grown, and I’ve really grown. Our partnership really formed very quickly,” she said.

Smith returned last out of 199 riders for the Jumping Phase, with hushed spectators watching her every move over the technical course.

“I was a little slow and a little bit conservative because I was going in on top,” said Smith, who accrued 3 time faults and a final score of 87.15. “My horse has a massive stride, so I wasn’t concerned about any of the lines. If anything, I was more concerned about the wall, but the course rode perfect. It was how I walked it.”

What we saw on the flat she carried over to the jumping phases.—

Mark Jungherr

Smith’s fourth place in the Jumping Phase was multiplied by a coefficient of 2 and added to her previous score of 225 for a final score of 399.3. In the end, she finished with an eight-point lead, so further testing was not required.

“I thought she did a great job dealing with the pressure,” said Edwards. “We didn’t know how close the scores were because of the points and coefficients. She was a bit conservative and had some time faults, so we were getting prepared to test, but she was far enough ahead that it wasn’t needed.”

Jungherr agreed that Smith’s showmanship and ideal position helped her throughout the three phases. “She was very stylish and had correct angles and very good communication with her horse,” he noted. “And she demonstrated that same talent through the Gymnastic Phase. The gymnastics course tested the riders and asked questions about how much control they had and whether it was real. What we saw on the flat

she carried over to the jumping phases.”

The judges praised the overall talent the riders exhibited in the final, as well as the courses for contributing to a great class. “The courses all week long were brilliant,” said Edwards. “We had a wide range of riders in this class, and I think we had just one who fell off in the Jumping Phase out of 199. That’s amazing to have that balance—a technical course but no one having disasters. To me it was comparable to watching a five-star grand prix where 4 faults happened at a variety of different jumps all over the course to determine the placings. This was similar. The tests and errors were all over the ring, and the riders who mastered the tests rose to the top while the others had a safe and educational experience.”


Zone 4’s Ella Tarumianz, of Charlotte, North Carolina, who was third in the Jumping Phase, placed second overall with a score of 391.685 on Betsee Parker’s Daktari, the gray who was ridden to the 2022 victory by Maddie Tosh. Rosemary Bilson, of Pacific Palisades, California, in Zone 10, clinched third with 385.495 aboard the flashy pinto Que Color, owned by Cherokee Show Horses. With three scores in the 85s, the pair rose an impressive 58 spots in the

Jumping Phase.

Smith credited her partner, Keep Calm, a 10-year-old KWPN (Biscayo—Beauty), for his talent and rideability throughout the three days. “It definitely took me a second to get to know his canter,” she said of the elegant bay. “He has a really big canter, but I felt comfortable with him today.”

Keep Calm also earned the USHJA Jumping Seat Medal Best Horse Award and later carried Anna Tyler to fifth place in the THIS National Children’s Medal Finals during the Equitation Showcase.

The Marshall+Sterling/USHJA 3’3” Jumping Seat Medal provides junior exhibitors with the opportunity to develop their Equitation skills over a Jumper-style course. The goal is to help riders gain experience in a format similar to that of the Platinum Performance/USEF Show Jumping Talent Search. For more information on the 3’3” Jumping Seat Medal, please visit ushja.org/JumpSeatMedal.

The USHJA extends special thanks to the Capital Challenge Horse Show team for hosting the Final; Title Sponsor Marshall+Sterling; Official Sponsors Herm Sprenger, Nutrena and Parlanti; and Supporting Sponsor Essex Classics. 

USHJA 3’3” Jumping Seat Medal Final—East Results

Rider | Horse | Trainer | Owner

Phase 1 | Phase 2 | Phase 3 | Overall

1. Avery Faye Smith | Keep Calm | Caroline McLeese | Terrapin Hill Farm LLC

91.5 | 89 | 87.15 | 399.3

2. Ella Tarumianz | Daktari | Hunt Tosh | Betsee Parker

87.06 | 86.75 | 87.25 | 391.685

3. Rosemary Bilson | Que Color | James Hagman | Cherokee Show Horses

85.37 | 85.75 | 85.75 | 385.495

4. Liliya Obaid | Diamant | Andre Dignelli | Heritage Farm Inc.

87.39 | 81.75 | 87 | 384.015

5. Audrey Geren | Levanto | Emmy Tromp | Wolfstone Stables & Sales Inc.

84.25 | 83.4 | 86.5 | 382.35

6. Mimi Maddock | Carcoon | Frank Madden | Maddock Horses LLC

82.66 | 86.5 | 84.6 | 381.61

7. Campbell Cauthen | Chris Craft | Emily Smith | DCTM LLC

88.6 | 81.8 | 84.75 | 380.8

8. Payton Flanders | Brio | Rachel Agee | PEC LLC

87.85 | 84.3 | 82.9 | 380.1