

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 6



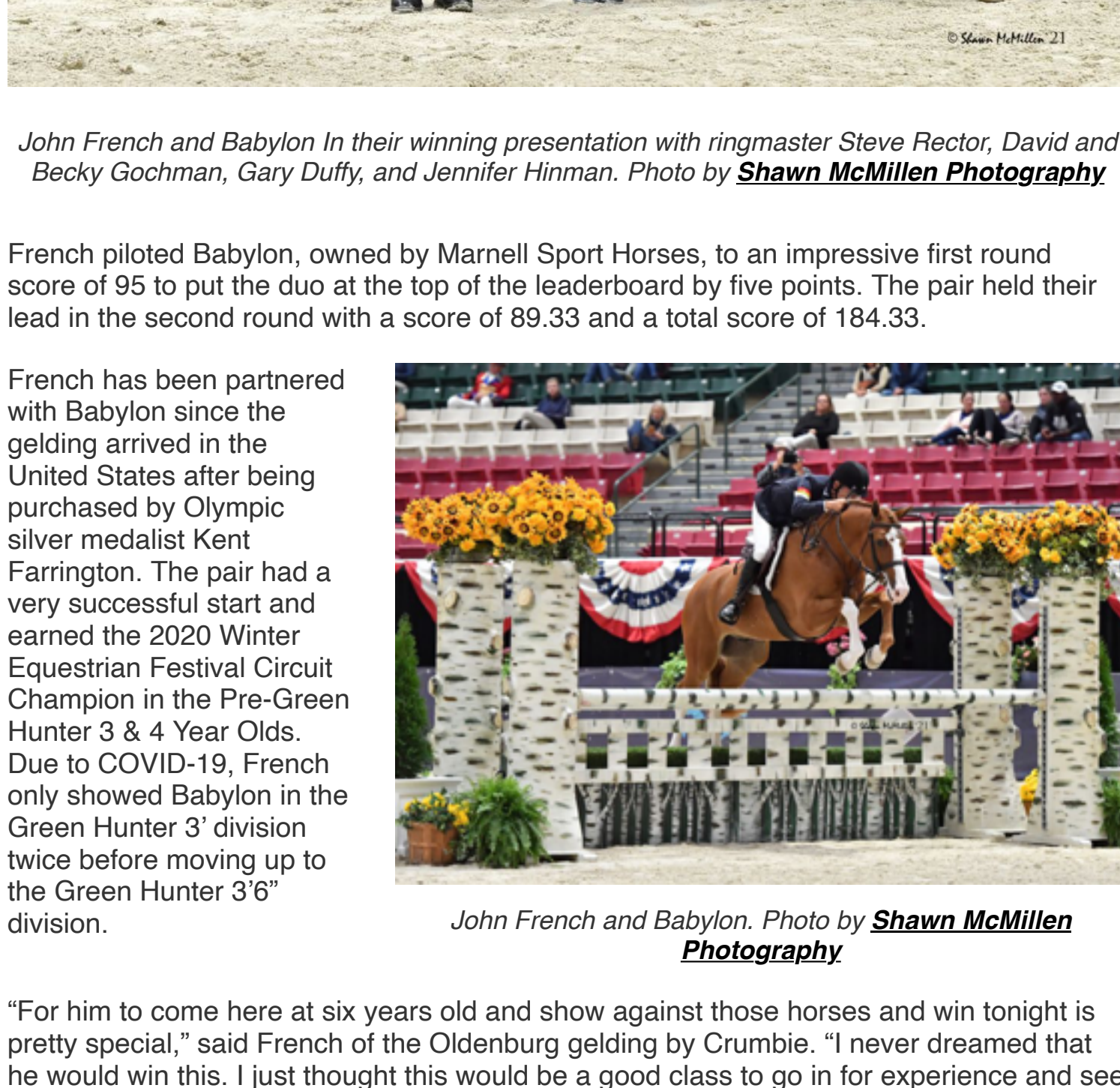
Results &amp; Orders

Live Stream

## John French Wins Fourth \$25,000 WCHR Professional Challenge Riding Babylon

October 6, 2021 – Upper Marlboro, MD – John French of Wellington, Florida, piloted Babylon to the victory in the \$25,000 World Championship Hunter Rider (WCHR) Professional Challenge, sponsored by The Gochman Family, at the 2021 Capital Challenge Horse Show on Wednesday, October 6, held at Prince George's Equestrian Center in Upper Marlboro, Maryland.

Riders qualified for the \$25,000 WCHR Professional Challenge by finishing in the top four in professional hunter classes at the show or ranking in the top 10 nationally. The class consisted of a first round for all 28 competitors and a second round for the top 12 horse-and-rider combinations.

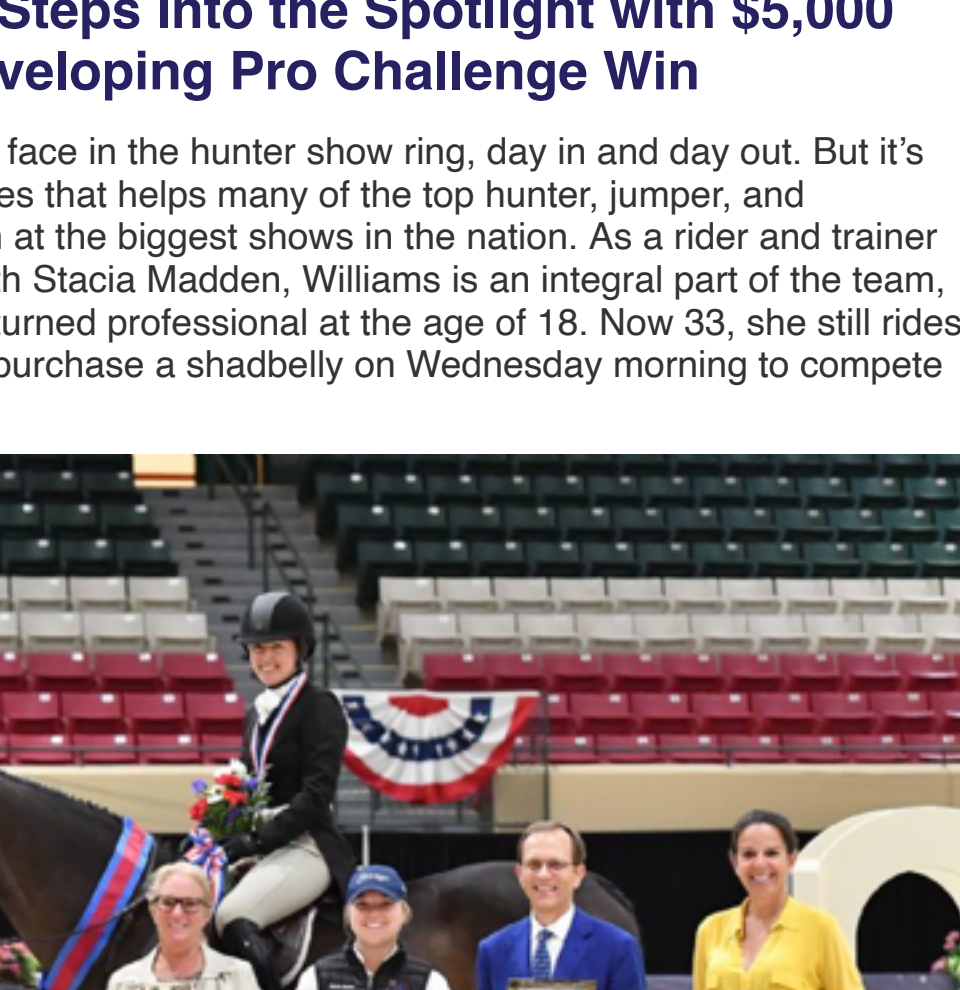


John French and Babylon in their winning presentation with ringmaster Steve Rector, David and Becky Gochman, Gary Duffy, and Jennifer Hinman. Photo by [Shawn McMillen Photography](#)

French piloted Babylon, owned by Marnell Sport Horses, to an impressive first round score of 95 to put the duo at the top of the leaderboard by five points. The pair held their lead in the second round with a score of 89.33 and a total score of 184.33.

French has been partnered with Babylon since the gelding arrived in the United States after being purchased by Olympic silver medalist Kent Farrington. The pair had a very successful start and earned the 2020 Winter Equestrian Festival Circuit Champion in the Pre-Green Hunter 3 & 4 Year Olds.

Due to COVID-19, French only showed Babylon in the Green Hunter 3' division twice before moving up to the Green Hunter 3'6" division.



John French and Babylon. Photo by [Shawn McMillen Photography](#)

"For him to come here at six years old and show against those horses and win tonight is pretty special," said French of the Oldenburg gelding by Crumbie. "I never dreamed that he would win this. I just thought this would be a good class to go in for experience and see how he did, and he ended up winning the whole thing. Having started him from the beginning makes it more special."

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## Heather Williams Steps Into the Spotlight with \$5,000 WCHR Developing Pro Challenge Win

Heather Williams isn't a familiar face in the hunter show ring, day in and day out. But it's her work put in behind the scenes that helps many of the top hunter, jumper, and equitation riders and horses win at the biggest shows in the nation. As a rider and trainer at Beacon Hill Show Stables with Stacia Madden, Williams is an integral part of the team, having worked there since she turned professional at the age of 18. Now 33, she still rides in her old hunt coat and had to purchase a shadbelly on Wednesday morning to compete in the Challenge class.



Heather Williams and DiCaprio 3 in their winning presentation with ringmaster Steve Rector, Rachel Kennedy, Martha and John Ingram, and Jennifer Hinman. Photo by [Shawn McMillen Photography](#)

"A lot of times I'm not here during this week because it's also the USEF Talent Search Finals," said Williams. "The stars just sort of aligned that I was able to be here, and I had the opportunity from the Sorokens to ride this great horse so I said I was going to take advantage and do it while I can."

"The majority of my professional career is really spent training," she continued. "I don't do a lot of competitive riding for myself; I do a lot of schooling jumpers and preparing horses. I would say that's primarily what my riding entails, but I knew I was going to be here this week and it's a rare occasion."

Williams piloted DiCaprio 3, a 13-year-old Holsteiner gelding by Contender owned by Lillian Soroken, to victory after they scored 85.66 and 88.66 for a total of 174.32. Jared Depenmier and Brad Wolf's Sebastian were second with scores of 85 and 87.66 for a 172.66 total. Vivian Yowan and Sazerac, owned by IMB of Jupiter LLC, finished third after they scored 86.41 and 86.16 for a 172.57 total.



Heather Williams and DiCaprio 3. Photo by [Shawn McMillen Photography](#)

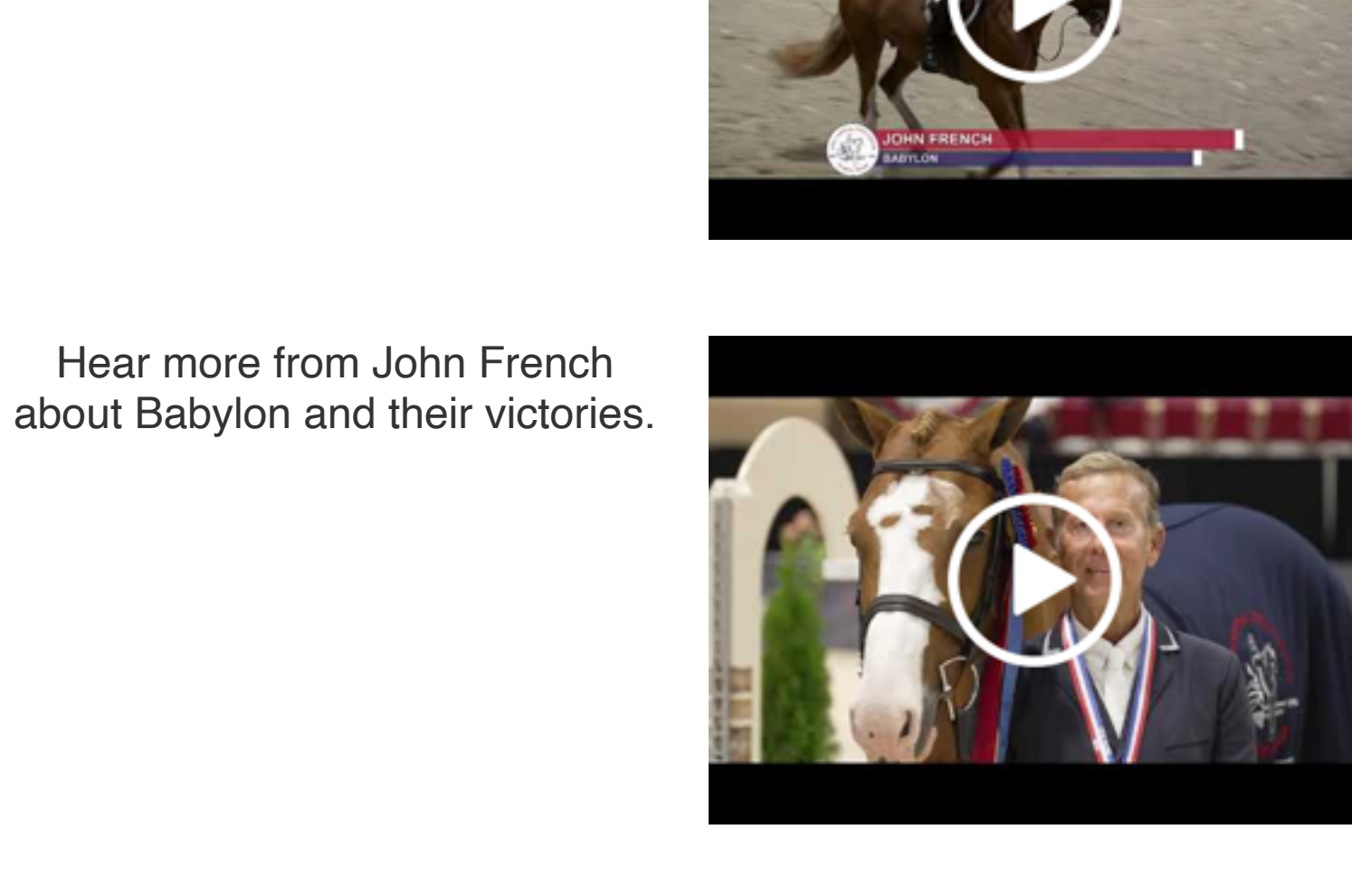
Williams sat in third place after the first round, but their highest second-round score propelled them up the standings.

"Coming into the second round, I took a peek at the scores before I got on and I saw that the top riders were all really within one point of each other," she said. "I knew if I had a good trip, I would have a real chance at moving up. I tried to stick to my plan. I know my horse really well, and I had a road map of how I wanted to ride the course and luckily it panned out exactly how I'd hoped."

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## Ackergill Castle and Scott Stewart Paint a Pretty Picture for Victory

Ackergill Castle, piloted by Scott Stewart, returned to the ring for the second round of the KASK North American Green 3'-3" Hunter Championship sitting in the lead with a 90. The Holsteiner gelding (Balous Bellini), owned by Betsee Parker, didn't reveal his experience as he loped around the Show Place Arena and posted a 90.16 from the panel of three judges. His combined two-round score of 180.16 secured the title and gave Stewart his eighth win in the 24-year history of the class.



Scott Stewart and Ackergill Castle in their winning presentation. Photo by [Shawn McMillen Photography](#)

"It's always awesome to win here, and there were a lot of good horses in this class," said Stewart. "I tried not to watch anyone go the second time. I was really pleased with him. As of yesterday, I wasn't even sure if I should do it and then he went in the first class so relaxed, I was sort of shocked how grown-up he acted, so I was glad I did it."

Ackergill Castle, just six years old, was purchased during the height of the COVID pause. Stewart said of the talented gelding, "Betsee bought him off of a video a little over a year ago, and because of COVID we were not able to go over and try him. He had just done one horse show, and she wasn't really looking for a horse but was nice enough to get him for us."



Scott Stewart and Ackergill Castle. Photo by [Shawn McMillen Photography](#)

Stewart only showed Parker's young horse three or four times in Florida before showing once in July, and then competing in the USHJA Green Hunter Incentive Championship where he was second. The Incentive Championship was the last time he was in the show ring. Stewart was thankful he was home for the two weeks prior to Capital Challenge so he could ride the gelding himself every day.

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## Watch the Winning Ride, Hear From the Winner, and More

See the winning ride for John French and Babylon.



Hear more from John French about Babylon and their victories.



Watch the winning ride for Heather Williams and DiCaprio 3.



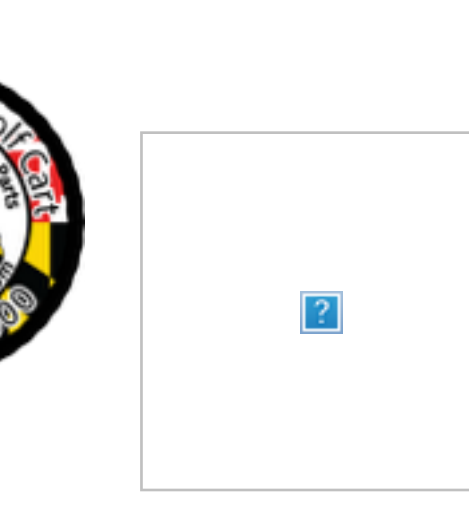
## Winners Gallery



John French and Babylon in their winning presentation for the Grand Hunter Champion. Photo by [Shawn McMillen Photography](#)



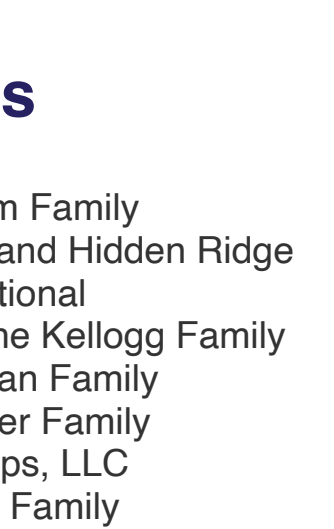
Scott Stewart and Ackergill Castle in their winning presentation for the Grand Hunter Champion. Photo by [Shawn McMillen Photography](#)



Holly Orlando and Waverly were the Grand Green Hunter 3' & 3'3" Champions. Photo by [Shawn McMillen Photography](#)

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 7, 2021 EDITION

# The Daily Update

Capital Challenge  
2021 Show News

## Castle is King Victorious in Championship



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