

Washington International Horse Show

OCT. 24-30 | UPPER MARLBORO, MARYLAND

Swail's On An Upswing With Count Me In At Washington

He earns his second Longines FEI World Cup qualifier win in a month.

By Lindsay Berreth And Mollie Bailey

Two years ago Ireland's Conor Swail was sitting in 59th place in the Longines Fédération Equestre Internationale World Rankings.

He had a good string of horses but lacked a superstar. When the opportunity to take the ride on two talented grand prix horses, Count Me In and Vital Chance De La Roque, presented itself in 2021, Swail jumped at the chance, and his career has experienced a sort of renaissance ever since.

"I think in any person's sports career you have good

moments and not-so-good moments," he said. "I haven't been out of the Top 100 in the last 10 or 15 years, so it's not that I was going particularly badly, but I just didn't have the quality of horse like I have now. I'm lucky now I have this great opportunity where I have a nice group of horses and these two horses who are my only two grand prix horses at the moment. They just continually give me great chances to win every time they're out of the stable. It's given me a lot of confidence and given them great confidence also. It's been good."

Just three weeks after winning the Longines FEI Sacramento CSI4*-W in California on Vital Chance De La Roque, Swail took home another World Cup qualifier win, this time aboard Count Me In, in the \$406,000 Longines FEI Washington CSI5*-W at the Washington International Horse Show, held Oct. 29 in Upper Marlboro, Maryland.

"It's obviously been a fantastic start [to the World Cup season] for me, winning two out of two with two different horses, but tonight really it's kind of about 'Crosby,'" he said. "He's been just incredible for me since I got him basically. This is his first five-star [grand prix] win. I think maybe he's been second four times or something like that, so I'm just so thrilled for him to be honest."

Conor Swail won his second FEI World Cup qualifier in three weeks when he and Count Me In topped the \$406,000 Longines FEI Washington CSI5*-W at the Washington International Horse Show. LINDSAY BERRETH PHOTO



\$406,000 Longines FEI Washington CSI5*-W
Upper Marlboro, Md.—Oct. 29

Horse/Rider/Nation	Faults	Time	Purse
1. Count Me In/Conor Swail/IRL	0-0	35.76	\$133,980
2. Gemma W/Daniel Bluman/ISR	0-0	36.00	91,200
3. MTM Vivre Le Reve/Brian Moggin/USA	0-0	36.74	60,900
4. Eddie Blue/Devin Ryan/USA	0-0	36.87	40,600
5. Chartraine Pro Noir/Beot Mändli/SUI	0-0	38.24	24,380
6. Barbolina 2/Mario Deslauriers/CAN	0-0	40.17	18,270
7. Landon/Kent Farrington/USA	0-4	36.99	12,180
8. Legacy/Daniel Coyle/IRL	0-4	38.55	10,150
9. Confu/Laura Kraus/USA	0-VW	-	8,120

➤ Also competed: 10. Igor/U. Verlooy/BEL; 11. Pepita Con Spita/H. Holloway/USA; 12. Contagious/M. Ward/USA; 13. Major Tom/R. Pessoa/BRA; 14. Viva Columbia/B. Goutal-Martens/USA; 15. Brogo R N B/K. Dinan/USA; 16. Chance Siva Hermelle/N. Dean/USA; 17. Chevabacca/J. Torano/USA; 18. Armi/B. Courmane/USA; 19. Elusiva/J. Velez/USA; 20. Alejandro/S. Sweetnam/IRL; 21. Blue Moves/R. Willis/AUS; 22. Inesita Van't Voorhees/P. O'Shea/IRL; 23. Vivaldi Du Theil/A. Cuvellier/USA; 24. Noortje V D Windshrevel/M. Bluman/COL; 25. Valkies 2/E. Coluccio/USA; 26. Agadance Van't Galutt 2/J. Debeyre/GBR; 27. Centrico Voley/L. Coyle/IRL; 28. Dicks/M. Engle/USA; 29. Hungry Heart/J. Springsteen/USA; VW: Bull Run's Price Of Peace/K. VanderVeen/USA, VW



Stephanie Danhaki's Casanova Royal jumped to the top of the 3'6" green hunter division and tied for the grand hunter championship with Scott Stewart up at the Washington International Horse Show. *MOLLIE BAILEY PHOTO*

Crosby, a 15-year-old Hanoverian gelding (Count Grannus—Sunshine, Sherlock Holmes) owned by Sandy Lupton and Mannon Farm, came to Swail in June 2021 after competing with Canadian rider Beth Underhill.

"He was always a very nice horse with Beth, and it's a horse that always caught my eye," said Swail, 51. "He's 15. I took a big risk thinking he could keep continuing and doing what he's doing. He never really jumped at this level so consistently, so it's been a great partnership even though it's a short one. He's one of the best horses I've ever ridden in my career. It would've been great to have him a little sooner, but it's better to have him than not at all."

Swail describes Crosby as needing a little bit of motivation in the ring, but he's very careful. "You've got to make the decisions for him," he said. "I have to be aggressive enough riding him, but quality-wise, as far as carefulness, I don't ever think he's going to knock anything down, and he generally doesn't as long as I don't make any mistakes. He's great to ride. There's not

that many horses in the world that you think you're not going to knock jumps down on, so thankfully I have one of them."

The pair won a World Cup qualifier in Texas last year and finished in the Top 10 at the Longines FEI World Cup Final in Germany this year. Then they finished eighth in the Rolex Grand Prix of Aachen (Germany) and helped the Irish team to a historic win in the FEI Dublin Nations Cup this summer, hoisting the prestigious Aga Khan trophy. He currently sits fifth on the Longines FEI Jumping World Rankings.

"It's something that as an Irish rider, as a kid you dream of winning the Aga Khan, nearly more so than the Olympics," Swail said. "It's something that we watched on television. Everyone would have watched it. It's one of those things that no one would ever miss. That was my lifetime goals achieved, and it's all because of him."

"Last year I wasn't so sure whether he was going to be capable of doing that," he added. "There was a lot of firsts with Crosby and I. We've done our first World Cup

together. I jumped in Aachen for the first time because of him. I won my first Aga Khan in Dublin because of him. So he's really changed my career, and he's brought me to a lot of places I've never been and has been very successful doing it. This year I feel like now I know he's capable."

Swail, who has a home in Wellington, Florida, has been busy traveling the world this year, and he'll continue his World Cup campaign in Mexico, Toronto and Las Vegas.

"I'm always on the road, but I'm having the time of my life," he said. "It's the most successful I've been in my career, and I'm loving it."

STEWART SWEEPS THE PROFESSIONAL DIVISIONS

If you were hoping for a championship ribbon early in the week at Washington, you were out of luck—unless your name was Scott Stewart. The Flemington, New Jersey, professional swept all five divisions, picking up one reserve championship to boot.

It's the second time Stewart has managed this feat, having picked up five championships in 2019 as well.

His champions included Sophie Gochman's Jordan in the green conformation division, Betsee Parker's For Always in the high performance conformation and 3'9" green hunter divisions, Stephanie Danhaki's Casanova Royal in the 3'6" green division and Parker's Nottingham in the high performance division. He also earned his own trophy, the Scott Stewart Leading Hunter Rider Perpetual Trophy.

Two of his mounts, Casanova Royal and Nottingham, tied for grand champion hunter honors, each earning 36 points out of a possible 40.

Casanova Royal, a 13-year-old Holsteiner stallion (Cassus 2—Violetta VII, Caretino 2), came to Danhaki and Stewart through Paul Schockemöhle. He competed through the 1.60-meter level throughout Europe and the Middle East.

"I told him I needed a really nice horse for my amateur rider," said Stewart. "He sent me a video of this horse who was a little overqualified, but we went and tried him, and Stephanie was lucky enough to get him. It took a while to get him. I tried him once, and Stephanie wasn't sure if she could get there, and [it turns out] she couldn't. [It was a big step to buy him], and she just did it."

Casanova Royal started showing stateside in May of this year, earning a reserve championship with Danhaki in the amateur-owner division and the 3'6" green



Betsee Parker's Nottingham won the high performance championship and tied for the grand hunter championship with Scott Stewart riding at the Washington International Horse Show. *MOLLIE BAILEY PHOTO*

championship with Stewart their first time out.

"I thought he was going to take a little more time to get the hang of the hunters, but he's really straightforward," Stewart said. "Stephanie is a really good rider, so she can handle him when he's not quite used to doing it. They're a great combination."

Stewart's been showing his other grand hunter champion, Nottingham, since the start of the 2021 season.

"Nottingham is a great horse," said Stewart of the 10-year-old Oldenburg (Verdi—Calibelle, Califax). "He has such a good rhythm and is just so smooth between the jumps. He's one of the best horses to ride."

Parker said they took their time with the gelding before bringing him out, which has paid off with big results. This year he's won titles at Devon (Pennsylvania) and the Platinum Performance USHJA Green Hunter Incentive Championships (Kentucky).

HORSE SHOWS



Ellie Ferrigno rode two horses to junior/amateur jumper championships at the Washington International Horse Show, winning the high amateur title on I Dottori VD Richter. *MOLLIE BAILEY PHOTO*

summer we were able to make a deal, and he was able to become part of our family again. And now we'll never give him up ever again."

To control his forward-thinking brain, Ferrigno played with a bit, changing from a strong hackabit with two curb chains to a simpler gag, and she removed his noseband. He also wears a snug-fitting mask on his head that Ferrigno likened to a dog's ThunderShirt to help keep him calm.

"He's definitely a quirky guy," said Ferrigno, Newtown, Connecticut. "He doesn't do lead changes. Depending on the day, he might run away, or he might

not. But what better horse to jump that big on? He's a fighter, and he'll do anything."

Queen Elizabeth, a 13-year-old Swedish Warmblood (King Louie—Whiwan, Iowa), spent time under Jack Whitaker's saddle before coming to the United States. "Queenie" struggled with soundness issues when Ferrigno first started riding her in 2019. After the mare's last bout of lameness, owner Molly Ohrstrom called Ferrigno.

"She said, 'Queenie's coming back this time. I think she's only a low amateur horse at this point. Do you want her? She's an incredible horse, and I know you love her, and she deserves a good home,'" said Ferrigno.

Ferrigno figured she'd ride the mare for the summer then breed her, but she stayed sound for a year and a half. Ferrigno had promised Ohrstrom and Queenie that after Washington she would retire, and they went out with a tricolor.

"She is the most incredible horse, and I can always count on her to just fly with me," she said. "I'm always able to pick up this giant gallop, and I know that if I leave the jumps up no one can beat her. She's just incredible."

Ferrigno was thrilled to have two top finishes at Washington, where she's been showing since she was 8. "I've always watched the jumper classes where they get to ride around with the cooler on, and that was my dream always that that would be me one day," she said. "And I always hoped and hoped, and it has evaded me until this year when I have my two incredible horses who gave it to me."

A DOUBLE WIN FOR FERRIGNO

Ellie Ferrigno couldn't have had a much better trip to Washington, where she picked up two amateur jumper championships. She piloted her own Queen Elizabeth to the top of the low junior/amateur division and her own I Dottori VD Richter to the high junior/amateur championship.

Ferrigno, now 20, first threw a leg over I Dottori VD Richter when she was 15.

"He wasn't a match with the professional that had him at that point, so it was kind of a 'If you can make him go, you can have him' situation," she recalled. "He was a dead runaway. He was weird, and I had to work with him. I rode him the first time, and he absolutely ran away with me. I rode him for a while, and I looked at [trainer Val Renihan], and I said, 'I want to keep him.'"

The Belgian Warmblood (Winningmood Van De Arenberg—Ranca, Heartbreaker) helped Ferrigno graduate from the low junior jumper divisions to the high juniors, but a few months later he returned to his owner.

"It always killed me a little that I didn't get to do [any championships] on him, because he's so important to me," said Ferrigno.

Then last year Ferrigno heard that he was for sale.

"I called everyone I knew like, 'Please, where's my horse?'" she said. "And it ended up at the end of last

"He's really an exquisite horse, and his expression when he looks through the bridle and his attention to jumping form is fun to see," she said. "He's a thrilling horse. Where others get the job done and are very utilitarian, he's very flamboyant."

A LONG PARTNERSHIP PAYS OFF

In the eight years that Danhagl has been showing Quest, they've picked up a slew of tricolors from major shows like Devon, the National (Kentucky), the Pennsylvania National and Capital Challenge (Maryland). The only major accolade missing from his resume has been a championship from Washington International—until now.

Danhagl guided the 15-year-old Dutch Warmblood (Verdi—Udina, Gran Corrado) to the 3'3" amateur-owner hunter, 18-35, and the grand 3'3" amateur-owner hunter titles at Washington.

"He's been a great horse year after year. He has so much enthusiasm for his job," said Danhagl. "It's really such an honor to be able to ride him. He's 15 this year, but he feels like he's better than ever. Really he's gotten easier with age; some horses are in their prime when

they're 7, 8, 9. He was really in his prime at 14, 15. He's been great the whole time. It's just so nice to have a horse that's been doing it for so long and still has that spark."

It's been three years since Danhagl competed at Washington, sitting out 2020 thanks to COVID-19 and missing last year as she was pregnant with her son, Miles Raymond.

Danhagl lives in Dover, Massachusetts, where she's working on her Ph.D. in art history at Boston University, far from trainer Stewart's barn in New Jersey. She keeps her leg strong by foxhunting with Norfolk Hunt Club (Massachusetts).

"My husband [Peter Raymond] has been hunting as well—which I never thought would be possible," she said. "I've always been a lover of tradition and history, so it feels like I'm able to be a part of the sport in the roots of hunters, which I really appreciate. It's fun to just kind of let go and gallop and jump some jumps that maybe would be a little scary. I've had a great horse who does it that I've had for four years. I'm having a blast. I have a lot of friends who do it. It's not a lot of show people. It's a different side of the industry and great people."



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Stephanie Danhaki rode Quest to the 3'3" amateur-owner hunter, 18-35, title and the grand 3'3" amateur-owner hunter title at the Washington International Horse Show. **MOLLIE BAILEY PHOTO**

up after the trot, and the nine [strides] was there beautifully. He always gives me a 10 jump if I put him in the right place, so it's very rewarding to ride him."

Jacobs has had the ride on the 9-year-old warmblood (Legion—Kolibri) since the summer of 2021.

"He's a little mouthy, but he's not mean—he's

really friendly," she said of the stallion. "He does want to hold something [in his mouth] at all times. We got him over here, did the 3'3" that [first] year, and this year we stepped him up to the 3'6". He does the [3'6" green hunters] with [trainer Chris Payne]. He didn't get into that [division] here, so I was a little nervous, but we pulled it together, and I had so much fun out there."

She said he jumps best with upper body support off the ground. "He's a little guy, but he has an enormous step, so I never have to worry about the lines or anything," she said. "It's a blast, honestly. I love riding him."

Jacobs lives in Boston, where she's a marketing manager, and her horses split their time between her family's farms in East Aurora, New York, and Wellington, Florida. She works out with equestrian fitness guru Kali Cram, and before a horse show, she'll get to her horses for a few days to get some rides in.

Payne and his partner at New Hope Farm, David Belford, were thrilled with how the two performed.

"She rode amazing, and the horse was wonderful," said Payne, Cincinnati. "He always tries to put in a good effort. He tries to be there for you, and she rose to the occasion." 🍀

She added that foxhunting helps her stay bold and going forward. "It definitely makes this look a lot more tame in comparison to some of the stuff we do," she said. "I just try to ride out in the hunt field like I would ride in the show ring; I try to find distances to everything and have a nice canter. Good riding is good riding."

ON ICE FREEZES OUT THE COMPETITION

Melissa Jacobs didn't have the best start to the Washington International with On Ice. She finished out of the ribbons in her first amateur-owner hunter, 18-35, over fences class.

"I made a lot of decisions to the single oxer," she quipped.

But she came back strong the next day, winning both the handy and the stake class to claim the division championship and the grand amateur-owner title.

"I woke up and saw I went first in the handy," said Jacobs, 29. "Sometimes I feel like if you haven't seen [anyone ride the course], and you just have to go in and do it, [it's better]. Especially the trot bending to an oxer, we can get overthinking that if you see what number someone else did. But I just went in and landed and rode



On Ice and Melissa Jacobs picked up three blue ribbons on the way to the amateur-owner, 18-35, and grand amateur-owner titles at the Washington International Horse Show. **MOLLIE BAILEY PHOTO**

Washington International Horse Show Upper Marlboro, Md.—Oct. 24-30	
Green Conformation Hunter CH: Jordan, Sophie Gochman. RES: Augustine, Lee Kellogg Sadriin.	\$10,000 WIHS Adult Amateur Hunter CH: Hundred Acre, Laurie Barna. RES: Vorekai, Kim Shuler.
High Performance Conformation Hunter CH: For Always, Betsee Parker. RES: Superlative, Grace Owens.	\$10,000 WIHS Adult Amateur Jumper CH: Gold Lux, Siboney Ranch. RES: Dartani, Kimberly Cortis.
3'6" Green Hunter CH: Casanova Royal, Stephanie Danhaki. RES: Small Love, Iwasaki & Rollfy.	International Open Jumper CH, Tie: Catoki, Marilla Van Beurden & Count Me In, Connor Swail.
3'9" Green Hunter CH: For Always, Betsee Parker. RES: Nottingham, Betsee Parker.	Grand Green Hunter CH: Casanova Royal, Stephanie Danhaki.
High Performance Hunter CH: Nottingham, Betsee Parker. RES: Diplomat, Grace Russo.	Grand Hunter CH, Tie: Casanova Royal, Stephanie Danhaki & Nottingham, Betsee Parker.
Amateur-Owner Hunter, 18-35 CH: On Ice, Melissa Jacobs LLC. RES: Baker Street, Stephanie Danhaki.	Leading Hunter Rider: Scott Stewart.
Amateur-Owner Hunter, 36 & Over CH: Juan Carlos, Irene Neuwirth. RES: Guess Who, Irene Neuwirth.	Grand Amateur-Owner Hunter CH: On Ice, Melissa Jacobs LLC.
3'3" Amateur-Owner Hunter, 18-35 CH: Quest, Stephanie Danhaki. RES: Mojito, Lasorda Holdings.	Leading Amateur-Owner Hunter Rider: Melissa Jacobs.
3'3" Amateur-Owner Hunter, 36 & Over CH: Augustine, Lee Kellogg Sadriin. RES: B link, Lee Kellogg Sadriin.	Grand 3'3" Amateur-Owner Hunter CH: Quest, Stephanie Danhaki.
Low Jr./Amateur Jumper CH: Queen Elizabeth, Ellie Ferrigno. RES: Toy Soldier, Abigail Gordon.	Leading 3'3" Amateur-Owner Hunter Rider: Stephanie Danhaki.
High Jr./Amateur Jumper CH: I Dottori VD Richter, Ellie Ferrigno. RES, Tie: Heldorado, Nina Bonnie & Ceoloo 23, Shayne Wireman.	Leading Amateur Jumper Rider: Ellie Ferrigno.
	Leading International Jumper Owner: Over The Top Stables LLC.
	Leading International Jumper Rider: Daniel Bluman.
	Leading Foreign Rider: Daniel Bluman.
	Leading Under 25 Rider, Tie: Brian Mogge & Hunter Holloway.
	Leading Lady Rider: Laura Kraut.

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