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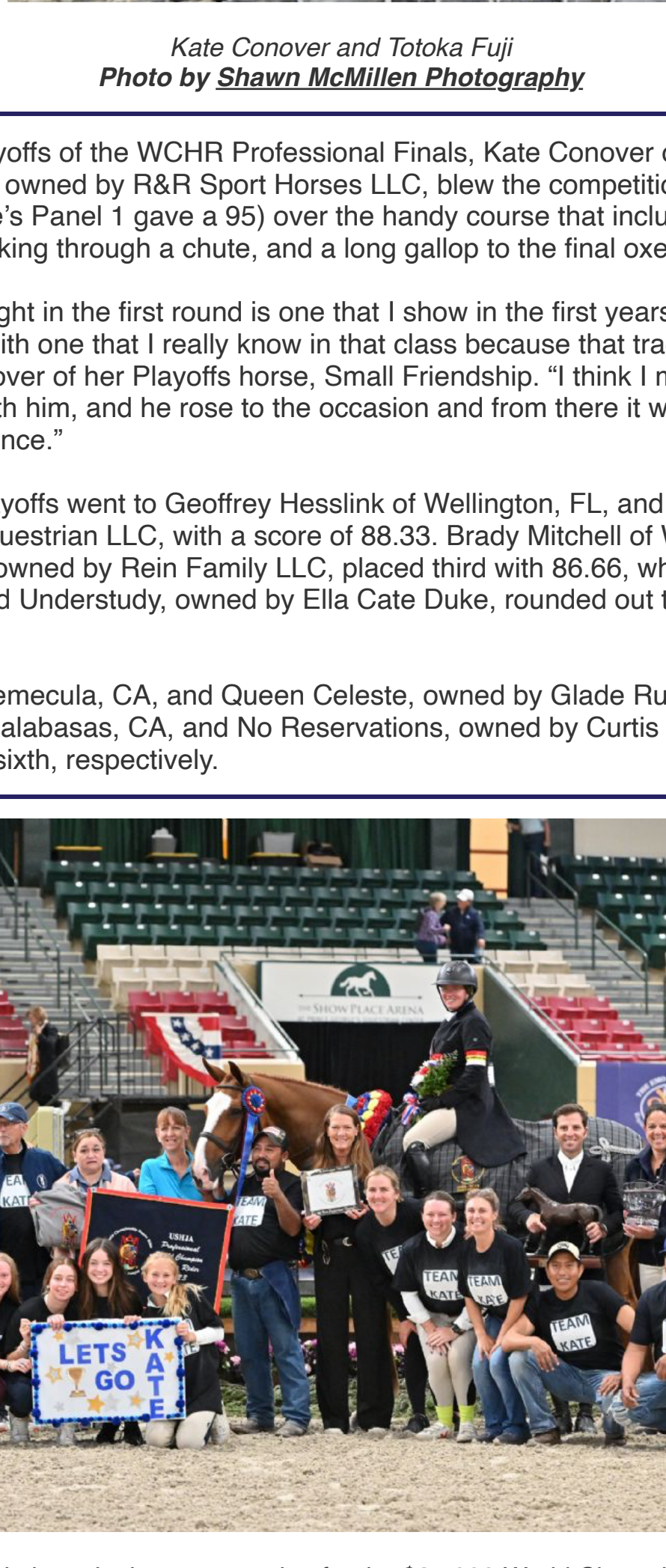
[Live Stream](#)

Kate Conover Completes a Dream by Winning \$25,000 WCHR Professional Finals at 2023 Capital Challenge Horse Show

On Friday, October 6, at the 2023 Capital Challenge Horse Show at the Prince George's Equestrian Center in Upper Marlboro, MD, Kate Conover made her dream come true by winning the \$25,000 **World Championship Hunter Rider (WCHR)** Professional Finals, sponsored by The Rein Family. Conover took home the win by completing a stellar handy round in the Playoffs, then staying incredibly consistent and holding the lead with four unfamiliar horses in The Final Four.

The class featured six of the country's top professional hunter riders going head-to-head. Shelley Campf, Kate Conover, Nick Haness, Geoffrey Hesslink, Brady Mitchell, and Leslie Steele qualified by their spots in the WCHR national standings. All six riders competed in the opening Playoff Round over a handy hunter course set by Ken Krome on a horse of their choosing.

Three teams of two judges oversaw the class, with Chris Wynne and Virginia Edwards making up the first panel, Brian Lenehan and Scott Fitton on the second, and Mark Jungherr and Eric Dirks sitting on the third. Each team awarded one score, and the average of those three scores represented the rider's overall mark. The riders with the four highest totals then advanced to The Final Four, where they took turns riding unfamiliar horses.



Kate Conover and Tokota Fuji
Photo by Shawn McMillen Photography

In the \$5,000 Playoffs of the WCHR Professional Finals, Kate Conover of Ocala, FL, and Small Friendship, owned by R&R Sport Horses LLC, blew the competition away by scoring 93 (Judge's Panel 1 gave a 95) over the handy course that included multiple option jumps, walking through a chute, and a long gallop to the final oxer.

"The horse I brought in the first round is one that I show in the first years, and I thought that I should go with one that I really know in that class because that track you had to be handy," said Conover of her Playoffs horse, Small Friendship. "I think I made the right decision going with him, and he rose to the occasion and from there it was pretty amazing, the whole experience."

Second in the Playoffs went to Geoffrey Hesslink of Wellington, FL, and Spoken, owned by Shadowfax Equestrian LLC, with a score of 88.33. Brady Mitchell of Wellington, FL, and Holden Out, owned by Rein Family LLC, placed third with 86.66, while Shelley Campf of Canby, OR, and Understudy, owned by Ella Cate Duke, rounded out the final four with a score of 81.66.

Nick Haness of Termeclua, CA, and Queen Celeste, owned by Glade Run Farm LLC, and Leslie Steele of Calabasas, CA, and No Reservations, owned by Curtis Holdings Inc., finished fifth and sixth, respectively.



Kate Conover in her winning presentation for the \$25,000 World Champion Hunter Rider Professional Finals, sponsored by The Rein Family, with Team Kate.
Photo by Shawn McMillen Photography

Conover, Hesslink, Mitchell, and Campf returned for the Final Four on a clean slate, each jumping four courses, rotating turns on horses generously donated by their owners. Conover, Mitchell, and Campf were all riding in their first-ever WCHR Pro Finals, while Hesslink made his debut in 2020.

Conover started out her first round on Tokota Fuji, a nine-year-old Belgian Sport Horse gelding by Spartacus owned by Ingenium Farm. She scored 88 with a smooth ride to start out with a two-point lead. She next rode Actionable, a seven-year-old Oldenburg gelding by Action Blue owned by LG Sporthorses LLC, to the high score of the competition with a 92, which raised her total to 180 and increased her lead to eight points.

Riding Lifestyle, a seven-year-old KWPN gelding by Cape Coral RBF Z owned by Topline Imports LLC, in round three, her lead shrank down to 5.34 points as Mitchell came back with a strong ride on Tokota Fuji. It was her final ride on A Little Less Conversation, a seven-year-old Oldenburg gelding by Elvis Ter Putte owned by Emily Wolkind, that sealed the deal with a score of 86.33 and a final total of 355.33.

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Riley Hogan Hones in on the Win in the ARIAT National Adult Medal Finals

During daytime competition in The Show Place Arena on Friday, riders competing in the ARIAT National Adult Medal Finals took centerstage, where Riley Hogan, 20, of Warrenton, VA, claimed the win with an overall score of 181.99.

Riders spend the year earning points towards qualification of the finals with only the top 30 invited to compete at Capital Challenge. Three panels each composed of two judges oversaw the class. Peg Seals and Chris Wynne made up the first panel, while Brian Lenehan and Mark Jungherr sat on the second panel, and Virginia Edwards and Mary Eufemia represented the third panel. Each panel provided one score, and the average of the three resulted in the rider's overall mark. The top 10 then returned for a second round in reverse order of their first-round scores.



Riley Hogan is presented as the winner of the 2023 ARIAT National Adult Medal Finals with 1997 winner Lara McPherson, Silvia Alejos, Megan Ghere, Don Stewart, and Jennifer Hillman.
Photo by Shawn McMillen Photography

Hogan, a junior at Oklahoma State University majoring in Marketing and Business, was unable to take time away from school until she arrived in Maryland at 2:00 a.m. Friday morning. As an added difficulty, she sat on her mount Uruguay, an eight-year-old Holsteiner gelding by Uriko owned by Don Stewart and Stefano Baruzzo LLC, for the first time just four hours later.

"My trainer Don Stewart has a lot of horses because he does a lot of sales, so he had a few here at the show for me to try," explained Hogan. "I got them all in the ring this morning and I jumped three or four of them, and we decided that Uruguay was the best fit. Don has had him for a little bit, so I've seen him, but I've never ridden him myself."

[Read More](#)

WORDS FROM THE WINNERS

Hear from Riley Hogan following her win in the ARIAT National Adult Medal Finals!

[Watch Here](#)



WINNER GALLERY



\$2,500 WCHR Adult Amateur Challenge Sponsored by Kate Considine & Willow Brook Stables
Frosted, ridden and owned by Rindy Dominguez



Connaway & Associates Equine Insurance Services High Point American-Bred Award
SVF Inaugural, ridden by Maria Rasmussen and owned by Sunset View Farm LLC

Photos by Shawn McMillen Photography



Capital Challenge Horse Show and Co-Founder and Show Manager Oliver Kennedy were thrilled to be honored tonight with an official proclamation to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the show, which has become a mainstay in the equestrian calendar at Prince George's Equestrian Center in Upper Marlboro, Maryland. Oliver (third from right) was joined by Ross Peddicord, Executive Director Maryland Horse Industry Board presenting the Maryland Horse Industry Board Touch of Class Award; Sheila Curry, Office of Prince George's County Executive Angela Alsobrooks; Jennifer Glass and Rachel Kennedy of Capital Challenge Horse Show; The Honorable Mayor Sarah Franklin of Upper Marlboro, MD; and Rachel Jones, Director of Government Relations, MD Department of Agriculture, presenting the proclamation on behalf of Maryland Governor Wes Moore.
Photo by Jump Media

#CCHS2023



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About the Capital Challenge Horse Show

The Capital Challenge Horse Show, an official USEF Heritage Competition, has a distinct and unique focus on preeminent hunter and equitation competition. The 2023 edition of the Capital Challenge Horse Show will take place from September 28-October 8. The 11 days of competition will include prestigious equitation events, jumper divisions, the World Championship Hunter Rider (WCHR) Finals, the \$25,000 3' and 3'3" Green Hunter North American Championships, and more, with many of the country's best horses and riders competing in junior, amateur, and professional divisions.

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