



PESSOA / U.S. HUNTER SEAT MEDAL FINAL

Equitation classes judge the rider, not the horse. The rider must demonstrate good seat and hands and sufficient management of the horse to perform the required tests in a smooth controlled and accurate manner. Riders are tested with technical questions such as changes of lead, combinations, counter-canter, bending lines, narrow jumps and rollbacks.

The annual U.S./Pessoa Hunter Seat Medal Finals are held at the Pennsylvania National Horse Show each year. Riders must qualify to be invited to compete and they represent almost every state in the United States. Nearly one-third of the winners of this prestigious title have gone on to become members of the USA Olympic or World Championship Team.

Past Winners

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1937 Muriel Arthur | 1977 Elizabeth Sheehan |
| 1938 Arthur Platt, Jr. | 1978 Hugh Mutch |
| 1939 Carol J. Adler | 1979 Mark Leone |
| 1940 William C. Steinkraus | 1980 Joan Scharffenberger Laarakkers |
| 1941 Janet A. Meade | 1981 Laura Tidball Balisky |
| 1942 George Mc Kervey III | 1982 Sandra Nielsen |
| 1943 Dorothy Ritterbush | 1983 Laura O'Connor |
| 1944 Lois Lisanti | 1984 Francesca Mazella Rivera |
| 1945 Albert Torek | 1985 Jenno Topping |
| 1946 Ann Ritterbush | 1986 Mia Wood |
| 1947 Elaine S. Watt | 1987 Karen Nielsen Kuehler |
| 1948 Barbara Pease | 1988 Cheryl Wilson |
| 1949 Nancy Jane Imboden | 1989 Ray Texel |
| 1950 Ronnie Mutch | 1990 Nicole Shahinian Simpson |
| 1951 Victor Hugo-Vidal | 1991 Laura Bowden Steffee |
| 1952 George H. Morris | 1992 Jennifer Clarkson Killin |
| 1953 Cynthia A. Stone | 1993 Melanie A. Walters |
| 1954 Margaret McGinn | 1994 Keri Potter |
| 1955 Wilson Dennehy | 1995 Meredith Taylor Amoroso |
| 1956 Michael O. Page | 1996 Hillary Schlusemeyer Simpson |
| 1957 Michael Del Balso | 1997 Lauren Bass |
| 1958 Susan White | 1998 Kent Farrington |
| 1959 Wendy Hanson | 1999 Emily Williams |
| 1960 Mary Mairs Chapot | 2000 Sarah B. Willeman Richter |
| 1961 Bernard Traurig | 2001 Randy Sherman |
| 1962 Carol Altmann Molony | 2002 Maggie Jayne |
| 1963 Stephanie Steck | 2003 Lauren Van Eldik Kuykendall |
| 1964 James Kohn | 2004 Megan Young |
| 1965 Christine Jones Tauber | 2005 Brianne Goutal |
| 1966 Rita Timpanero | 2006 Maggie McAlaray |
| 1967 Conrad Homfeld | 2007 Kimberly McCormack |
| 1968 Brooke Hodgson | 2008 Kels Annabelle Bonham |
| 1969 Fred Bauer | 2009 Jessica Springsteen |
| 1970 James Hulick | 2010 Hayley Barnhill |
| 1971 Joy Slater | 2011 Schaefer Raposa |
| 1972 Katie Monahan Prudent | 2012 Meg O'Mara |
| 1973 Buddy Brown | 2013 Lillie Keenan |
| 1974 Robin Rost Fairclough | 2014 Spencer Smith |
| 1975 Cynthia Hankins | 2015 Kelli Cruciotti |
| 1976 Frances Steinwedell Carvin | 2016 |



1951 Champion Victor Hugo-Vidal



1955 Champion Wilson Dennehy



1966 Champion Rita Timpanero



1967 Champion Conrad Homfeld



1974 Champion Robin Rost Fairclough



1979 Champion Mark Leone



1982 Champion Sandy Nielsen



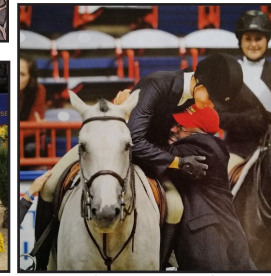
1985 Champion Jenno Topping



1997 Champion Lauren Bass



2009 Champion Jessica Springsteen

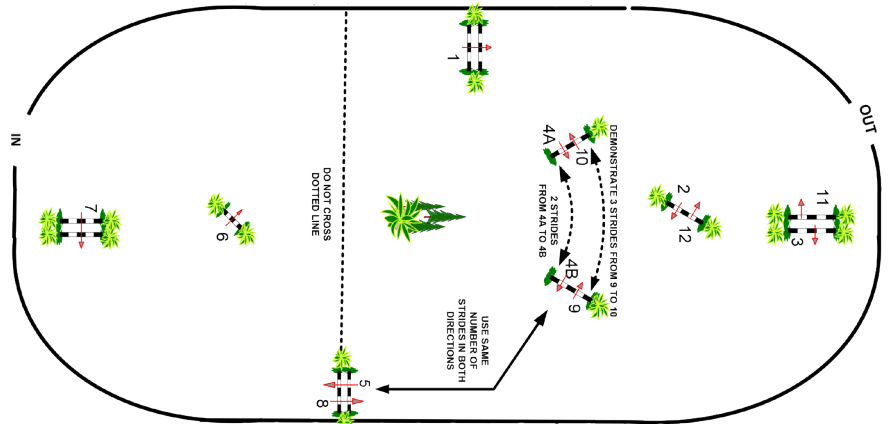


2012 Champion Meg O'Mara



2014 Champion Spencer Smith

Gallery of Champions



2016 Course - Round 1

The Judge's Box



Jimmy Torano

"The Medal Finals is the one class I really look forward to judging. As far as the "Finals" go, for me, it's the most important one. It's an honor to be asked back for the third time. Yes, it's a long day, but as the judge, I'm as excited for the last one that comes through the gate as I am for the first one. I have to say when it comes down to the test, I'm on the edge of my seat for every rider. I love this class.

Mary Lisa Leffler

I am really looking forward to judging the U.S./Pessoa Medal Finals this year! I love judging with Jimmy, we have similar likes and thoughts about the style we are looking for in the equitation division. Judging this class is a great honor.



The Judge's Box

It's All Gold For Katherine Strauss in the Neue Schule/USEF Junior Jumper Individual Championship

In a nail biting fight to the finish, Katherine Strauss, 17, of Southampton, NY, took top honors riding All In, owned by Katherine Strauss, LLC, in the Neue Schule/USEF Junior Jumper Individual Championship. The win was all the more special as she was competing in her final year as a junior rider.



"I couldn't have been happier with the way my horse jumped this week, I am so proud of him. This is my third year competing with him here and it feels great to finally come back and have this finish," said Strauss. "This has been a class that I have watched for many years and to represent Zone 2 and compete with riders that have worked so hard to get here all year is so special. I'm even more thrilled to have this win with my teammates and my barn mate. It's a true testament to how strong the Zone 2 riders are."

Strauss' teammates Madison Goetzmann, 15, Skaneateles, NY, and Lauren Fischer, 17, Bedford Hills, NY, were all members of the Zone 2 gold medal winning team in the Neue Schule/USEF Prix des States Team Championship, which took place on Friday evening. Strauss and Goetzmann also train together with John and Beezie Madden.



In the final phase of the Championship, scores are carried over from the previous two phases. The top three, Strauss, Goetzmann and Fischer, all entered the final phase of the competition without having knocked down a single rail. The margin between them was one and one half faults, meaning there was no room for error in order to capture gold.

Riding in reverse order of merit, Fischer was the first of the three to ride. Fischer and her mare, Tosca du Feugre, were easily negotiating the Steve Stephens designed course until the final fence, where they came in at an awkward distance and the mare made a Herculean effort to leave the rails intact.

"I didn't see anything," said Fischer about the distance at the final fence. "I was like, it's the last jump, I can't have it down and I panicked, but I knew she had my back. I said, 'Come on Tessa!' And she cleared it. She's a good girl. She had my back. In the beginning she really didn't like me very much. It took me actually 12 months to figure out how to ride her so it makes this moment more special."

Goetzmann followed Fischer riding on Wrigley. Fischer had already gone clear and Strauss was waiting in the wings, so the pressure was on. The young rider had no problem going clear and clinched silver. "It's such an amazing accomplishment," said Goetzmann. "My horse, Wrigley and I continue to grow and grow. I've had her for about two years now and each show our partnership gets better and better. It's an amazing feeling having both of my teammates finish well. No matter what the end result was, I was going to be happy."

As the final rider of the 18 who competed in the final phase, Strauss had a long wait before entering the arena. Her teammates had already gone clear, so she and All In needed to be flawless to win gold. "These two definitely put the pressure on, they are so hardworking, so talented and so accomplished," said Strauss. "I was definitely nervous, but I had total confidence in my horse. He's such a special horse." Strauss also won the William C. Steinkraus Style of Riding Award, sponsored by Karen Healey Stables. The award is presented to the Prix des States Junior Jumper Rider who best exemplifies the American style of equitation and the respectful, dignified, courteous and workmanlike manner of a true sportsman.

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Sponsor Spotlight

Pessoa

Classical riders like Nelson Pessoa know exactly where the rider's weight should fall on the horse's back. Hardly a new revelation, but it was Nelson who first designed a tree that would allow the saddle to help the rider find that position. Like coming back home again, every Pessoa® saddle encourages riders to find their perfect sweet spot of balance.



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A Special
**Pennsylvania National
Horse Show Offer**



Amazing Things Come In Very Small Packages

Pony Hunters of all sizes took over the ring here in Harrisburg. The ponies and their pint-sized jockeys contested two over fences classes on Friday, and on Saturday saw the culmination of their efforts, with a class on the flat and one final round over fences to determine championship honors.



Alexa Elle Lignelli, a 9-year-old fourth grader from New York, NY, and her 9-year-old pony IParty, were named Small Pony Hunter Champion, placing first or second in all the classes in the division for a point total of 32. Sophie Gochman and Bit of Love, owned by Dr. Betsee Parker took the Reserve with 26 points. "I started riding her after Washington last year. She is very huntery. If you don't know her pace you won't find the distances. You don't want to go forward galloping or you will pop or chip. You want to have a normal pace, not like a real hunter, not that slow but like pretty medium," explained the adorable Lignelli.

When asked what she likes about horse shows, Lignelli was very clear. "I like the competition. I just love the sport. It is so fun." Trainer Bill Schaub added "Two weeks before pony finals I got a phone call and she came to me. They started off with a bang. They were Champion Section A in Kentucky the week before Pony Finals. We had some bad luck at Pony Finals but we have been inching our way up."

"She has nerves of steel," continued Schaub. "She doesn't get nervous. She is always telling me to calm down. She loves the competition and that is unusual, if she has a bad round she comes out smiling and we discuss it and learn from it and it is over. They have really come together."



Rock Star, an entry of Roberts Sales LLC, and rider Sophia Roberts, a 12-year-old from Wilmington, OH, were the Medium Pony Hunter Champions with 24 points. Trillville, owned by Stella Wasserman and Augusta Iwasaki were the Reserve Champions with 16 points. "It is my second time at Harrisburg, but it is his first," said Roberts. "He has never been to indoors before. We got him about a year ago and I have been showing him all summer and I was really happy when we qualified for this show. He is really sweet. He is really fun and he has progressed a lot. I love riding him. I have to slow him down in the lines and bend him in the turns, but he is pretty easy."

The first thing Mimi Gochman, 12, of Palm Beach, FL, did after winning both Champion and Reserve honors in the Large Pony Hunter division was to transfer all her belongings to her new Pennsylvania National Horse Show backpack exclaiming "It has a pocket for my computer!" That new backpack was due to the wonderful rounds turned in by Fair Play Farm's Storyteller. Both Storyteller and Gochman's other ride, Dr. Betsee Parker's For The Best, had a point total of 20, however, Storyteller had more points earned in over fences classes to place him ahead. "I am so happy," said Gochman. "He is such a good boy. I wasn't really thinking about the championship. I was just trying to do my best. He has a great rhythm, a nice smooth jump and is so comfortable, and he tries really hard all the time. I love riding him. Sadly, this is my last year on ponies so this is a good way to go out."



Grand Pony Hunter Champion was awarded to IParty and Alexa Elle Lignelli, making it an even better day for the pair. IParty's caretaker, Amato Ramos took home the Groom Award for his efforts. The EMO Agency Pony Hunter High Five award was given to Sophie Gochman and The Pony Hunter Sportsmanship Award went to Adam Edgar.

photo credits AI Cook Productions