



NLF Shakespeare's Rhythm Pens Another Win At Final Chase

He and Peter Pletcher score their fourth and final derby win of the season.

BY ANNE LANG
PHOTOS BY DON STINE

Competing in late November at the Final Chase Horse Show might be stressful to certain riders in pursuit of year-end points, but for trainer Peter Pletcher it was just another day at the office.

On Nov. 16, he and NLF Shakespeare's Rhythm captured the \$10,000 USHJA International Hunter Derby at the show in Katy, Texas, besting 20 challengers to win both the classic and handy rounds for a combined score of 376. Pletcher also finished second overall (357.5) aboard Savvy, owned by Ashley Cross of Coppell, Texas.

Peter Pletcher and NLF Shakespeare's Rhythm captured the \$10,000 USHJA International Hunter Derby at Final Chase.

"That horse is just super brave," Pletcher, 52, said of winner "Hamlet," a 9-year-old Holsteiner owned by the Bruheim family of Nordic Lights Farm in Tomball, Texas. "He'll walk into any ring—inside, outside, under any lights—and you can count on him to always try his best, every time. He's incredibly handy, and the short jumper career he had at the start of his life has paid off."

J.P. Godard designed an inviting first round, but the various tracks in the handy class were trickier. "He definitely gave us a lot of different options," Pletcher said, "with some easier routes for the newer horses, yet you could be really handy with a more experienced horse. You had four different options to the first jump."

On all three of his mounts, Pletcher chose a path that put the first fence just three strides from the in-gate. He followed that with a series of tight turns to the next three fences, jumping the higher sides of all the options. He then took "a little bit of a slice at the trot fence," Pletcher explained, then rode a tight rollback to the oxer near the judges and jumped the high side of fence 7 before hand-galloping to the final oxer.

Hamlet and Pletcher, of Magnolia, Texas, won three other hunter derbies in 2012 and claimed several tricolors in the high performance hunter division at the FTI Winter Equestrian Festival (Fla.) and other shows.

Cross purchased runner-up Savvy, a German Sport Horse (Kalistro—Can Can), in late summer. She rides him in the children's hunter, 15-17, division.

"He has a super brain and is very straightforward," Pletcher noted. "He jumps 3' beautifully with his owner, yet when I call on him to jump 4' or 4'6", he figures it out."

Pletcher also campaigns Savvy in the 3'6" performance hunters.

**\$10,000
USHJA INTERNATIONAL HUNTER DERBY
Katy, Texas—Nov. 17**

Judges: Panel 1: Heather Irvine, Bucky Reynolds; Panel 2: Mike Lowry, Chrystine Tauber

HORSE/RIDER	1ST ROUND		2ND ROUND		TOTAL
	PANEL 1 SCORE/ HEIGHT OPTION	PANEL 2 SCORE/ HEIGHT OPTION	PANEL 1 SCORE/BONUS/ HEIGHT OPTION	PANEL 2 SCORE/BONUS/ HEIGHT OPTION	
1. NLF Shakespeare's Rhythm/ Peter Pletcher	85/2	86/2	89/8/3	89/9/3	376
2. Savvy/Peter Pletcher	84/0	82.5/0	84/6/3	87/8/3	357.5
3. Accra/Megan Haag	81/0	83/0	82/6/3	85/6/3	349
4. Cellino/ Martien Van Der Hoeven	75/3	72.5/3	87/9/3	84/8/3	347.5
5. Priority/Belynda Bond	82/0	81/0	78/5/1	74/4/1	326
6. Right On/Ciara Murphy	74/0	74/0	79/7/4	77/6/4	325
7. Coconelli/Mary Riggs	80/3	80/3	68/4/4	69/5/4	320
8. Carlano/Erin Jarvis	78/0	79/0	72/4/3	75/5/3	319
9. Celebrate/Katie Lambert-Boone	82.5/0	82/0	73/5/3	65/4/3	317.5
10. Shade/Katie Lambert-Boone	76/0	73/0	75/5/1	73/4/1	308
11. Ivory Coast/Peter Pletcher	73/4	75/4	65/4/1	71/5/1	303
12. CR Carolato II/Jordan Siegel	83/3	78/3	40/1/4	40/2/4	258

21 horses competed.



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▶ Texas Pre-Green Super Stakes Series Scores

On Dec. 1, the U.S. Hunter Jumper Association launched its Pre-Green Incentive Program, formulated by the organization's Open Hunter Task Force (led by Geoff Teall) "to encourage the development of pre-green horses." But Texas beat the USHJA to the punch by 11 months.

Trainer Colleen McQuay of Tioga, Texas, was inspired to create a pre-green incentive program in Texas that began in January 2012. Show managers Patrick Rodes, Pauline Cook and trainer Peter Pletcher helped McQuay, who serves on the USHJA Task Force, get the program up and running.

This season, 19 Texas shows offered a pre-green stakes class with minimum prize money of \$2,500, with \$75 added back for each low and high pre-green hunter competing in the class. Ultimately, more than 60 horses enrolled—not just from Texas but also Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Florida, New York, North Carolina, Indiana, Louisiana and New Mexico. Including the add-back money, the program awarded nearly \$80,000 in its first year.

"This was such a great concept," Pletcher said. "It's been amazing and such a needed thing for the pre-green horses to let them have a bit of the spotlight. It's also been very good for getting pre-green horses sold. Already, I've heard a lot of people talking about wanting to buy pre-green horses for next year, including in my own barn, because it's really a highlighted event, and the money is incredible for pre-green horses."

McQuay said her original goal was mainly to help owners and trainers develop young hunters. "As an owner-trainer myself, I find that if you can win a little money as you're developing your horses, obviously it makes it more affordable to do all the entry-level training involved in making future amateur, junior and open horses," she said. "I wanted



(From left) Colleen McQuay, Patrick Rodes, Pauline Cook and Peter Pletcher celebrated the successful culmination of the first year of the Texas Pre-Green Super Stakes Series.

a good incentive program for the breeders but also for the trainers and owners who show pre-green horses and young horses.

"Texas obviously has a strong hunter participation level, good show facilities and a lot of opportunities for developing horses," added McQuay, who drew on her experiences with the lucrative programs in the reining world, where her husband, Tim, is a world-class rider and trainer.

The program offers year-end awards for leading horses, riders and owners, based on money won. There's also an award (including a \$3,500 prize) for the leading Thoroughbred in the series, inspired by series co-sponsor Take 2 Second Career Thoroughbred Program, which works to find new careers for ex-race-horses. This year's Thoroughbred leader was Hollywood Hero, owned by Allison Jones and ridden by Shannon Slyfield.

Rodes called the series "a big shot in the arm for the shows here and for the pre-green hunters. We used to

have very few entries in the pre-green divisions, but this year, the entries went up and stayed consistent all year long. And there are people showing horses in other divisions who wouldn't have been here if not for the super stakes class."

McQuay said the program's first season went even better than expected. "Now we're rolling, and everyone is thrilled," she said. "We've had people paying the high-rate [late-season] enrollment fees just so they could participate in these last few shows and the championship. Hopefully everyone will stay on board and stay invested, because it's only going to keep getting better."

Meanwhile, McQuay described the upcoming national pre-green incentive program as "the culmination of more than five years of work to create ideas, formulas and incentives, resulting in the performance hunter divisions, the international and national hunter derbies, and now the pre-green incentive program. So this is really exciting for me."



Peter Pletcher guided Snowden to a win in the \$25,000 Texas Pre-Green Super Stake Final at The Final Chase Horse Show.

A Super Finish

Pletcher also won the \$25,000 Texas Pre-Green Super Stake Final on Snowden, owned by Sparky Frost (SHF Enterprises Inc.) of Houston. Eighteen horses competed in the grand finale of the Texas Pre-Green Super Stakes, an incentive program created this year to boost earning opportunities for young horses (*see sidebar*).

Frost, 27, imported the 7-year-old Oldenburg gelding (Ars Vivendi—Stutbuch 1) from Europe in 2009. The two have been champion in the adult amateurs in all three of their outings this season. Snowden and Pletcher won the pre-green stake at the Autumn Classic (Texas) the week before the Final Chase and have earned numerous tricolors in the 3'3" pre-green division.

"Snowden definitely is starting to come into his own," Pletcher said. "When we got him, he was a little greener than we had originally thought. He was a little bit of a tough lead-changer, but we got that fixed up, and he's been great ever since."

In the 3'3" pre-green hunter division at Final Chase, Pletcher was champion on San Angelo and reserve champion on Freedom, while Snowden's best

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▶ Super Salomon



Salomon, shown by Stacie Goodson, topped the inaugural Texas Pre-Green Super Stakes for owner Susan Schwartz.

Nov. 17 was a happy night for Susan Schwartz, owner of Salomon, the 7-year-old Dutch Sport Horse who nabbed the pre-green series' year-end award as the top horse. His year's total was \$6,325.

Schwartz, of Dallas, also received the top owner award, and her trainer, Stacie Goodson, earned the top rider award for having won \$11,772 overall. Schwartz's trainer, Stacie Goodson, also earned the top rider award.

"It's amazing," said Schwartz, who bought "Saul" from a small Dallas dressage barn in 2010 and rides him in the modified adult amateur hunters, hoping to step up to the regular adult amateurs this season. "I've loved this horse since the day I bought him, but I had no clue back then that he was as talented as he's turned out to be.

"The series is so motivating," Schwartz continued, "because trainers, especially, work so hard to get these green horses ready for their owners. It's great to be able to reward them for their dedication to these horses and their owners. It's also helped me pay for Saul's training, because without the financial incentives from this program, I'm not sure I could have afforded to send him to as many shows as I did."

Goodson, 52, owns Bay Yard Farms in Argyle, Texas. She rode Salomon in 11 of the program's pre-green stake classes this season. They won three times and were second three times. Also, from 15 shows in the regular pre-green hunter division, they were champions eight times, reserve champions twice and two-time circuit champions.

"He's very athletic," she said, "but he's also very good-minded. Not just quiet, but interested in life. He's also not one that you have to drill on to keep him straight. I'd have to say his brain is his best quality, although he puts just about anything in his mouth, so I've gone through a ton of reins!"

Goodson hopes Schwartz will let Saul step up to the first year green hunters and possibly some international hunter derbies in 2013, after placing well in several national hunter derbies in 2012. "I think he'd make a spectacular [international] derby horse," Goodson said, "because he's so interested in life and kind of likes the spooky jumps. He thought the national derbies were really fun."

As for the pre-green series, "I can't say enough good things about this program," Goodson concluded. "It's motivated my clients, and it's motivated me."

ribbon in that division was a second. But in the stake class, Snowden finished just ahead of Freedom and San Angelo.

"All three of those horses have been switching around between champion and reserve," Pletcher said. "This weekend, after showing outside for two weeks in a row, Snowden moved indoors for the stake and was a little more alert and gave a crisper jump.

"He peaked at the right time this weekend," Pletcher added. "He's so pretty and always has such a beautiful look about him. He has a lovely head and neck, he's really even going around, and he has a good jump."

Of the finals course, Pletcher said: "None of the pre-green horses had ever shown indoors under the lights, so that was challenging for some. And the last line was a little tricky, a two-stride to about 10 strides [in a bending line]. You had to go at sort of a weird angle to the final jump at the in-gate. But everything else on the course was very straightforward and inviting." 🐾

The Final Chase

Katy, Tx—Nov. 14-18.

GREEN HUNTER CH: Westbrooke, Laurie Lewis.

RES: Bravado, Silver Oak Farms LLC.

3'6"-3'9" PERFORMANCE HUNTER CH: Savvy, Ashley Cross.

RES: NLF Shakespeare's Rhythm, Nordic Lights Farm LLC.

3'3" PERFORMANCE HUNTER CH: Luck, Johnnie Martin-Carey.

RES: Catuse, Jake Wasson.

LOW AMATEUR-OWNER HUNTER CH: All In, Carly Lazzari.

RES: Bremen, Nanette Flaten.

AMATEUR-OWNER HUNTER CH: Accra, Five-H Partners.

RES: Caden, Shadyside Farm.

LARGE JR. HUNTER, 15 & UNDER CH: Infinity, Silver Oak Farms LLC.

RES: Castello, Colleen McKenzie.

LARGE JR. HUNTER, 16-17 CH: MTM Braggin Rights, Taylor Sutton.

RES: Genuine Article, Emily Savage.

SMALL JR. HUNTER CH: Archangel, Mr. & Mrs. Chuck Waters.

RES: Bravado, Silver Oak Farms LLC.

MODIFIED JR./AMATEUR-OWNER HUNTER CH: MFP Casanova, Madeline Odom.

RES: Lush, Cameron Weiner.

SMALL/LARGE PONY HUNTER CH: Jamestown, Hallie Smith.

RES: Bush Farm Blues Brother, Molly Athey.

MEDIUM PONY HUNTER CH: Northwinds Top Secret, Anna Athey.

RES: Happy Feet, Sloan Hopson.

LARGE GREEN PONY HUNTER CH: All Things Chrome, Abby Horswell.

RES: King Midas, Sandy Creek Stable LLC.

CHILDREN'S HUNTER, 14 & UNDER CH: Limbo, Showcase Limited.

RES: Castano, Maddie Chenoweth.

CHILDREN'S HUNTER, 15-17 CH: Arabella, Ashley Cross.

RES: Paul Stuart, Augusta Pines.