



Calcagnini And Day Dream Make Derby Win A Reality

The Texas trainer pulls off a rare triple play at Great Southwest Winter Series II.

Anne Lang

ON FEB. 11 in Katy, Texas, Courtney Calcagnini demonstrated a creative twist on the term "triple play." In the \$10,000 USHJA International Hunter Derby at the Great Southwest Winter Series II, she won the overall derby as well as the classic and handy rounds.

The creative part? She did it on three different horses.

Calcagnini, 27, of Pilot Point, Texas, won the overall event with 336.5 points on Taylor Reid's Day Dream, the classic round on Reid's Ovation and the handy round on Carson, owned by Kristen Blomstrom.

Jena Halstead of Boerne, Texas, finished second overall (332 points) with Taylor Hagler's Bankrupt. Ovation finished third, just .5 points behind Bankrupt.

Calcagnini's first of five trips came aboard Curtain Call, who'd had a stellar national season in 2009 but was laid up last year with an injury. Because Curtain Call had been off for so long, Calcagnini was most nervous on the Selle Francais owned by Shannon Reid (Taylor's mother).

"He had a rail, but we had just wanted him to get around, and he did beautifully," said Calcagnini. "After that, it just got easier and easier."

Calcagnini had hardly expected an "easy" horse show. Just one week earlier, record-breaking cold temperatures, ice and snow in the Dallas/Fort Worth area brought training activity to a halt at her farm.

"The horses couldn't get out of their stalls for four days," recalled Calcagnini, who trains at her 12-acre farm in Pilot Point. "We couldn't even walk them to the treadmill, the ice was so thick outside the barn."

Courtney Calcagnini guided Taylor Reid's Day Dream to the overall victory in the \$10,000 USHJA International Hunter Derby at the Great Southwest Winter Series II.

Arriving in Katy just days later, Calcagnini put all the horses on the longe line herself, one after another. "They were wild!" she said with a laugh. "Out-of-control bucking. And we had to do the hunter derby indoors, without practicing in that ring. I was so nervous! But we'd done a lot of work with all the horses this winter, so I figured everything would be fine."

She was right. With winner "Mc-Dreamy," the key to success was maintaining a steady flow, Calcagnini said.

"He's super brave, has a big step, is

very handy and very consistent," Calcagnini said, "which he proved by winning the overall derby, even though he didn't win either of the rounds."

The Reid family bought the 11-year-old warmblood at the 2009 Capital Challenge (Md.) Horse Show. The 15.3-hand gelding was Taylor's first ride at 3'6", and in 2010, she campaigned him to numerous tricolors in the small juniors. They also finished as reserve champions at this show.

Taylor, 15, also competes in the jumpers and in the large juniors on Hap-



(David Mullinix Photography Photo)



Christian Heineking and River Of Dreams claimed the win in the \$25,000 Grand Prix at the Great Southwest Winter Series II.

penstance and Ovation (a.k.a. Lucas). Lucas won that championship at this show, and Taylor has started getting her feet wet with some derby rides. Taylor, who lives just down the road from Calcagnini, is home-schooled, which allows her the flexibility to train with Calcagnini for five or six hours a day. Joining her in the same daily arrangement is Blomstrom, 14, who also competes in the junior hunters.



(David Mullinix Photography Photo)

► Brave And Beautiful

Classic winner Lucas is a 12-year-old Holsteiner that Calcagnini described as a beautiful jumper.

"He jerks his legs up and is really round. He never spooks, and he's very consistent," she said. "We've had him for 18 months, and at this show he was coming back from an injury, so he hadn't been shown in three months."

"We discovered he has so much scope. He can turn and gallop with his huge step, or he can compact his stride."

—Courtney Calcagnini

Handy winner Carson (who turns 6 in May) doesn't have near the number of miles under his girth as most of his derby rivals, which made his performance all the more amazing to Calcagnini.

When the Dutch Warmblood gelding was bought for Blomstrom last August he'd shown in just a few low jumper classes. "He was still so green he could barely steer!" said Calcagnini. "And we called him 'Troll' when he first came to us, because he was kinda cranky. We worked really hard to make him feel happy, and now he's fine."

He was bought to be an equitation horse and a jumper. "But then we discovered he has so much scope," said Calcagnini. "He can turn and gallop with his huge step, or he can compact his stride, so we did a few derbies last fall. He's very brave. At this show, he'd never

shown indoors, and we never got to practice inside."

Carson is a high performance hunter and was champion in that division in Katy. "So the 4-foot options are no problem for him," said Calcagnini. "In the handy, he jumped high, and he turned in the air. I left out a couple of strides to the last jump, because it's so easy for him. He's incredible, and I'm so excited for his future."

Calcagnini acknowledged that having multiple mounts in a derby works to the rider's benefit. "Once you've jumped around the first time, you can see how the lines ride, and it makes it easier to plan," she said. "There were a lot of

bending lines [that called for decision-making]."

While J.P. Goddard's derby courses looked straightforward on paper, there were plenty of challenges. "It was pretty difficult to do a derby indoors where it's quite spooky, with things at the ends of the ring like sandcastles and bushes," said Calcagnini. "And the jumps out of the bending lines were set in the corner so you kind of jumped into all that stuff. That made the course hard for me, at least, with this being the first horse show out of the gate."

Calcagnini didn't always choose the bigger jumps on any of her mounts. "In the handy, I thought one of the four-foot

\$10,000

USHJA INTERNATIONAL HUNTER DERBY

Katy, Texas—Feb. 11

Judges: Steve Wall, Alice Coke-Cokern, Lynn Forgione, William Sparks

HORSE/RIDER	1ST ROUND		2ND ROUND		TOTAL
	Score/ Height Option	Score/ Height Option	Score/Bonus/ Height Option	Score/Bonus/ Height Option	
1 Day Dream/Courtney Calcagnini	80/0	80/0	79.5/3/3	83/5/3	336.5
2 Bankrupt/Jena Halstead	72/4	78/4	74/8/4	75/9/4	332
3 Ovation/Courtney Calcagnini	84/1	82/1	77.5/2/1	80/2/1	331.5
4 Neander/Audrey Watkins	76/0	78/0	76/8/4	76/8/4	330
5 Carson/Courtney Calcagnini	72/0	74/0	84/3/3	85/5/3	329
6 Forever/Carley Barnett	78/0	77/0	74.5/4/0	74/4/0	311.5
7 Dylan/Kaitlyn Arnold	74/0	73/0	82/1/0	79/2/0	311
8 Dubari/Gayle Cox	81/0	79/0	61/7/4	65/9/4	310
9 Usher/Michael Wallace	72/1	75/1	73/5/1	73/4/1	306
10 Carlano/Will Roberts	82/0	86/0	60/7/2	57/9/2	305
11 Shine/Liza Richardson	73/0	70/0	78/2/0	78/3/0	304
12 Jaegermeister/Britt McCormick	68/0	71/0	68/8/0	65/7/0	287

25 horses competed.



HORSE SHOWS

option fences [a rollback after fence 1] was a little difficult," she said. "It was a really straight up-and-down vertical and very tightly set in the corner. I chose not to go inside there, because I felt to turn in the air after such a tight corner was a little too risky. I didn't want a rail."

The Calcagnini group is showing at Gulfport (Miss.) through mid-March, when they'll return to Texas for the big AA-rated spring shows.

Dream On

The word "dream" seemed to be a lucky factor in horse names at this show, where River Of Dreams won the \$25,000 Grand Prix. Christian Heineking and the 14-year-old Oldenburg gelding owned by Kai Handt were one of only two pairs to go clean in the first round of the Michel Vaillancourt-designed course, contested by 21 entries.

"Even though he was already 11 years old, we had to bring him along like a green jumper."

—Christian Heineking

Heineking's rival in the jump-off was none other than his 16-year-old student, Jordan Appel of Plano, Texas, on her horse Einstein.

Heineking called Appel a model rider, good at responding to instruction. She's placed in several grand prix classes and rode on the Zone 7 junior team at the 2010 Adequan FEI North American Junior and Young Rider Championships.

"Einstein is a very nice horse for her," he added. "She's had him for 2½ years, so they know each other well by now."

But Heineking, 31, had to put aside his pride in Appel—at least temporarily—when it came down to the clock on Feb. 12. In the first round, Appel laid down a clean trip that was more than 2 seconds faster than Heineking and "River." But Heineking had the advantage of going second in the jump-off, knowing that Appel and Einstein had dropped a rail at the final fence. At that point, he knew he just had to finish clean to win.

"I did a few more inside turns than Jordan did," he explained, "and since she

\$25,000 GREAT SOUTHWEST WINTER SERIES GRAND PRIX Katy, Texas—Feb. 12

HORSE/RIDER	FAULTS	TIME	PURSE
1. River Of Dreams/ Christian Heineking	0-0	47.56	\$7,500
2. Einstein/Jordan Appel	0-4	48.08	5,500

21 horses competed.

had a rail at the last jump, I tried hard to go double-clear. I didn't want to go too crazy and risk too much."

River came through and even beat Einstein's time (47.56 to 48.08). Sired by Riverman (out of Hallmark, by Merano), the 16.2-hand River came to Handt in 2008 from Louisiana, where he'd been a dressage horse. Handt, who owns North Texas Equestrian Center, where Heineking works as a trainer, is a competitive dressage rider. But he and Heineking agreed that River (who was a sale horse at the time) had significant jumper potential.

"Kai bought him," Heineking said, "And we started re-training him as a jumper. He had jumped a little bit when he was 4 or 5, but just small stuff. Even though he was already 11 years old, we had to bring him along like a green jumper."

But the following year, River won the \$25,000 Grand Prix of Germantown (Tenn.) and continued to collect substantial paychecks as he went along.

Heineking immigrated to the United States three years ago to join fellow German native Handt at NTEC in Wylie, Texas, after graduating at the top of his class in German Reitlehrer FN certification (a rigorous master certificate awarded to select individuals after five years of riding and coursework conducted at the German Riding Academy of Warendorf).

NTEC, located about 30 miles north-east of Dallas, sits on 50 acres along the shore of a lake, where riders can escape to the trails—a perfect environment, Heineking feels, for bringing out the best in horses.

"It's just good for the horses' mentality," Heineking said, "to help them relax a little bit and keep working. We're lucky that we can ride outside away from [the stables]; it's so important for the horses. They get bored if they're only in their stalls or in the arena."

KATY, TX—FEB. 9-13.

HIGH PERFORMANCE HUNTER CH: Carson, Kristen Blomstrom.

RES: Forever, Carley Barnett.

3'6"-3'9" PERFORMANCE HUNTER CH: Lastrup, Merrylegs South.

RES: Ovation, Taylor Reid.

3'3" PERFORMANCE HUNTER CH: Oliver, Daphne Preti.

RES: Most Wanted, Bethany Bolen.

1ST YR. GREEN HUNTER CH: Now How Z, Kelly Joyner.

RES: Manhattan, Teri Miller.

2ND YR. GREEN HUNTER CH: Alezzio, Jennifer McNamara.

RES: Amadeo, Diane Dematteo.

AMATEUR-OWNER HUNTER CH: Dubari, Gayle Cox.

RES: Expedition, Jessica Zienkiewicz.

SMALL JR. HUNTER, 15 & UNDER CH: Now How Z, Kelly Joyner.

RES: Day Dream, Taylor Reid.

LARGE JR. HUNTER, 15 & UNDER CH: Ovation, Taylor Reid.

RES: Dylan, Kaitlyn Arnold.

LARGE JR. HUNTER, 16-17 CH: Neander, Jackie Watkins.

RES: His Splendor, Jacqueline Ward.

MEDIUM PONY HUNTER CH: Fine Art, Hannah Power.

RES: Little Wonder, Kurstin Grady.

SMALL/LARGE PONY HUNTER CH: Jerry Jeff Walker, Kelly Ronden.

RES: GF Reign And Shine, Amanda Roche.

GREEN PONY HUNTER CH: Inaway Theodorable, Kimberly Rathmann.

RES: Cool Hand Luke, Erin Jarvis.

ADULT AMATEUR HUNTER CH: Crem De La Crem, Laura Kruger.

RES: Chicago, Teri Miller.

CHILDREN'S HUNTER, 14 & UNDER CH: Truly Trinna, Annie Laurie Gibson.

RES: Adagio, Cameron Weiner.

CHILDREN'S HUNTER, 15-17 CH: Four Leaf Clover, Rebekah Wilson.

RES: Double Down, Kelley Oliver.

3'3" PRE-GREEN HUNTER CH: Four Leaf Clover, Rebekah Wilson.

RES: CR Rolex, Hilary Tandy.

BABY GREEN HUNTER CH: Trinity, Heather Conquest.

RES: Metro Park, Rachel Lindsey.

MODIFIED ADULT AMATEUR HUNTER CH: Adagio, Kendall Clark.

RES: Onyx, Debbie Bird.

MODIFIED CHILDREN'S HUNTER CH: Mojave, Steve Hummel.

RES: Carasel, Kathy O'Connor.

LIMIT RIDER HUNTER CH: Something To Talk About, Sophia Depumpo.

RES: Flicka, Sedona Chamblee.

SPECIAL HUNTER CH: Bada Bing, Diane Dematteo.

RES: CHF Supreme, Kalpana Ramakrishna.

CHILDREN'S PONY HUNTER CH: Rollingwoods Picturesque, Annakate Long.

RES: Elvax, Sedona Chamblee.

SHORT/LONG STIRRUP HUNTER CH: Brownland's Jessie James, Claire Levinson.

RES: Classified, Janet Daigneault.

SHORT/LONG STIRRUP EQUITATION CH: Claire Levinson.

RES: Abby Horswell.

OPPORTUNITY WALK-TROT HUNTER CH Tie: Little Wonder, Kurstin Grady.

CH Tie: My Fair Lady, Eleanor Lorton.

OPPORTUNITY WALK-TROT-CANTER HUNTER CH: Secret, Kate Odom.

RES: Red River, Claire Thomas.

OPPORTUNITY WALK-TROT EQUITATION CH: Basia O'Konski-Siwiek.

RES: Stone McCormick.

OPPORTUNITY WALK-TROT-CANTER EQUITATION CH: Kate Odom.

RES: Claire Thomas.

1.15M JUMPER CH Tie: Silverton S, Kathy Love.

CH Tie: Laroche, Michelle Walsh.

LOW CHILDREN'S JUMPER CH: Goatzi, Isabella Carroll.

RES: The Gentleman, Annie Laurie Gibson.

HIGH CHILDREN'S JUMPER CH: CR Andiamo, Megan Bifano.

RES: Soprano, Jamie Richardson.

ADULT AMATEUR JUMPER CH: Oberlin, Corey Diener.

RES: Condesa, Olivia Herbert.