



North American League News

Summer 2015

As summer draws to a close, riders hoping to qualify for the North American League's two year-end Finals are giving their best efforts with the hopes of earning the right to compete in one or both of the Finals.

The NAL hosts National Finals at the Pennsylvania National Horse Show in Harrisburg, PA, October 8-17, and West Coast Finals at the Las Vegas National Horse Show in Las Vegas, NV, November 10-15.

Both Finals include the following five divisions – Children's Hunter, Adult Hunter, Children's Jumper Presented by EquiFit, Adult Jumper Presented by SmartPak, and Low Junior/Amateur-Owner Jumper Presented by UltrOZ.

"The end of the season is drawing near, but that doesn't mean there isn't still time to accumulate points," said Annette Longenecker of Ryegate Show Services, Inc., which administers the North American League. "We encourage everyone to ensure that their NAL memberships are up to date, so they can receive points to qualify for one, or both of the Finals."

The NAL qualifying period runs September 1 through August 31. NAL competitions are open to all who wish to compete, however points only count for current members. Now is the time for those wishing to qualify for Harrisburg and Las Vegas to join the North American League.

For more information regarding the North American League, please call (717) 867-5643, email to NAL@Ryegate.com or visit www.ryegate.com.

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NAL Adult Hunter Division

Mindy Wurzburg and Overseas Lead the NAL Adult Hunter Division

In the Adult Hunter Standings, Mindy Wurzburg of Memphis, TN is in the lead aboard *Overseas* with 2,550 points. Wurzburg and her trainer, Phoebe Sheets, have been together for almost 35 years. She started taking riding lessons when she was 6 or 7 years old and then started showing when she was 10 years old.

Wurzburg says her biggest influence in riding is her trainer. “Phoebe is one of the hardest working people in the industry, an incredible rider and teacher, a great friend, and the horses always come first,” she said. “Her riding and teaching style has such a positive impact on her students and horses. She is truly one of the best in the business.” Wurzburg rides mostly on weekends and Phoebe rides her horses during the week.

Wurzburg says she really enjoys all the shows that she goes to and that, of course, competing indoors is always fun and exciting but that her favorite shows would have to be the West Tennessee Hunter Jumper Assoc. shows and The Germantown Charity Horse Show.



“It is nice to be able to show near home and only travel about 5 miles,” remarked Wurzburg. “The facility is great, and I can get to sleep in my own bed! The Germantown Charity Horse Show is also great because it brings out so many old faces to the show with the night time performances. It is an old school, exhibitor and hospitality friendly, fun all-breed show with Corn Dogs and Funnel Cake!”

Wurzburg, who competed in her first NAL finals in 2001 on her horse Starstruck, says “The NAL Championship Finals gives us Adult riders the opportunity to compete at Harrisburg which we wouldn’t have otherwise, since the Adult division is not offered during Indoors.”

While she really enjoys competing, when there is down time she says she is fortunate to have good trails around the barn. “I find it really fun to hack or take a lesson, then go for a walk around the property or the surrounding area. Leo (Overseas) LOVES to cruise around the cross county course at the Kentucky Horse Park, a great grazing opportunity!”

Wurzburg works with her husband at their Landscape Architecture business, Blair Parker Design. He is the Landscape Architect and she runs the office. Her goals as a rider are to finish high in the rankings for NAL, WIHS and Zone 4 in the Adult 36-49 division as well as the local WTHJA. Like many Adults in this sport, she feels it is a big accomplishment to work full time, ride, show, and balance family life as well as being successful in the show ring.

Wurzburg says she feels very lucky in this sport. She has been fortunate to have the horses that she has (or has had) and they are family. The people at her barn are very close and supportive of each other. She and her sister, Cheryl Rubenstein, actually show and compete in the NAL against each other. She says her husband is amazingly supportive of her riding and she is very thankful for that. The time commitment with horses is so big, and he is very understanding and patient.



Samantha Sommers and Small Adventure Lead the West Coast Adult Hunter Division

Samantha Sommers of Thousand Oaks, CA and *Small Adventure* are leading the West Coast Adult Hunter Standings with 2,080 points. Sommers has been riding horses since the age of four and has been competing since the age of eight. She has only been competing in the North American League since January and is very excited to be leading her division standings.

Sommers says her trainers Elizabeth Reilly, John French, and Rose Carver of Makoto Farms located in Agoura, CA are some of her biggest influences because they continue to help her improve her riding and always help her to push farther in her riding career. She also appreciates her parents and all of the support they have given her.

“My favorite horseshow is the Washington International Horse Show held at the Verizon Center in Washington, DC. I love that show because of all my experiences there, and I am always so thrilled that we are still able to show in the middle of the city and at such a prestigious venue,” she said. “I enjoy riding in the small rectangular arena of the Verizon Center because it is difficult and challenging, which makes me strive to perform better.”

During the summer she spends on average four to five days a week riding, but during the school year it becomes more difficult. She will ride three to four days a week during the school year. “I have fun practicing derby courses and riding *Iwasaki*, *Reilly’s Small Adventure* and Huckleberry Farm’s *World Affair*. These horses are both unique and challenging, and I love to ride them at home and work on different things. I enjoy courses with bending lines because it makes me focus on measuring and thinking about the next jump.”

Sommers considers herself a huge bookworm and enjoys making short films in her free time and watching old movies with her father. He is a big influence in her life because he is a filmmaker and she is currently attending the USC film school.



Sommers said she would like to continue as an amateur and compete in the Hunters and eventually compete in the Jumper arena as well. She would also like to be successful in the NAL Finals. In the upcoming years she would like to move up to the AO’s and is looking forward to competing in the Adult Hunters during the WCHR weekend of Capital Challenge and would like to eventually win a National WCHR title.

“My biggest accomplishment was at the WIHS in 2013 where I was Overall Grand Champion Junior Hunter, Best Child Rider on a Horse, and won the prestigious Lyric Trophy for High Point Score” she said. “My other biggest accomplishment would be receiving the ZONE 10 Equestrian of the Year award after my final junior year.”

Sommers, who has not competed in an NAL Final before, is very excited to make her debut this year. She also said she has heard good things about the NAL Finals at the Las Vegas National from previous riders and enjoys that venue immensely.

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NAL Adult Jumper Division Presented by SmartPak

Lindsey Tomeu and Bonapart Lead the NAL Adult Jumper Division Presented by SmartPak



Lindsey Tomeu of Wellington, FL, leads the Adult Jumper Standings, Presented by SmartPak, with 6,882 points aboard *Bonapart*. Tomeu has been riding horses her whole life and started competing in the North American League when she was 14, but didn't become a member until a few years ago.

Tomeu says her biggest influence are her trainers, Michael DelFiandra and Shane and Ali Sweetnam of Sweet Oak Farm in Wellington, FL with whom she has been training for 16 years. She says they are like family to her and always have her best interests at heart.

When asked about her favorite horse shows, Tomeu commented, "My favorite horse show would be Kentucky where we spend the summers, because it's a great venue for the horse and rider, and we have a great farm right next door."

Tomeu, who rides up to 6 days a week and as many horses as she can, strives to be the best. "My biggest accomplishment would be winning the North American League Final at Harrisburg this past year."

Tomeu is currently a student who would love to graduate from college and continue riding and showing in the Amateur Hunter and jumper divisions. When she's not riding, she likes to hang out with her friends on the boat.



Ali Randall and Red White & Blue Lead West Coast Adult Jumper Division Presented by SmartPak

Ali Randall of Scottsdale, AZ and *Red White & Blue* lead the West Coast Adult Jumper Standings, Presented by SmartPak, with 2,592 points. Randall has always ridden horses because her mom is a professional rider, but she became serious about riding at the age of 6. She started competing in the North American League last year.



Randall credits her mom, Paula Inman Randall, and her trainer, Katie Monahan Prudent of Plain Bay Farm, as the biggest influences in her life. She says Katie has made a huge impact in her life even beyond riding over the last 3 years. She also gives credit to her mom as her biggest supporter and somehow makes everything she wants to do possible. "Without these two in my life, I would not be able to have the opportunity to do the things I do."

Randall attends college at Baylor University and is on their NCAA Equestrian team. She tries to travel back and forth to practice and show with Plain Bay Farm as much as possible, but with being in school it can be difficult to do so. Being on the Baylor Equestrian team allows her to continue riding everyday while she is away from the farm and keeps her well in tune.

Randall says her favorite thing to do when she rides is to do a line without a set number of strides and try to see how many different strides that she can either fit in or leave out. Her favorite horse show is Spruce Meadows, and she actually got the opportunity to show there this summer for the first time ever which was an amazing experience for her. What she likes best about Spruce Meadows is that no matter what class you compete in they make the award ceremonies a big deal and the actual horse show itself is a huge attraction to the city of Calgary.



"My goal in life is to be successful. And as for riding, I hope to be the best of my ability," said Randall. "My biggest accomplishment in riding is not actually the win, but anytime I go in the show ring and I master a course or gain any knowledge at all it's an accomplishment and a step forward for me and my riding."

Randall would like to thank her mom, Paula Randall, and dad, Rick Randall, for always allowing her to achieve her dreams.

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NAL Low Junior/Amateur-Owner Division, Presented by UltrOZ

Sheer Levitin and Nabuco lead the NAL Low Junior/Amateur-Owner Jumper Division Presented by UltrOZ

Sheer Levitin of Delray Beach, FL, who started riding at nine years old, and *Nabuco* lead the Low Junior/Amateur-Owner Jumper Division, Presented by UltrOZ, with a whopping 9,457 points.



One of Levitin's biggest influences is Reed Kessler. She said it's extraordinary the amount she's accomplished at such a young age. Another is Kent Farrington. "He's such a talented rider, I learn something every time I watch him ride. I recently had the amazing opportunity to work with John and Bezie Madden for the last two weeks of Spruce Meadows. Their program is unbelievable and definitely something to look up to and work towards."

Levitin, whose favorite horse show is Spruce Meadows because the facilities are great, everything is well organized, and there's a great variety of classes to watch, says that winning the NAL Low Junior Finals last year was a great experience she will never forget.

Levitin, who rides six days a week all year round, trains with Max Amaya at Stonehenge Stables in Colts Neck, NJ. She's only been training there since May. Prior to training under Max, she enjoyed working with Katie Prudent who was influential on her riding education and she worked hard to engrave in Levitin the fact that speed matters. "My favorite thing to do is show, but I also love taking lessons because it lets me focus completely on my horse's improvement and the improvement of my riding skills."

Levitin attends Palm Beach International Academy in Wellington, Florida and is beginning high school this September. The school is very accepting of her riding schedule and she wouldn't be able to ride as often if not for their support. Her goal is to compete in the Olympics some day and to eventually become a competitive and successful grand prix rider.

"I think my biggest accomplishment is representing the USA as part of the winning team in the Children's Nation Cup at the Winter Equestrian Festival this year," she said. "I also consider winning the NAL Low Junior Finals last year on *Nabuco* to be a huge accomplishment."

When asked about the NAL West Coast Finals in Las Vegas, she said, "It's a great thing for the show riding community. I compete in the NAL Finals in Pennsylvania, but I'm sure there are a lot of fantastic riders on the other side of the country that have had difficulty making it out here. If the West Coast Finals brings in more riders, the level of competition goes up, and that pushes everyone to perform better."



She said her favorite quote is "Practice does not make perfect, perfect practice makes perfect," and that thinking about that concept constantly pushes her to try harder, regardless of whether she is in a competition or a lesson.



Megan Hilton and Washington lead the West Coast Standings Low Junior/Amateur-Owner Jumper Division, Presented by UltrOZ

In the West Coast Low Junior/Amateur-Owner Jumper Standings, Presented by UltrOZ, Megan Hilton of Seattle, WA is in the lead aboard *Washington* on 1,799 points. Hilton, who started riding horses when she was six years old with her older sister Emily, started riding in the North American League when she was 14. Winning her first Classic in the Children's Jumpers is her favorite NAL memory.

Hilton said her trainer, Cara Anthony out of Redmond Washington, who she has trained with since she was 6, is the biggest influence in her riding career and always pushes her to do better. George Morris has also been an amazing influence for her. She says being able to attend some of his clinics has improved her riding skills immensely.

Hilton, who rides five to six days a week, says Spruce Meadows in Calgary, Canada is her favorite horse show because the facilities are absolutely amazing. "The competition is impeccable," said Hilton. "Whenever I go to Spruce Meadows not only does my ability to ride jumpers improve, but my equitation skills do too."

Hilton, currently a senior in high school, says that working on flat work is her favorite thing to do. Without 'flatting' correctly, jumping is extremely difficult. When she is working with her horse, getting them soft and responsive, she feels like she is talking and having a conversation with them. She also enjoys teaching horses new things, like how to counter canter because the riding work with the horse creates a trust that leads to confidence when you start jumping.



Her biggest accomplishment was when she was recently second in her first Grand Prix on her horse, Washington, out of 30 plus riders.

Her goals as a rider for the next few years are to win a Grand Prix, place higher than 10th in a Medal Final, and do well at Junior Jumper Finals. Hilton enjoys baking and spending time with friends and family in her free time.

Hilton is so thankful to her trainer, Cara Anthony, for everything that she has done. She has pushed her to be the best she can be, and Hilton appreciates all of her efforts.



NAL Children's Hunter Division

Annabel Briggs and Cavalli Lead the NAL Children's Hunter Division

Annabel Briggs of Austin, TX is leading the Children's Hunter Rankings aboard *Cavalli* with 3,568 points. They are also leading the West Coast standings with that total of 3,568 points. Briggs is just 12-years-old and only started riding seriously when she was 10. She started riding in the NAL last year right after her twelfth birthday in September.



Briggs has been training with Susan and Bill McMorris at Rio Vista Farm in Austin, TX, for a little over a year. Briggs credits her trainer Susan as a great rider, trainer, and a true professional. "Susan has a great work ethic. She is almost always at the barn with Bill, riding and training her horses and other people's horses. At the shows, she gets up early to help us walk courses for the jumpers and coach us in our early hunter classes." Briggs credits her mom as her other big influence stating that her mom is always there for her and she drives her to the barn every day and to shows.

Her favorite horse show so far has been the Country Heir summer shows in Kentucky. The Kentucky Horse Park is so amazing and beautiful, the competition is big, and there are many fun activities to do after competing!

Briggs says her favorite NAL experience/memory was winning the \$500 NAL Children's Hunter Classic at Country Heir I this year in Kentucky. It was her first time ever competing in Kentucky and the class was large. She won the

Classic along with Champion in the younger Children's Hunters with Cavalli.

Briggs takes riding lessons five days a week and hacks her horses if they need it on Sunday and Monday. She shows twice and sometimes three times a month. During the summer, she comes out to lesson and stays out all day at the barn almost every day to help ride other people's horses, and to help out with chores her trainer gives her.

When she is not riding, she loves reading, drawing, hanging out with friends, and especially photography. She focuses on equine photography (of course!) and sometimes macro photography. She has an Instagram account for her photos @cavalli_photography and is currently working on a Facebook photography page!



Briggs says her goal in life as a rider is to be the top rider in the nation, to train horses, and to be an Olympic rider. Her biggest accomplishment thus far is her first place rank for Children's Hunters in the NAL, so she is well on her way to reaching her goals!

Briggs said she would like to thank Susan and Bill McMorris and her Mom for making this year in the children's hunters so amazing! "I couldn't have done it without them!" she said. "And of course Cavalli. He has been such a great boy and I love him so much! Thanks Cav!"

NAL Children's Jumper Division Presented by EquiFit

Skyllar Beckel and Lyons Creek Action Lead the NAL Children's Jumper Division Presented by EquiFit

Skyllar Beckel of New Albany, OH currently leads the hotly contested Children's Jumper standings, Presented by EquiFit, aboard *Lyons Creek Action* with 4,093 points.

Briley Koerner and CR Sargent ES lead the West Coast Children's Jumper Division Presented by EquiFit

In the West Coast Children's Jumper Standings, Presented by EquiFit, Briley Koerner of The Woodlands, TX is in the lead with 1,407 points aboard *CR Sargent ES*.



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