



North American League News

Summer 2017

With the end of the qualifying season for the North American League (NAL) in sight, the summer competition results have heated up the rankings with riders rapidly gaining points that will take them to the top of the standings, along with a chance to compete at one or both of this year's NAL Finals this fall.

The NAL National Finals will be held at the Pennsylvania National Horse Show in Harrisburg, PA, October 12-21, and the NAL West Coast Finals at the International Jumping Festival hosted by Blenheim EquiSports in San Juan Capistrano, CA, September 20-24. Both Finals include five divisions – Children’s Hunter, Adult Hunter, Children’s Jumper Presented by EquiFit, Adult Jumper Presented by SmartPak, and Low Junior/Amateur-Owner Jumper.

The NAL qualifying season runs from September 1 through August 31. NAL qualifying classes are open to all competitors, but only current members are awarded points. By joining the NAL, riders can accumulate the points necessary to make it to the Finals and annual memberships are only \$40 per rider.

“Now is the time for those wishing to qualify for the Finals at Harrisburg and San Juan Capistrano to join the NAL and secure their spots!” said Annette Longenecker of Ryegate Show Services, Inc., which administers the North American League. “There’s still plenty of time to accumulate points, but you have to make sure your NAL memberships are up to date to make your points count so you can ride in the Finals.”

For more information regarding the North American League, please call (717) 867-5643, email to NAL@Ryegate.com or visit www.ryegate.com. Follow us on [Facebook!](#)



NAL Children's Jumper Division, Presented by EquiFit

Grace Klein Leaps into Lead of National Children's Jumper Division Presented by EquiFit

Grace Klein of St. Charles, IL, and *Nabuco* have leapt into the pole position in the Children's Jumper division Presented by EquiFit. They have 4,121 points thus far in her first season competing in the NAL. She is also ranked 10th with her other horse *Piper*.

When Grace was just 4½-years-old, she began asking her parents for riding lessons each time they drove by the local barn. Her first trainer, Toni Knight-Utoff, was reluctant to teach her at first due to her young age, but finally agreed and Grace's passion for the sport took off. Over the past nine years Grace has competed in saddlebreds, hunters, and has finally found her true love...the jumpers...and her goal is to compete at the grand prix level.

In May 2017 Grace began training with Lynn Jayne from Our Day Farm in South Elgin, Illinois, where she rides 5-6 days a week.

"I ride every day when possible and when we are not away at a show," said Grace. "Every day I spend training with Lynn I learn something new! Flat work is something I enjoy, as I know that it is the key to a jumper's success. Jumping the big jumps is always fun, however it is the flat work that teaches me the technique that I need to continue to succeed in the sport and jump in higher events! I try my hardest to put it all into practice to continue growing as a rider."

Grace is not only passionate about her career in the ring, but also about her horses. "*Nabuco* and *Piper* have been together for a long time and I believe their own bond is part of my success," said Grace. "They are friends in the barn and wherever they travel 24/7."

In regards to her leading horse *Nabuco*, Grace commented, "He and I share a very special bond both in and out of the ring. He enjoys winning as much as I do and I truly believe that he knows when it is time to "turn it on" and help me ride well and win. It is this friendship and partnership that we share that makes me the success I am today. *Nabuco* gives me the courage to overcome my fear and anxiety in the ring and gives me 100% of his heart and soul every time we enter the ring. He has instilled great confidence in me and made me a better rider than I could have ever imagined I would become! I trust him and he trusts me and together we make a great duo!"

Grace is a dedicated student both in and out of the show ring. She completed eighth grade over the summer so that she could go to high school a year early and is starting this fall, giving her a great sense of accomplishment along with her other riding achievements.





Ashley Vogel in Pole Position in West Coast Children's Jumper Division Presented by EquiFit

The West Coast Children's Jumper standings Presented by EquiFit is also a fairly tight race, and Ashley Vogel of Mequon, WI, and *Twist Des Forets* continue to lead the division with 1,102 points.



A gift of riding lessons for her eighth birthday started Ashley down her equestrian path. She always rode hunters until this year when she took a sudden interest in jumpers. In February Ashley began leasing *Twist Des Forets* from Neil Jones Equestrian.

"*Twist des Forets* or "Twist" is such a character," said Ashley. "His goofy self always brings a smile to everyone in the barn. He is like a little dog as he follows me around and is so gentle. Although jumping him is very fun, I love to graze and trail ride him as it is a good break from the show ring."

Ashley trains with Maria Rasmussen and Jeff Wirthman at Sea Change Farm located in Illinois. "I've been training with them for a year now and it has been the best experience. I have gained so much knowledge and am grateful for the opportunity to train with them," she said. "They are my biggest influences along with my parents because they push me to do my very best and they see the most in me."

WEF is not only Ashley's favorite show, but it's also where she's had her most treasured NAL experience. "My favorite NAL experience was probably winning the NAL Classic week 7 of WEF. It was a technical course with lots of tight inside turns, which is *Twist's* and my favorite. He makes them look and feel very smooth," reflected Ashley. "I also love the show grounds at WEF and the feeling of people all over the country coming together. The busy environment makes me excited to show!"

Ashley also plays lacrosse and field hockey in high school, and enjoys traveling to different places to ski in the winter. However, her future plans remain focused on the horse world. "My goals right now include having a successful indoor season with all my horses and continuing to improve in all aspects of my riding. In the future, I think it would be exciting to show in Europe.

"I am truly thankful for the trainers at Sea Change who have helped me get to this point in my riding career," added Ashley. "I have now moved up to the low junior jumpers and I am really excited to see where my jumper career goes. To other riders, I would tell them not to dwell on their mistakes, but to learn from them."



NAL Adult Jumper Division Presented by SmartPak

Two-Time NAL Champion Lindsey Tomeau Holds Top Spot in Adult Jumper Division Presented by SmartPak

The 2014 and 2015 Adult Jumper Final Champion Lindsey Tomeau of West Palm Beach, FL, and her partner *Bonapart*, who have led the National Adult Jumper division Presented by SmartPak all season, continue to top the leaderboard by a huge spread on 5,165 points, earning 755 points in just one month.

Lindsey and *Bonapart*, a 16-year-old Belgian Warmblood gelding, have developed quite a partnership together over the past few years and are seeking a third chance to compete in the NAL Final. Lindsey first became a member of the NAL in 2014, making it to the Final that year with *Bonapart* where they clinched the title, a feat the duo repeated the following year.

“Bono (Bonapart) is amazing to ride!” said Lindsey. “He is so adjustable, and is always looking for the next place to turn. He loves being lightly hacked and just stretching his neck down. He's very quirky though, he hates loud noises, big machinery, and if the weather is bad.”

Lindsey's mother used to ride, so she was around horses all the time and began riding at a very young age. For the past ten years, she has been training with Michael DelFiandra along with Ali and Shane Sweetnam of Sweet Oak Farm where she rides six days a week. Some of her favorite moments include a nice pleasant hack around the field.

A focused competitor, Lindsey's goals are to win to win all the Adult Jumper Finals and Ariat Finals and she seems to be well on her way. Along with her two NAL Championship titles, Lindsey says her other biggest accomplishment so far is winning the AA Jumper Championship at the 2017 Devon Horse Show, which is her favorite horse show.

“Devon is a totally different experience than any other show I've been to with the fair and the huge amount of spectators,” said Lindsey. “Also, getting to show at night is a great experience.”

When she's not riding or showing, Lindsey likes to spend a lot of time with her family.





Tara Brown Stocks Holding Top Spot in West Coast Adult Jumper Division Presented by SmartPak

Another rider making her successful NAL debut this year is Tara Brown Stocks of Coto De Caza, CA, who is leading the West Coast Adult Jumper Division, Presented by SmartPak with 1,165 points aboard *High Hopes*.

Tara began riding when she was nine-years-old when her neighbor took her under her wing and let her tag along to the stables. “From day one I was hooked!” she said.

After a ten-year hiatus from riding, Tara decided to get back in the saddle two years ago and returned to trainers Joe and Katie Lifo of Pacific Coast Show Jumpers, with whom she began training with when she was 12 years old.



“Joe and Katie are my biggest riding influences,” said Tara. “They not only educate me about riding and horses in general, but they also teach me a lot about myself. It’s amazing what a horse can teach you about yourself if you stop and take the time to ‘listen.’ Outside of riding, my biggest influences are my parents, my close family, and God. As a collective team they make me want to be a better person and help me do so by guiding me with love, support, and advice. But only when asked of course – haha!”

Tara, who works in the healthcare field, is looking forward to competing at her first NAL West Coast Final aboard *High Hopes*, a 10 year-old Belgian Warmblood gelding, who is one of her two horses.

“I would have to say that they would both do just about anything for me if they physically could, and I am truly blessed to have them both in my life and on my team!” said Tara. “My favorite thing to do with my horses is spend alone time with them during night check when it is very quiet and dark. That’s when I like to go into their stalls and spend time with them. I believe that you need to let your horse know that you care for them and show some appreciation for what they do for you in the ring. Some people may laugh at that, but I have done that since I was a child with all my horses and not one of them has ever let me down. The only difference is that I don’t have to sneak out now that I am in my thirties!”

When asked about her goals in life, it’s clear that Tara is enjoying her life’s path along with success in the ring. “Do I want to push myself harder? Absolutely. But I have to think about my daughter and the time I get to spend with her,” Tara commented. “My dream as a child was to do the Grand Prix. Maybe one day and maybe not. But what I do know is that I just want to have fun, be happy, safe and enjoy the life I have. It is a very blessed one and sadly it goes so fast.”



NAL Low Junior/Amateur-Owner Division

Catalina Peralta Leads National Low Junior/Amateur-Owner Jumper Division

With the top fifty riders in the quadruple digits, the Low Junior/Amateur-Owner Jumper division is proving to be highly competitive. Leading the standings is NAL first-timer Catalina Peralta on *Chopin Z* with 5,692 points.

Catalina comes from a horsey family and has been riding and training since she was little with her parents Wendy and Ezequiel Peralta at their family farm in Geneva, Florida.

With a view to eventually becoming a professional rider, Catalina points to some of the world's best jumping riders as her biggest influences – mainly U.S. Olympic medalists Beezie Madden and McLain Ward. She admires their “American style of riding and how their hands follow the horse's mouth.”

Although Catalina can't pick just one horse as her favorite, *Chopin Z*, a Zangersheide gelding, is most definitely one of them.



“My favorite thing to do with *Chopin Z* is play with him,” said Catalina. “He's very quirky so he's always up for snuggles and any activity that involves treats!”

Catalina travels to many different horse shows across the country, but her favorite show is at the Kentucky Horse Park. “I love to flat my horses on the huge, grass eventing field,” she commented.

In her free time Catalina enjoys reading and would also like to be a part-time writer when she's not in the saddle. She sums up her goals in life quite simply... “to love whatever I do, and do it to the fullest extent,” said the talented rider. “I can and I will. Watch me.”



Olivia Chowdry Maintains Massive Lead in West Coast Low Junior/Amateur-Owner Jumper Division

Continuing to lead the West Coast Low Junior/Amateur-Owner Jumper standings is Olivia Chowdry of Denver, CO, who has accumulated a massive 5,107 points this season with *Douwe* – more than 3,200 points over her closest competitor.

Olivia began riding when she was seven years old, rode in her first NAL class when she was 14, and is hoping to compete at her first NAL Final this fall. For the past year and a half Olivia has been training with famed show jumping veterans Katie and Henri Prudent at their Plain Bay Farm where she rides almost every day.

“I love showing, but some of my favorite days are the light work days at home when we take the horses on long trail rides. It's great for both horses and riders!” said Olivia. “If I had to pick a favorite show, it would be the Split Rock Jumping Tour that show jumper Derek Braun and his team run. Derek's shows have a very European feel and offer great hospitality for horses, riders, staff, spectators, and all involved.

Describing her top NAL partner, Olivia commented, “*Douwe* has the best personality in the barn, he is so sweet and snuggly!” said Olivia. “He is fast and careful, but also a little quirky. I think that's the part of his character that makes him so brilliant in the ring. He is such a trier and has really taught me so much. As a fun fact, he loves tomatoes - but only the green ones!”



Olivia and *Douwe*'s first competition together was in the NAL Classic at the American Gold Cup last year. “He is young and we really didn't have any expectations seeing as it was our first show together. I went very early in the order, had a quick time, but didn't think that it would hold up for the win. We waited the whole afternoon and almost left the horse show only to find out that we were being called by the announcers to say that there were just a few horses left and we were currently on top. We hurried down to the ring just in time to see the last few and we ended up winning the class! My whole team, including my mom, was there to watch which made the moment extra special!

“I feel very fortunate to get to do what I love with the horses, travel to various places and have a healthy family life,” stated Olivia. “My goal would be to be able to continue working to balance everything with the addition of further academic education. In riding, I have a few other horses that I compete in higher levels. I would like to continue to learn as much as I can from Katie and her team and give my best to be an effective rider and compassionate and educated horseman. I believe both qualities are essential to be at the top of whatever level I am capable of reaching.”



NAL Children's Hunter Division

Henry Healy and Dakapo Lead National Children's Hunter Division

In the Children's Hunter division, Henry Healy of Cincinnati, OH, and *Dakapo* are leading the pack with 3,050 points.



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Jaden Porter and Dragonfly's Acerado Lead West Coast Children's Hunter Division

Jaden Porter of Ladue, MO, and *Dragonfly's Acerado* lead the West Coast Children's Hunter standings with 1,733 points - over 160 points ahead of their closest rival.

Although Jaden has been riding for nine years, she only started competing in the NAL last year. For the past five years she has enjoyed continued success under the watchful eye of trainer Stephanie Petersen. Jaden is not only looking forward to competing in her first NAL Final this fall, but she is also excited about riding at the Pennsylvania National Horse Show, host of the Final, which also happens to be her favorite horse show because of the competition and energy at the venue.

Jaden's favorite NAL experience is winning both weeks of the NAL classes in Colorado, and she considers her biggest accomplishment to date is making it to the top-twenty in the Pony Medal class at the 2016 Pony Finals.

"I would love to become a well accomplished hunter rider," said Jaden who also helps her sister with her rescued miniature horses. "I ride 5-6 days a week and love jumping bareback!"

In talking about her top horse, *Dragonfly's Acerado*, Jaden commented, "He is the sweetest horse I know. We have a very strong bond and he always gives me his full heart when we walk into the ring. He puts in 100% and I love that about him. He loves watermelon and all the mini horses in the barn."





NAL Adult Hunter Division

Victoria Clarke Leads National Adult Hunter Division

Victoria Clarke of Chevy Chase, MD, leads the National Adult Hunter standings by nearly 500 points with a total of 3,846 points aboard *Uptown*.

Victoria began riding when she was 11-years-old, gaining experience in showing and foxhunting, quite often on the same pony or horse. After a 35-year break from riding, she returned to the show ring, competing in the Adult Hunters and the NAL in 2016.



“My riding goals are simple,” said Victoria. “Have fun and do the best you can, every time. Getting back in the ring after nearly four decades was terrifying, but I’m glad I did it. The horses are the best, and the competitors – especially the older adults – are so encouraging and supportive.”

Victoria trains with Jonelle Mullen, whom she describes as “endlessly patient.” “Before I started showing, Jonelle trained my daughter, Devan Graham, for seven years, coaching her from short stirrup to Medal Finals and indoors with her junior hunter *Delorian*. Jonelle’s a terrific horsewoman with an uncanny knack for finding just the right match of horse and rider.”

When asked about her biggest influence both in and out of the ring, Victoria was quick to credit her family and friends. “They keep me grounded and laughing,” she remarked. “However my daughter Devan is my biggest supporter and toughest critic. She is always pushing me to do better.”

For Victoria, picking a favorite show is much easier than picking a favorite horse. “Upperville has always been my favorite show,” she said. “It’s the best place to watch horses, and you know you’ve accomplished something if you do well there. Picking a favorite horse is like picking your favorite child – impossible! They’re all amazing creatures, just in different ways. But if I had to pick, it would be the first pony I rode, called *Ace of Spades*. He loved to foxhunt, delighted in running away with me in the winter, and gave it all he had every time he went in the ring.”

With a full-time job in corporate public affairs, Victoria juggles lessons and rounds at horse shows in between conference calls and there’s not a lot of free time to fulfill her other passion for traveling.

“As they say, it takes a village, but in my case, it takes a mid-size city,” said Victoria. “I have a wonderful and supportive husband (who is a saint!), a remarkable trainer, phenomenal grooms, and an exceptional vet and farrier, all of whom work together so I can compete in this crazy sport!”



West Coast Adult Hunter Division Led by Jef Lauwers

Jef Lauwers, originally from Belgium and now based in Magnolia, TX, leads the West Coast Adult Hunter division with *XOXO*, a six year-old Dutch Warmblood gelding, on 3,355 points. He is also in sixth place with 1,410 points aboard his second mount *Sutherland*, a 12-year-old Oldenburg gelding.

Jef started riding ponies in his homeland at the age of 12. His parents were strict about his education, so time spent in the saddle diminished while he was away at university. He graduated with a degree in engineering (master in Electro-Mechanics) in 2012 and although he worked in that field for several years, he missed being around horses and got back in the saddle and started competing again.

Following his dreams, Jef decided to move to the U.S. full-time at the end of 2016. He now lives and trains at PJP Farm with Peter Pletcher, whom he met two years ago during his first visit to the Winter Equestrian Festival (WEF) in Wellington, Florida. The pair got married earlier this year.



“Peter has taught me everything I know about the hunters and the American style of riding, but I’m definitely still learning,” said Jef. “He taught me so much about this sport in such a short period. He really gets the best out of me, everyday.”

This is Jef’s first year competing as a hunter rider in the U.S. and the NAL. He competed at WEF, followed by his first NAL Classic in March at the Pin Oak Charity Horse Show in Houston, Texas.

“I like WEF a lot because everyone gets to do what they love and share it with each other, and it’s fun to see all of my American and European friends in one place,” remarked Jef. “I love the Texan hospitality and ‘home-feeling’ of the Pin Oak Charity Horse Show, as well as the authenticity and tradition of Devon, where I went as a spectator this year.”

With two horses in the running, Jef is really looking forward to the NAL Finals. “I have never been to the Finals or competed indoors so I’m super excited! I’m really thankful for the NAL experience at Country Heir 1 & 2 in Kentucky where I was Champion and Classic winner with *XOXO* the first week, and again with *Sutherland* the second week! The horses are incredible, each in their own right,” said Jef. “Peter owns both of them and I’m grateful that he’s entrusted them to me. We bought both horses earlier this year, so they are new for me. Both have their quirks and each one acts like a princess.”

Jef rides six days a week and rotates all of his horses so each one gets ridden four times per week. “My favorite thing to do is to make sure they’re happy and enjoying their job. I believe in a “happy horse, happy rider” way of thinking. I don’t obsess about getting it perfect every day. We do a lot of different things every day and try just to keep it light and have fun!”