

Five Days of Finals Competition September, 2004

By Melody Taylor-Scott

The Marshall & Sterling League National Indoor Finals were welcomed back to the City of Worcester, MA and the Worcester Centrum Center for its second season. Nearly 700 horses compete for more than \$250,000 in prize money. National titles in the HBO Junior Equitation Medal, the Charles Owen Children's and Adult Medal, eleven Hunter and five Jumper divisions were contested and awarded over the week of September 22nd through the 26th culminating in a \$100,000.00 dollar Grand Prix on Sunday. This year's Grand Prix was won by Christine Tribble and her wonderful horse Promised Land; second place (again!) went to Jonathan Millar of Canada riding Karat.

The weather was perfect, the courses beautifully appointed in fall colored foliage and built to a challenging yet fair standard that tested all the riders in their respective divisions. Course designers Dave Ballard and Brian Morris are credited with creating courses that sorted out the best of the equitation and jumper riders and allowed the Hunters to show off their step. Everyone agreed that this year's courses tested the technical aspect of riding.

The folks at HITS really did a great job of encouraging spectator involvement by offering guided tours of the warm up and stabling area, T-shirt giveaways, clowns on the mezzanine, face painting, Rodeo stunt riding entertainment at intermission, and Announcers Peter Hugo and Vic Carmen kept the audience educated with great explanations of the divisions and judging. Tom Struzzi, of Horse Shows In the Sun, (HITS) should be proud of this gem of a finals horse show.

Riders and trainers agree that the Centrum venue offers great footing, no slipping or sliding on the turns or in the warm up ring, and a hospitality room with complimentary continental breakfast, lunch, and evening snacks. The main ring is 200' X 130' and the warm up ring is approximately 150 X 150 with no columns in the way! Portable stalls are set up at the far end of the warm up ring and under tents in a parking lot across the street from the Centrum building.

Only the next 6 exhibitors to ride in each class were allowed to warm up at one time in the warm up ring when the show was going on, thus giving everyone a comfortable space to get ready. The main ring and warm up area were open for riding during breaks and after midnight.

One thing that was mentioned more than once was that it would be nice for all exhibitors to receive some memento from the show as recognition for making it to the finals. Maybe a baseball hat or T-shirt or something to take home after all is said and done. Some food for thought, given the expense of going to this show. However the general consensus is this is a great show and everyone would like to see it grow and continue at the centrally located Worcester Centrum.

Results:

\$10,000 Children's Jumper Classic National Championship Award went to Shannon McGrath of North Caldwell, New Jersey on her horse Tipitina, Rebecca Margolis of Sherborn, Massachusetts, aboard Bantry Bay placed second.

Adult Amateur Jumper National Championship Award was won by Eleanor Bright of Dover, Massachusetts on board her second ride Manhattan. Elizabeth Maloney of Franklin, Massachusetts on Royal Rival was second and Christie Feoli of Lebanon, New Jersey and Lisselton Princess finished third.

Charles Owen Children's Medal was won by Rebecca Shipps of Wrentham, Massachusetts Miranda Lekacos of Norwich, Connecticut finished in second place and Laura Ting of Dover, Massachusetts took third.

Charles Owen Adult Medal was won by Megan Wilkinson of Glastonbury, Connecticut over 67 contestants. Kelsey Amedeo of Springfield, Massachusetts finished in second place Sandra Willekes of Sparta, New Jersey placed third.

HBO Junior Medal was awarded to Ana Ousouljoglou, second place to Megan Spilatro

Jennifer Alfano of Buffalo, New York, earned many awards – Leading Hunter Rider, Regular Working Hunter Champion, Green Working Hunter Reserve Champion,, and two Horse of the Year awards. The Horse of the Year title for the Working Hunters is GG Valentine owned by Barbara Kearney and Second Year Green Hunter horse went to Enough owned by SBS Farms.

Grand Hunter Champion went to Ticket To Ride owned by Melanie Brown and ridden by James Lala.