



After sitting out of the show ring for two months due to a spinal disk herniation, Peter Pletcher made up for lost time by winning the \$15,000 USHJA International Hunter Derby aboard NLF Shakespeare's Rhythm at the Dallas Harvest Horse Show.

(David Mullinix Photography Photo)



Pletcher Returns To Dominate Dallas Harvest

Following a two-month layup, the Texas trainer triumphs with a hunter derby win on NLF Shakespeare's Rhythm and championships in three divisions.

Anne Lang

SHAKESPEARE'S *HAMLET* contains a famous quote, which could arguably apply to Peter Pletcher of late: "Though this be madness, yet there is a method in it." While some might think it was madness for Pletcher to enter the ring 52 times at his first full-length horse show since recovering from a spinal disk herniation that developed in August, there was indeed a method to the veteran trainer's comeback strategy.

"I don't think there's anything better for you than riding," Pletcher declared. "The therapeutic part of walking and trotting on a horse before coming back to showing truly helped in my healing process."

He proved that by guiding NLF Shakespeare's Rhythm to victory over 35 rivals in the \$15,000 USHJA International Hunter Derby at the Dallas Harvest Horse Show on Nov. 4 in Tyler, Texas, after being back in the saddle for less than 14 days.

Pletcher, 51, said two weeks of preliminary riding at home in Magnolia, Texas, preceded by nearly two months of daily acupuncture treatments, contributed to his rebound and the derby win on "Hamlet," an 8-year-old Holsteiner gelding owned by the Bruheim family of Nordic Lights Farm in Tomball, Texas. Holly Shepherd finished second on Triumpf, owned by Loretta and Sarah

Patterson of Omaha, Neb., and Kelley Farmer placed third on Taken, owned by Nancy Amling of New York, N.Y.

Triumpf won the classic round, and Hamlet was in fourth place going into the handy round, 7 points behind Triumpf. However, Triumpf faltered a bit at the trot fence in the handy, and Shepherd took a more conservative path to some of the option jumps.

Pletcher, on the other hand, was taking inside turns wherever he could, including at jump 9, where an inside turn afterward was particularly challenging. The 10th and final element in the handy was an option that course designer Patrick Rodes had divided between two



jumps set on separate sides of the ring, and the higher option was angled just four strides from the in-gate. After that jump, riders could either turn right for a courtesy circle, or try to come down to a walk immediately upon landing, then exit directly. Pletcher chose the latter option.

"That was definitely a point-getter," Pletcher said, "to get that inside turn and the 4-foot jump, then to be at a walk by the time you left the ring. But Hamlet did it beautifully. I knew he would give it his all no matter what I asked him to do. I just dropped the reins, and he was at a walk."

The judges rewarded the pair with a score of 192, while Triumpf and Shepherd trailed with 183. In the overall results, just 2 points separated first and second places: 367 to 365. (Farmer and Taken weren't far behind, scoring a total of 361.5.)

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"It was heartbreaking!" lamented Shepherd, of Grand Bay, Ala., who a week earlier had won the derby on Triumpf at the Fleur de Lis Classic (Texas). There, Pletcher finished second in the classic round on Tell All but faded in the handy. "Unfortunately, I wasn't paying close attention to the scores. I probably should have done an inside turn instead of going around one of the jumps in the handy. And 'T' stuttered at the trot fence, which I hadn't expected. But my horse was super; he was amazing."

Pletcher felt the same way about Hamlet, who seemed to have regained the winning style that landed him 13th in the final standings of the 2010 USHJA International Hunter Derby Series. But this season, the gelding hadn't cracked the top 12 in three derby attempts, until now. Most of his miles in the show ring this year were spent in the high per-

\$15,000 USHJA INTERNATIONAL HUNTER DERBY Tyler, Texas—Nov. 4

Judges: Panel 1: Kim Dorfman, Haley Schoolfield; Panel 2: Tony Workman, Cathy Dow

HORSE/RIDER	1ST ROUND		2ND ROUND		TOTAL
	Score/ Height Option	Score/ Height Option	Score/Bonus/ Height Option	Score/Bonus/ Height Option	
1. NLF Shakespeare's Rhythm/ Peter Pletcher	83/4	84/4	85/7/4	86/6/4	367
2. Triumpf/Holly Shepherd	86/4	88/4	82/3/4	85/5/4	365
3. Taken/Kelley Farmer	85.5/4	86/4	80/6/4	82/6/4	361.5
4. Alezio/Kelsie Brittan	84/1	85/1	83/6/3	84/4/3	354
5. Surprise/Kelley Farmer	82/4	81/4	78/1/4	79/2/4	339
6. Bases Loaded/Kelley Farmer	81/4	79.5/4	73/7/4	75/5/4	336.5
7. Ovation/Courtney Calcagnini	76.5/4	76/4	79/5/3	80/4/3	334.5
8. Carson/Courtney Calcagnini	80/4	82/4	72/4/4	74/6/4	334
9. Dolce/Stacie Goodson	79/2	77/2	81/3/2	83/2/2	333
10. Valobra/Peter Pletcher	84.5/4	84.5/4	46/7/3	47/3/3	286
11. Kenya/Patty Stovel	85/1	83/1	45/5/2	45/4/2	273
12. Ostentacious/Kelley Farmer	82.5/4	81.5/4	40/1/2	40/0/2	257

36 horses competed.

formance hunters (where he and Pletcher collected several tricolors), and in the large junior hunter, 16-17, division with Lene Bruheim.

Bruheim will continue to show Hamlet in the juniors, while Pletcher will ride the horse in more derbies. But they plan to back off doing the high performance hunters for now. Going between the hunter derby ring and the junior hunter ring is no problem for Hamlet, according to Pletcher, who trains all of the Bruheim horses.

"Hamlet is super-brave. He doesn't mind rider mistakes, and he's gung-ho. You can always count on him," said Pletcher, whose re-emergence at Dallas Harvest was capped by championships in the 3'3" performance hunters on Vino (owned by Ashley Cross), the first year green hunters on Valobra (owned by Eva Bisso) and the pre-green hunters on Luck (owned by Johnnie Martin-Carey).

Pletcher said he's in good physical shape following his marathon performance in Tyler, although he admitted that his back is "still a little sore, for sure. But that's more from standing to teach or walking from ring to ring than from riding," he said. "Honestly, this was probably too much to do, too soon. But the horses were great; everything was right on track. Danny [Arendt, assistant trainer at Pletcher's PJP Farm] did a great job of keeping the horses going while I was down, so it made for an easy transition to get right back into it."

Carson Gibson rode Caden to the tricolor in the large junior hunter, 16-17, division at the Dallas Harvest Horse Show.

► A Clean Sweep

Pletcher's longtime student Carson Gibson swept the large junior hunter, 16-17, division, winning the championship on her Irish Sport Horse Caden and the reserve on Santiago, owned by her family's Shadyside Farm (located near PJP Farm in Magnolia). She also won the WIHS hunter phase on Santiago.



(David Mullinix Photography Photo)



HORSE SHOWS

\$25,000

GRAND PRIX OF DALLAS

Tyler, Texas.—Nov. 6

HORSE/RIDER	FAULTS	TIME	PURSE
1. MTM Timon/Tracy Fenney	0-0	38.08	\$7,500
2. October Hill's Concho/ Erin Davis	0-0	40.85	5,500
3. MTM Centano/ Tracy Fenney	0-4	34.26	3,250
4. Carigor Z/Patty Stovel	0-4	36.00	2,000
5. Alamo/Erin Davis	0-4	38.10	1,500
6. MTM Remington/ Michael McCormick	0-4	39.38	1,250
7. Carl Loui TSP/Christian Rogge	0-4	39.82	1,000
8. Commodore 2/Colleen Acosta	0-8	37.94	750

20 horses competed.

Gibson, 17, has owned Caden since 2007. "His jump is the best feeling," she said. "He jumps big, slow and high. It's the feeling we're all looking for on a hunter course. You kind of have to kick him to get going, but he carries his own pace."

The weekend began on Friday morning with Gibson's participation in a cross-country meet at her school. "I was coming off a high from that meet, with a lot of positive momentum," she said. "And Caden was really feeling great. I had hardly ridden him since [the Pennsylvania National Horse Show], but sometimes I think he jumps even better

when he hasn't been doing as much. He was perfect."

And it wasn't the first time for perfection. This year, Gibson, of Houston, and Caden have won tricolors in the older junior hunters in Texas, Michigan and Kentucky. They earned ribbons at Devon (Pa.) and the Capital Challenge (Md.), and finished in the top 12 in two hunter derbies. At home between shows, Caden shows lots of personality.

"He's really not fond of other horses," Gibson explained, "which is why he has his own paddock and a corner stall. But he's the sweetest, most personable horse around people. He loves to have his head

TIDBITS



- Tracy Fenney, of Flower Mound, Texas, won the \$25,000 Grand Prix of Dallas aboard MTM Timon, an 11-year-old Dutch Warmblood gelding that Fenney and husband Mike McCormick imported from Europe in 2008. This season, "Timon" (Voltaire—Candy) has won six grand prix classes, including the \$50,000 grand prix at HITS-On-The-Hudson (N.Y.) in August. In the Grand Prix of Dallas, Fenney also was third on MTM Centano, while McCormick finished sixth on MTM Remington.

The couple own MTM Farm in Flower Mound. Coincidentally, in late 2009 Fenney campaigned Dallas Harvest hunter derby winner NLF Shakespeare's Rhythm in the first year green hunters after the horse had been deemed too slow for the grand prix. McCormick eventually sold him to the Bruheim family.

- Hanley Morrison traveled to Tyler from Madison, Miss., to win the ASPCA Maclay class and the WIHS overall and jumper phase on her horse Patrick. Morrison, 15, has trained with Holly Shepherd for three years. "Hanley is a natural," Shepherd said. "She taught herself to ride on horses that she kept in her backyard. You can put her on anything, and she follows through really well." Morrison owns two junior jumpers but has been leaning more toward the equitation classes on Patrick, a 14-year-old Dutch Warmblood (Holland—Izmira-Bella). "We've taken him from the jumper ring to the hunter ring to the equitation ring," Shepherd said, "and he's able to do it all."
- Maggie DiVecchia won the pony hunter classic and the WIHS pony equitation class aboard her own Siddhartha, and the two also nabbed the large pony hunter reserve championship. DiVecchia, 16, is from Argyle, Texas, where the high school sophomore trains with her mother, Debbie. "Kiddo," an 8-year-old Welsh cross gelding, was a 12th birthday present for DiVecchia, who has also shown horses in the junior and children's hunter divisions. "He's really calm, sweet and easy," DiVecchia said of Kiddo. "He has a personality, for sure. For the first couple of months I had him, he was really green. But now he's great." From 15 shows this season, Maggie and Kiddo have been champion seven times and reserve champion three times. At press time, Kiddo was leading the large pony hunters in Zone 7.



(David Mullinix Photography Photo)

Tracey Fenney guided MTM Farm's MTM Timon to the top check in the \$25,000 Grand Prix of Dallas.



in your lap, loves peppermints and is really good around little kids. He's great on trail rides, too."

At Dallas Harvest, Gibson also rode in the high junior/amateur-owner jumpers. She won one class on Shadyside's Freebird and one class on Remarkable, owned by her older sister Caroline, a college freshman who rides on the equestrian team at the University of Virginia. The younger Gibson is currently awaiting her own college acceptance letters.

Gibson's mother, Kate, and her aunt, Laura Beckworth, also ride and show. As in previous years, the family will travel to the FTI Winter Equestrian Festival (Fla.) with Pletcher's barn this winter.

► Keeping It Simple

Colleen Acosta was just three weeks into her new position as head trainer at Showtime Farms in Southlake, Texas, when Dallas Harvest came around. The show was Acosta's first one to attend with a batch of students she'd only recently come to know, but they obviously clicked, as the group ended up bringing home three championships and three reserve championships.

One of those students was Sophia DePumpo of Southlake, champion on Zeik It in the large pony hunters and winner of the pony medal class. "Zeik" is an 11-year-old Paint gelding that DePumpo has been leasing for the past year from Olivia Hernandez of Colleyville, Texas. The pair started out in the children's pony hunters, moving up to the A-rated division last April. They won their first champion ribbon two months later, and a second one in October.

"He loves to jump," DePumpo said of Zeik. "He's a really great learning pony. He's very sweet all the time, and he loves Skittles."

DePumpo credited Acosta with helping her prepare for Dallas Harvest. Her game plan going into the show was "to keep it simple, and to just focus and relax."

She praised Acosta for her nice but tough attitude. "She pushes you to your limit. She's a great trainer," said DePumpo.

Acosta said DePumpo had been practicing hard in the weeks leading up to Dallas Harvest, and her efforts paid off. "I thought Sophia might be nervous the second day after riding so well the first day [winning two firsts and a second],"

the trainer said, "but she held it together and did great. I was really proud of her."

DePumpo, 11, began riding just two years ago. On Zeik this year, the sixth-grader has placed in the top three in five pony medal classes, winning two of those. She might like to try the bigger equitation classes someday, when she transitions to horses. Meanwhile, her goals for the next couple of years include "going to Capital Challenge and to Pony Finals a few more times."

TYLER, TX—NOV. 2-6.

3'6"-3'9" PERFORMANCE HUNTER CH: Stella, Kristen Blomstrom.

RES: Lavasco, Paige Brodbeck.

3'3" PERFORMANCE HUNTER CH: Vino, Ashley Cross.

RES: Delorean, Kaitlin Hopmann.

1ST YR. GREEN HUNTER CH: Valobra, Eva Bisso.

RES: Isaiah, Sue Copeland.

2ND YR. GREEN/HIGH PERFORMANCE HUNTER CH:

Taken, Nancy Amling.

RES: Carson, Kristen Blomstrom.

AMATEUR-OWNER HUNTER, 36 & OVER CH: Dolce, Sue Takata.

RES: Dubari, Gayle Cox.

LOW AMATEUR-OWNER HUNTER CH: Scoop, Cammy Turgon.

RES: Banderas, Nancy Lewis.

SMALL JR. HUNTER CH: Right On, Ciara Murphy.

RES: Usher, McLain Ward.

LARGE JR. HUNTER, 15 & UNDER CH: Dylan, Kaitlyn Arnold.

RES: Lavasco, Paige Brodbeck.

LARGE JR. HUNTER, 16-17 CH: Caden, Shadyside Farm.

RES: Santiago, Shadyside Farm.

SMALL/MEDIUM PONY HUNTER CH: Bianca, Michael Binder.

RES: Pashmina, Jordan Coyle.

LARGE PONY HUNTER CH: Zeik It, Sophia Depumpo.

RES: Siddhartha, Maggie Di Vecchia.

ADULT AMATEUR HUNTER, 18-35 CH: Sahalee, Erin Walker.

RES: Sazerac, Ashley Hixon.

ADULT AMATEUR HUNTER, 36-49 CH: Just For Fun, Ann Thomas.

RES: Westview, Eva Bisso.

ADULT AMATEUR HUNTER, 50 & OVER CH: Back Talk, Eileen Fontaine.

RES: Priority, Eileen Fontaine.

CHILDREN'S HUNTER, 14 & UNDER CH: On-Board Z, Kai Devoglaer.

RES: Coraggio PF, Carley Barnett.

CHILDREN'S HUNTER, 15-17 CH: Shoot For The Stars, Jenna Laurie.

RES: Pristine Park, Elisabeth Bruheim.

CHILDREN'S PONY HUNTER CH: My Fair Lady, Eleanor Lorton.

RES: Foxlair Protege', Savannah Hemby.

PRE-GREEN HUNTER CH: Luck, Johnnie Martin-Carey.

RES: On-Board Z, Kai Devoglaer.

3'3" PRE-GREEN HUNTER CH: Talkin' Smak, Hi Hollow Farm.

RES: Four Leaf Clover, Rebekah Wilson.

BABY GREEN HUNTER CH: Very Groovy, Amy Ganci.

RES: Corazon WH, Demar Sciuto.

MODIFIED ADULT AMATEUR HUNTER CH: Soleil, Kim Mayer.

RES: Hawthorne, Sunset Ridge.

MODIFIED CHILDREN'S HUNTER CH: Tuscan Sun, Peter Pletcher.

RES: Armoni, Olivia Provenza.

LIMIT RIDER HUNTER CH: Easy Does It, Delaney Torti.

RES: JL Carlos, M And M Equestrian.

LOW SPECIAL HUNTER CH: Charleston, Nancy Littlejohn.

RES: Valentino, Rhonda Kevlin.

HIGH SPECIAL HUNTER CH: Lorenzo, D'Anne Fereday.

RES: Englester, Juliet Lapietra.

PRE-CHILDREN'S/ADULT HUNTER CH: Lorenzo, D'Anne Fereday.

RES: Sunny Delight, Shelby Easterwood.

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