



NLF Shakespeare's Rhythm Pens A Winning Story At Pin Oak II Hunter Derby

Peter Pletcher triumphs in the \$25,000 event.

Peter Pletcher and NLF Shakespeare's Rhythm jumped to the top of the \$25,000 USHJA International Hunter Derby at Pin Oak Charity II.

BY ANNE LANG

Some horses might use the excuse of moving indoors after showing outside in the sun to spook. But on March 30 in Katy, Texas, NLF Shakespeare's Rhythm effortlessly made the light-to-dark transition for Peter Pletcher as the pair soared to victory in the \$25,000 USHJA International Hunter Derby at the Pin Oak II Charity Horse Show.

"When we stepped into that indoor ring for this hunter derby, he just knew what to do," said Pletcher of Magnolia, Texas. "We'd been showing outside in Florida for the past three months [at the FTI Winter Equestrian Festival], but he jumped amazingly in the indoor ring and

was so crisp. He went just about as well as a horse could go."

Pletcher and "Hamlet," owned by the Bruheim family of Nordic Lights Farm in Tomball, Texas, won the classic round and were third in the handy. Courtney Calcagnini of Pilot Point, Texas, finished second on Kristin Blomstrom's Carson. Third by just 1 point was Holly Shepherd of Grand Bay, Ala., on Loretta and Sarah Patterson's Triumpf, who won the handy after topping the \$25,000 Pin Oak II Grand Prix the previous evening.

Designer J.P. Godard set a course that included "a pretty spooky, two-stride, curved-wall in-and-out with no standards that gave a lot of horses a little bit

of a problem," said Pletcher, who chose the high options in both rounds. "But I know this horse so well now. He's so brave, and where other horses might be spooky, he just tries that much harder."

One of the 4-foot options was a vertical wall with a rail on top that stood in the far corner, "at kind of a weird angle," Pletcher, 51, continued, "and one of my other horses knocked it down. But again, with Hamlet, you couldn't make the jumps big enough for him. He never looks at a jump, never spooks."

In the handy, Pletcher gambled by taking a tight inside turn to a high option following the curved-wall in-and-out.

"Even thinking back on it now, I honestly don't know how this horse did that," Pletcher said. "He had a swap at the next fence, but I think the rest of his round was so impressive, and his jumping style so amazing, that even if you took off 5 points, he'd still be at an 85. He was really straightforward, and he did the inside turns beautifully."

For Hamlet, a 9-year-old Holsteiner gelding who also does the large junior hunters with Lene Bruheim and the high performance hunters with Pletcher (winning three tricolors in the latter division at WEF), this was his first hunter derby of the year. Last November, he won the \$15,000 USHJA International Hunter Derby at the Dallas Harvest Horse Show.

"This horse gives it his all every single time," Pletcher stated. "That alone gives him an edge. Also, with his stride, he can go very slowly—and the lines in this derby were set a little bit continuing. He can basically walk a long line and make it look normal. While other horses are speeding up to get down that line, Hamlet is slowing down."

Pletcher also picked up a win in the \$10,000 USHJA National Hunter Derby on Hudson Bay, owned by Susan Pelletier of Magnolia, Texas—a repeat victory from the week before at Pin Oak I.

"He's just now started coming into his own," Pletcher said of Hudson Bay, who lives at Pelletier's home. "We originally bought him for Becky Gochman as a baby green horse, and we brought him along slowly. He spent three weeks in Florida this year, and he learned a lot there. He jumps very nicely, but his smoothness is what helped him win."

Pletcher earned the Ovation Leading Professional Hunter Rider Award for his accomplishments at Pin Oak II.

Repeat Win

Fresh off a win in the \$30,000 Pin Oak I Grand Prix on March 25, Tracy Fenney repeated that coup on March 31 at Pin Oak II. Both times, Fenney was aboard MTM Centano, a 12-year-old Holsteiner gelding (Cary—Haiba, Grundyman) owned since 2006 by Fenney and her husband, Mike McCormick. The couple's MTM Farm is based in Flower Mound, Texas.

In addition, Fenney placed second on MTM Timon, a 12-year-old Dutch Warmblood (Voltaire—Candy) who's been in the McCormick-Fenney stable for six years (and who won the \$25,000 Pin Oak I Grand Prix on March 23). She also was fourth on MTM Genau, a 7-year-old Holsteiner purchased while Fenney was competing in Ocala, Fla., this winter.

"The courses that [Bernardo Cabral] sets are pretty technical," Fenney said, "but there was nothing too crazy; nothing specifically came down a lot. The triple [7ABC] was set along the wall, so that was a little bit difficult,

\$25,000 USHJA INTERNATIONAL HUNTER DERBY Katy, Texas—Mar. 30

Judges: Panel 1: Jim Toon, Chance Arakelian; Panel 2: Kim Dorfman, Mike Rosser

HORSE/RIDER	1ST ROUND		2ND ROUND		TOTAL
	PANEL 1 SCORE/ HEIGHT OPTION	PANEL 2 SCORE/ HEIGHT OPTION	PANEL 1 SCORE/BONUS/ HEIGHT OPTION	PANEL 2 SCORE/BONUS/ HEIGHT OPTION	
1. NLF Shakespeare's Rhythm/ Peter Pletcher	86/4	89/4	85.5/5/4	86/8/4	375.5
2. Carson/Courtney Calcagnini	84/2	82/2	87/6/4	87/6/4	364
3. Triompf/Holly Shepherd	81/4	78/4	88/8/4	83/9/4	363
4. Libretto/Tammy Provost	83/4	84/4	84/5/4	84/6/4	362
5. Copperfield/Peter Pletcher	80.25/4	85/4	86/7/4	81/6/4	361.25
6. Carlano/Peter Pletcher	80.5/0	77/0	85/7/0	85/6/0	340.5
7. Mouse/Colleen Acosta	80.75/0	81/0	82/4/0	82/4/0	333.75
8. Contemporary/Tammy Provost	78.5/0	81.5/0	83/5/0	80/5/0	333
9. Promise Me/Christian Rogge	79.5/3	76.5/3	79/8/4	70/5/4	332
10. Caden/Carson Gibson	78/0	75/0	78/6/0	78/4/0	319
11. Four Leaf Clover/ Colleen Acosta	77/0	76/0	81/3/0	75/3/0	315
12. Accra/Megan Haag	79/1	73/1	30/0/4	30/4/4	226

34 horses competed.

\$25,000 PIN OAK GRAND PRIX Katy, Texas—Mar. 29

HORSE/RIDER	FAULTS	TIME	PURSE
1. Triompf/Holly Shepherd	0-0	42.57	\$7,500
2. MTM Centano/ Tracy Fenney	0-4	38.74	5,500
3. Tristan/Tiffany Sullivan	0-4	4.88	3,250

25 horses competed.

\$30,000 PIN OAK GRAND PRIX Katy, Texas—Mar. 31

HORSE/RIDER	FAULTS	TIME	PURSE
1. MTM Centano/ Tracy Fenney	0-0	37.50	\$9,000
2. MTM Timon/ Tracy Fenney	0-0	38.35	6,600
3. Triompf/Holly Shepherd	0-0	38.90	3,900
4. MTM Genau/ Tracy Fenney	0-0	39.11	2,400
5. Cicero 75/ Eirin Bruheim	0-0	40.63	1,800
6. All Star/ Tiffany Sullivan	0-0	43.50	1,500
7. Ayway/Eirin Bruheim	0-4	42.37	1,200
8. Winchester/ Theo Genn	0-13	47.53	900
9. Chazar/ Eugenio Garza	0-E		900

25 horses competed.



Tracy Fenney grabbed first and second place in the \$30,000 Pin Oak Grand Prix aboard MTM Centano (pictured) and MTM Timon.

because the crowd made some horses spook off the rail a little bit.

"There also were a few little awkward bending lines," Fenney continued, "including one toward the gate at the beginning [fence 4 to 5], and the last line going away from the gate was about a half-stride off."

Nine entries qualified for the jump-off, with Fenney coming back first on Genau, fourth on Timon and last on "Sly."

"With Genau being relatively green, I went around a jump where I might have turned tight inside with the other two," she said.

Shepherd and Triumpf "came in and beat Genau by just fractions," said Fenney. "So on Timon, I thought I would do the inside turn, but it just seemed too tricky. I thought it would be asking for trouble; it was too awkward an angle. So I just tried to be a hair faster than Holly instead."

Her strategy paid off: Timon finished clear in 38.35 to Triumpf's 38.90, giving her the lead as she headed into the ring on her last ride.

"I knew Sly takes less time to do everything; his turns are more efficient, and he leaves out strides that other horses can't," said Fenney. The result was a clean round and winning time of 37.50 for Sly, who is on a roll this season, having won five grand prix classes during the HITS Ocala Winter Circuit (Fla.) before his two Texas wins.

Fit And Fast

On March 29, it was Triumpf who finished on top in the \$25,000 Pin Oak II Grand Prix, relegating Sly to second. Shepherd has had notable success with cross-entering hunter derbies and grand prix classes with "T," an 8-year-old Dutch Warmblood (Tangelo van de Zuuthoeve—Etriumpf, Le Mexico) who was imported from the Netherlands in September 2010.

"There are no hard parts for him," Shepherd said. "He's so versatile and adjustable that everything feels easy."

However, Shepherd said the March 29 grand prix "was one of the hardest courses of the two weeks, very challenging and technical. One of the hardest elements was jump 3 to 4, a bending six [strides] to a plank. You really had to do a good job of riding, because both of those jumps were easy to bring down. Also, the in-and-out along the wall rode a little scopey, and some horses had problems there. And the natural verticals coming home toward the in-gate were challenging, too."

Only three of 24 entries went clean in the first round of Cabral's course. First to go in the jump-off was Tristan, owned by Haley Farms LLC and ridden by Tiffany Sullivan. But Tristan had a rail at the second-to-last fence.

"After that, I knew I just had to jump clean," Shepherd recalled. "I didn't go too fast, but I wanted to make Tracy [the third and final jump-off contender] have

to run a little bit. I got lucky, because Tracy was faster, but she brought down the last jump."

Triumpf delivered the clear round Shepherd had hoped for in 42.57.

Talent Rising

Meghan Felts, of Manhattan, Kan., had a stellar show, sweeping all five blue ribbons and the championship in the low amateur-owner, 18-35, division on her 14-year-old Westphalian mare Desiree. The pair claimed the same championship at Pin Oak I the previous week, and at Pin Oak II, Felts earned the Ovation Leading Amateur-Owner Hunter Rider Award.

Felts, 28, is trained by her aunt, Mary Ann Funk of Ashwood Farm in St. George, Kan. "She simplifies things for me," Felts said of Funk, whose other riders took home three additional tricolors from Pin Oak II. "She'll give me three or four things to think about, instead of 800 things."

Desiree requires a particular ride. "I tend to get too busy sometimes, so with her, I have to stay still," said Felts. "She's actually quite simple; I just try to make it too difficult sometimes. She wants me to be calm and relaxed, and as long as I stay that way, she stays that way too and jumps very well."

Years ago, Funk imported Desiree for Cleo Stoughton, one of Felts' best friends. Stoughton eventually sold the mare to Naomi Weirens, who trained with Val Renihan in New York. Last year, Felts bought her back.

Felts was a member of the equestrian team at Kansas State University. She's currently finishing up her degrees in photography and business via online courses. She's worked as a photographer's assistant for nearly 10 years, and she's started a business making dry-erase show boards for barns called Super Horse Boards.

Anna Beth Athey of Enid, Okla., owns and shows two ponies who are both 11 (the same age as Athey) and both Welsh. On Northwinds Top Secret, or "Jake," Athey won the medium pony hunter division and the small/medium WIHS Pony Medal. Aboard Bush Farm Blues Brother, aka "Dan," she captured the green pony hunter division. For those feats, she was named Best Child Rider on a Pony.

► HORSE SHOWS

Athey trains with Laura Hightower at Summerhill Farms in Flower Mound. "Anna Beth has a really good feel, great focus, and she's very empathetic to the ponies," Hightower said. "They all really like her. She's a hard worker, and she thinks a lot about the ponies. She takes care of them and cares about how they feel."

The fifth grader said she likes showing Jake because of his long stride and the way he moves. Her favorite things about Dan are "his scope and his ground manners."

Athey's mother, Molly, also won ribbons at Pin Oak II, in the modified adult hunter and modified adult equitation divisions. While Jake and Dan board at Summerhill, the Atheys keep one horse and one pony at home for practice between shows.

Two In One

Laurie Lewis, of Oklahoma City, swept the adult amateur, 36-49, hunter division, winning the championship on Abercrombie, an 11-year-old Oldenburg gelding by Sion, and reserve on Westbrooke, a 10-year-old Dutch Warmblood gelding (Andiamo—Sataja Verte). She was named the Ovation Leading Adult Amateur Hunter Rider.

Lewis, 39, trains with Pletcher but keeps her six horses at home on 100 acres. She bought "Fitch" in late 2010 from Michael Dennehy in Colorado. The horse is very easy, Lewis said, "no spooking, nothing. I just love him. He never pulls; you just point and go, and he cruises down the lines. Westbrooke is the same way; they're probably the two most similar horses I've had at one time."

Lewis admitted to carrying a little rubber pig in her pocket for good luck at shows.

Chris Nelson imported Westbrooke, and Lewis bought him in January. Pin Oak II was her first show on him, so she was grateful that Pletcher rode him in the first year green hunters earlier in the week, earning a reserve championship. Lewis said having her horses at home lets her really get to know them.

"Fitch will pin his ears," she said, "trying to be tough, but if you pet him his ears go back up. He's a softie, really. But Westbrooke is kind of ornery; he'll nip at you, but he has lots of personality." 🐾



Meghan Felts went home with an armload of blue ribbons and the tricolor from the low amateur-owner, 18-35, hunter division aboard Desiree at Pin Oak Charity II.

► HORSE SHOWS | Results

► Pin Oak Charity II

KATY, TX—MAR. 27-APR. 1.

ADULT AMATEUR HUNTER, 18-35 CH: Balisto, Linda Langmeier.

RES: Gretta, KAC Horses LLC.

ADULT AMATEUR HUNTER, 36-49 CH: Abercrombie, Laurie Lewis.

RES: Westbrooke, Laurie Lewis.

ADULT AMATEUR HUNTER, 50 & OVER CH: Yes He's Grande, Linda Yarborough.

RES: Elliot, Alliy Moyer.

LOW AMATEUR-OWNER HUNTER, 18-35 CH: Desiree, Meghan Felts.

RES: Optimized, Colby Hassfurther.

LOW AMATEUR-OWNER HUNTER, 36 & OVER CH: Regatta, Emily Woodall.

RES: Scoop, Cammy Turgon.

AMATEUR-OWNER HUNTER, 18-35 CH: Timber Ridge, Shane George.

RES: Vittorio, Haley Farms LLC.

AMATEUR-OWNER HUNTER, 36 & OVER CH: Dubari, Gayle Cox.

RES: Mac Arthur Park, Lynn Walsh.

SMALL JR. HUNTER, 15 & UNDER CH: Christabel, Rebecca Odom.

RES: Estreet, Lindsey Roberts.

SMALL JR. HUNTER, 16-17 CH: Holiday, Shadyside Farm.

RES: Bachelorette, Grace Mitchell.

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

RES: North Shore, Annie Kartsotis.

LARGE JR. HUNTER, 16-17 CH: MTM Braggin Rights, Taylor Sutton.

RES: Sandro Royal, Leslie Smith.

SMALL PONY HUNTER CH: Loafers Lodge Onyx, Emily Watson.

RES: Tiger Lily, Elise Kratzer.

MEDIUM PONY HUNTER CH: Northwinds Top Secret, Anna Athey.

RES: RosMel's Uncontested, Isabella Littlejohn.

LARGE PONY HUNTER CH: Sterling, Shannon McKim.

RES: Jamestown, Hallie Smith.

GREEN PONY HUNTER CH: Bush Farm Blues Brother, Molly Athey.

RES: Ottercreek Scottsman, Laura Rodes.

CHILDREN'S HUNTER, 14 & UNDER CH: Castano, Maddie Chenoweth.

RES: Tahiti Boy, Cadence Creek Farm LLC.

CHILDREN'S HUNTER, 15-17 CH: Easy Does It, Delaney Torti.

RES: On-Board Z, Kai Devoglaer.

CHILDREN'S PONY HUNTER CH: Zeik It, M and M Equestrian.

RES: Brownland's Jessie James, Claire Levinson.

MODIFIED ADULT AMATEUR HUNTER CH: Risque, Rebecca Horwitz.

RES: Amadeo, DDM Equestrian LLC.

MODIFIED CHILDREN'S HUNTER CH Tie: Summerton, Brooke Weiss & Audacious, Marlac Farm Inc..

SHORT STIRRUP HUNTER CH: No Kidding, Mary Daniel.

RES Tie: Peterpotamus, Mia Holstead & Painted Desert, Britt McCormick.

LONG STIRRUP HUNTER CH: First In Line, Natalie Bass.

RES: Sherwin Williams, Ali Naugle.