



Peter Pletcher rode Kyle Owens' Luxe to first place in the \$30,000 USHJA International Hunter Derby at the Pin Oak II Charity Horse Show.

Pletcher Is Nearly Perfect In Pin Oak's USHJA International Hunter Derby

The veteran hunter rider scores high marks on new European import Luxe's first derby attempt and finishes a close second on CR Beethoven.

BY ANNE LANG

PHOTOS BY SHAWN McMILLEN PHOTOGRAPHY

Going into the handy round of the \$30,000 USHJA International Hunter Derby at the Pin Oak II Charity Horse Show in Katy, Texas, on March 28, Peter Pletcher was trailing classic round winners Jennifer Alfano and Jersey Boy by 13 points. Not just on one horse but on each of his top two

performers that night: Luxe and CR Beethoven.

"I knew the riders and horses who would be going after me," Pletcher said. "Like Jen and Jersey Boy; I mean, you don't get much better than those two in this sport. So I knew I had to take all of the impossible tracks, like going tight inside from fence 1 to fence

2 with their two tall, huge options."

But as Pletcher piloted Luxe away from the first fence in the handy, he turned right and dropped his left rein. "As I was facing fence 2, my right rein slipped out, as well," he said. "So I just closed my leg, and Luxe just sailed over the jump. In the air, I got my left rein back and turned. The whole time,

\$30,000
USHJA INTERNATIONAL HUNTER DERBY
Katy, Texas—Mar. 28

Judges: Panel 1: Hope Glynn, Bobbie Reber; Panel 2: James Clapperton, Keith Hastings

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. Luxe/Peter Pletcher	83/4	85/4	86/8/4	85/9/4	372
2. CR Beethoven/Peter Pletcher	84/4	84/4	90/9/4	80.5/8/4	371.5
3. Amoro De Legante/Morgan Erbstoesser	76/0	78/0	75/8/0	81/9/0	327
4. Callucci/Courtney Calcagnini	77/0	73/0	85/6/0	72/9/0	322
5. Lacroix/Peter Pletcher	69/2	73.5/2	77/6/0	80/8/0	317.5
6. Bull Run's Rubicon/Elizabeth Adelson	71/0	74/0	80/5/0	73/4/0	307
7. Maggie May/Jennifer Alfano	70/0	75/0	74/5/0	68/5/0	297
8. Cellino/Martien Van Der Hoeven	88/3	90/3	46/9/3	43/8/3	296
9. Jersey Boy/Jennifer Alfano	95/4	86/4	35/8/4	45/8/4	293
10. Charlie Brown/Peter Pletcher	72/4	79/4	45/6/4	45/6/4	269
11. Greetings/Morgan Erbstoesser	74/0	81/0	48/8/0	47/6/0	264
12. Lago W/Mickie Sage	74.5/3	75.5/3	30/5/2	35/2/2	232

30 horses competed.

from Germany in early January through Desiree Johnson. He arrived during the second week of the FTI Winter Equestrian Festival (Fla.) and soon thereafter stepped into the high performance hunters with Pletcher, earning a reserve championship in that division just five weeks later. Concurrently, Luxe won ribbons in the amateur-owner hunters, 18-35, with owner Kyle Owens of Powell, Ohio.

"I bought Luxe for Kyle as an amateur hunter, hoping that he'd work out as a derby horse for me, as well," Pletcher said. "We weren't sure how he'd adjust to going straight into the high performance hunters, but it wasn't hard for him. He's a super scopey and athletic horse, so it worked out well."

Luxe also has no problem with carrying two different riders in two different divisions. "He has such a good brain for the amateurs, and the spookier, bigger and wider the courses are, the better he likes them," said Pletcher. "He'll be the perfect horse for shows like Devon [Pa.]

the horse just stayed smooth and on track.

"That very first jump in the handy, being a high option that came up right out of the gate, definitely was a challenge," added Pletcher, 53. "The inside turn to fence 2 was hard, too. I think those were the two most challenging parts of the course, especially coming up so soon. Usually those types of challenges come up later in the course."

But the rest of the J.P. Godard-designed course played out well for the pair, who won the event with a score of 372, half a point ahead of CR Beethoven.

Alfano and Jersey Boy, owned by SBS Farms, caused a collective gasp from spectators when they brought down all the rails at fence 4, a large oxer. After pausing to regroup, horse and rider gamely went on and finished the handy course, ending up in ninth place overall. Alfano also finished seventh on Billie Steffee's Maggie May.

Luxe, a 9-year-old Dutch Warmblood by Calato, was purchased



Jamie Davis' Pearl Street won the Texas Pre-Green Super Stake and the USHJA Pre-Green Incentive class with Peter Pletcher aboard.

► Fenney Doesn't Disappoint In Grand Prix

Following her victory in the \$30,000 Walter Oil & Gas Grand Prix on March 29 aboard MTM Timon, Tracy Fenney, as always, rode her horse back to the MTM Farm barn aisle and untacked him herself. She then fed him several giant-sized carrots, rubbing his face and telling him what a great job he'd done.

Eleven of 27 horses came back for the jump-off on a course designed by Bernardo Costa Cabral, including Timon and Fenney's other mount, MTM Centano, who had a rail and ended up sixth. Timon, a 14-year-old Dutch Warmblood (Voltaire—Candy) posted one of five double clears.

"When Timon went to the first jump, I thought: 'He's on, he's ready,'" said Fenney, of Flower Mound Texas. "I figured that with Wilhelm [Genn] and a couple other fast ones behind us, I'd go ahead and just let him go for it. And he felt great, awesome."

Having ridden in the middle of the jump-off order, Fenney was free to watch the remaining riders. However,

she said really she doesn't like to watch "because I don't like to jinx myself. But when Theo Genn [son of Wilhelm] on Paradox was on course, I could hear the crowd yelling 'C'mon, c'mon, c'mon!' so I thought, 'Oh gosh, he must be really close.'"

Theo's clear jump-off round on Paradox (owned by Thomas Bruinsma) stopped the clock at 33.59 seconds, landing the pair in a close second. Wilhelm finished third on Welcome Cor, owned by Ann Anastasio.

Fenney credits Timon's big stride for giving him an edge. And the chestnut was feeling particularly good at this show, she added.

"I couldn't have asked him to do anything differently," Fenney said. "He took every turn and angle jump fast and left out strides. I was ecstatic. He had just gone in the [Great American] \$1 Million Grand Prix on March 24 at HITS Ocala [Fla.], which was quite hard."

Fenney was also happy with Centano's performance at Pin Oak. "He

just cut the corner a bit too much going to the second-to-last jump and fell in just a hair. He's a little more nervous than Timon; I can push Timon a little bit, but you just kind of need to hang on to Centano more than Timon," she said. "Centano didn't quite have his feet under him at the second-to-last jump, but he's so fast."

Timon also won the \$25,000 Bisso Marine Grand Prix on March 27, while Centano was second. Fenney, 49, said she's been riding at the Pin Oak shows since she was 13. She's watched the show evolve into a major-league charity event that since 1945 has raised approximately \$5 million for various children's medical organizations and medical facilities in Texas.

"Pin Oak is amazing," Fenney said. "There are so many people here, and so many horses. And we had what seemed like a million people looking at our sales horses today. This show is great for the industry."



Tracy Fenney was fastest in the \$30,000 Walter Oil & Gas Grand Prix aboard MTM Timon.

\$30,000 WALTER OIL & GAS GRAND PRIX Katy, Texas—Mar. 29

HORSE/RIDER	FAULTS	TIME	PURSE
1. MTM Timon/Tracy Fenney	0-0	32.25	\$9,000
2. Paradox/Theo Genn	0-0	33.59	6,600
3. Welcome Cor/Wilhelm Genn	0-0	34.99	3,900
4. Boucanier/Wilhelm Genn	0-0	37.24	2,400
5. Calotta/Tony Font	0-0	38.58	1,800
6. MTM Centano/Tracy Fenney	0-4	31.61	1,500
7. Sun Tzu/Penny Brennan	0-4	36.62	1,200
8. MTM Twenties Girl/Frankie Owens	0-4	37.16	900
9. Alamo/Erin Davis-Heineking	0-4	38.92	900
10. Casseur De Prix/Jenni McAllister	0-8	35.74	600
11. Here I Come/Jenni McAllister	0-16	38.01	600

27 horses competed.

► **JENNIFER ALFANO** of Buffalo, N.Y., was named the Ovation Leading Hunter Rider after winning championships in the first-year green hunters on Counting Stars, owned by SBS Farms Inc.; the second-year green hunters on Maggie May, owned by Billie Steffee; and the conformation hunters on Timber Ridge, owned by Shane George. Alfano collected reserve championships in the high performance hunters on Jersey Boy, owned by SBS Farms, and the conformation hunters on her own Candid.

► **KYLE OWENS**, 22, of Powell, Ohio, was champion on Messick in the adult amateur, 18-35, division, and the duo also won the NAL/WIHS Adult Hunter Classic. Owens was reserve champion on Luxe in the amateur-owner division and on Voila in the adult amateur, 18-35, division. All three horses are owned by Owens, who is trained by Peter Pletcher.

► **ANNA BETH ATHEY**, 13, of Enid, Okla., was champion on her own Valor in the large green pony hunters, with a sweeping run of seven blue ribbons that included the green pony hunter classic. Athey also was champion on her own Northwinds Top Secret in the medium pony hunters. Aboard Entourage (owned by the Yandell Family Farm LLC), Athey was reserve champion in the large pony hunters, first in the large pony hunter classic, and first in the WIHS Large Pony Medal. "Anna Beth is extremely athletic, with great balance," said trainer Laura Hightower. "She's very focused on doing things correctly. Anna Beth and her parents all realize that any setbacks along the way are what help you grow as a rider."

► **ELIZABETH ADELSON**, 16, of Tulsa, Okla., was named the Ovation Leading 3'6" Equitation Rider after scoring wins in the ASPCA Maclay, the USEF/Pessoa Hunter Seat Medal and the

WIHS Equitation Overall. Adelson also finished sixth overall in the USHJA International Hunter Derby. All rides were on her own Bull Run's Rubicon. Trainer Libby Barrow said Adelson has become "very focused and serious about equitation in the past year, and that focus is starting to pay off."

► **ANNAKATE LONG**, 11, of Magnolia, Texas, earned the title of Ovation Leading Pony Hunter Rider after winning the championship in the small pony hunters on her own Rollingwoods Lemony Sticket. The pair's seven straight blue ribbons included the small pony hunter stake and small pony hunter classic. "AnnaKate works very hard," said trainer Robyn Schmidt, "and she follows every direction she's given. She usually stays very calm and has a natural instinct for riding. AnnaKate loves all of her ponies and is very kind-hearted, so they will do anything for her."

and the [fall] indoor shows, because nothing fazes him."

That would include the derby at Pin Oak, which drew 30 entries. "This was his first derby, so it was a pretty good start," Pletcher said with a smile. "Luxe was awesome. He gained some really good jumper miles in Europe, so he did some good turns in the derby. He was really good, super brave and super easy."

Pletcher had expected that jumper mileage might result in some extra energy from the horse. "But it turned out that he's so beautiful and smooth to ride," he said. "He took to the hunters so fast, probably faster than any horse I've had right off from Europe. It was amazing."

The only minor challenge for Pletcher has been learning to ride Luxe's big stride. "With the other horses I rode in this derby, I had to get up the lines a little bit early," he said. "With Luxe, I ended up having to slow down, but I'm sure I'll get used to that."

Owens shares Pletcher's enthusiasm for her elegant gray.

"I feel really comfortable jumping big on him, even though I don't have that much experience riding at 3'6"," said Owens, 22, who owns the 65-acre Woodbridge Farm in Ostrander, Ohio, and meets Pletcher at the shows. "I've shown a lot of 3' horses. But I feel so comfortable on Luxe; he has all the scope and power in the world. He has a huge step, he's talented and very brave, so I feel like I can get a lot of miles on him."

Unlike his barn mate, runner-up CR Beethoven has plenty of derby experience, with numerous wins to his credit, including a fifth-placed finish at the 2013 USHJA International Hunter Derby Championships (Ky.) with Texas trainer Martien van der Hoeven in the irons.

Margaret Anderson owns the 14-year-old Dutch Warmblood (Concorde—Mythe) and shows him in the low amateur-owner hunter, 18-35, division. 🐾

► Pin Oak Charity II

Katy, TX—Mar. 25-30.

PIN OAK HUNTER CH: Worth Noteing, Melissa Mishler.

RES: Midnight Madness, Mary Easterwood.

CONFORMATION HUNTER CH: Timber Ridge, Shane George.

RES: Candid, Jennifer Alfano.

1ST YR. GREEN HUNTER CH: Counting Stars, SBS Farms Inc.

RES: Callucci, KNW Farms LLC.

2ND YR. GREEN HUNTER CH: Maggie May, Billie Steffee.

RES: Limbo, Sophia Depumpo.

HIGH PERFORMANCE HUNTER CH: Cellino, Julie Thompson.

RES: Jersey Boy, SBS Farms Inc.

3'6" PERFORMANCE HUNTER CH: McGraw, Kimberley Quinn.

RES: Lacroix, Blackstone Farms Ltd.

3'3" PERFORMANCE HUNTER CH: Montgomery, Shane George & Luck, Johnnie Martin-Carey.

RES: Clementine, Elizabeth McRae & Thanks For The Gold, Rancho De Los Arboles LLC.

LOW PRE-GREEN HUNTER CH: Pearl Street, Jamie Jarvis.

RES: Voila, Kyle Owens.

HIGH PRE-GREEN HUNTER CH: Zafira, Nanette Hebert.

RES: Current Affair, Carly Lazzari.

AMATEUR-OWNER HUNTER CH: Q, Susan Baker.

RES: Luxe, Kyle Owens.

LOW AMATEUR-OWNER HUNTER CH: MacArthur Park, Lynn Walsh.

RES: MTM Do Right, Mr. & Mrs. Ken Mackenzie.

SMALL JR. HUNTER CH: Pilot, Lana Broussard.

RES: Wahlberg, Isabel Coleman.

LARGE JR. HUNTER, 15 & UNDER CH: San Miguel,