



Courtney Calcagnini rode Kristen Blomstrom's Carson to the win in the \$25,000 USHJA International Hunter Derby at the Spring Gathering Horse Show and also took home the high performance hunter tricolor.

Calcagnini Claims Spring Gathering Hunter Derby

Aboard the young Carson, the Texas trainer takes the grand prize with wins in both rounds.

BY ANNE LANG

On Easter Sunday, while many Americans were attending church, enjoying brunch or dyeing hardboiled eggs, Courtney Calcagnini was loading up barn equipment, stacks of jumps and about two dozen horses for the move to her new farm in Argyle, Texas—an enormous undertaking in itself.

But less than 48 hours earlier, on April 6, Calcagnini had set aside the packing boxes and headed 275 miles south to Katy, Texas, to win both classes and the overall crown in the \$25,000

USHJA International Hunter Derby at the Spring Gathering Horse Show.

“Carson was perfect in both rounds,” said Calcagnini, 28. “He just went in and jumped unbelievably; he couldn’t have been any better. He’s so scopey. He can jump huge while still going slow.”

Shawn Casady, of Harriman, Tenn., finished second in the 32-horse field, 9 points behind Carson, on Elliot, owned by Alliy Moyer of Carmel, Ind.

“It was a great course,” Calcagnini said of Allen Rheinheimer’s design for the large indoor arena, “but I will say, it was

pretty challenging, definitely a rider’s course. Right away, the first jump gave you an option of a straight up-and-down wall, either the tall side or the lower side. And on several of the turns, the horses might have thought they were going to the left when you’d turn them back to the right instead. Your horse had to be pretty sharp to ride it nicely.

“There was only one line on the entire course,” Calcagnini continued, “and it was a vertical to a vertical in the middle. You had the option of doing the high or low side, and the high side was

► HORSE SHOWS

definitely big. It walked a little bit long, so some people would jump in and get there too easily and have a rub or a rail. There weren't a lot of ground lines anywhere on the course, so that made it especially challenging."

In the handy round, Calcagnini opted to ride conservatively. "I played it a little bit safe," she said, "because I'd won the first round and was only 6 points ahead going into the class. The course was set so you could go inside on some of the jumps, or on all of them. I didn't do all inside turns, just to be safe. They made the six-stride line from the first class into a two-stride for the handy, and I chose the smaller side. All of my decisions worked out."

Kristen Blomstrom, 15, of Southlake, Texas, owns Carson, a 7-year-old Dutch Warmblood (Caretino—E-Delytsa). She purchased the 16.3-hand gelding from Sam Edelman during the HITS-On-The-Hudson series in Saugerties, N.Y., in August 2010. Acting on a suggestion by Texas trainer Mike McCormick, Calcagnini had flown east to try Carson as an equitation prospect for Blomstrom.

"He'd only shown in a few 5-year-old jumper classes at that point," Calcagnini said. "I rode him and loved the way he felt. I went back home and told the Blomstroms, 'He's really green, but he has a really good feel. I like him a lot.' So they took my word for it and bought him without riding him."

Calcagnini brought Carson to her farm (located at the time in Pilot Point, Texas) and soon discovered that his vast scope transcended the equitation realm. "He just kept jumping better and better," she recalled. "He was so unbroke, but he had so much heart and was so good-minded that later that fall I did him in a little derby at Tyler. After the first couple of jumps, I thought, 'Oh my gosh, this horse is amazing.' Then I started doing him in the high performance hunters right away, because even though he was still very green, it was so easy for him."

Last season, Carson and Calcagnini were Zone 7 champions in the high performance hunters after winning 13 tricolors from 16 shows in Texas, Mississippi, Georgia and Tennessee. And they added another high performance hunter championship at this show.

Also last year, the pair competed in 13

TIDBITS

► **Peter Pletcher**, of Magnolia, Texas, rode to the top three spots in the \$10,000 USHJA National Hunter Derby. He finished first on Enrico, owned by Mary Stone of Austin, Texas; second on Aura, owned by Eva Bisso of Tomball, Texas; and third on Luck, owned by Johnnie Martin-Carey of Argyle. At both of the Pin Oak shows in the preceding two weeks, Pletcher won this same event on Hudson Bay, owned by Susan Pelletier of Magnolia.

► **Eirin Bruheim**, 19, won the \$5,000 Spring Gathering Jumper Classic on NLF Trans Atlantic, owned by her family's Northern Lights Farm based in Tomball, Texas. Bruheim competed in the inaugural Youth Olympic Games in Singapore in 2010, where she was part of the sixth-placed North American show jumping team.

► **Isabel Coleman**, 14, was champion in the small/large pony hunters and won the pony hunter classic on Footnote, a large pony owned by Georgia Claessens of Rolling Hills, Calif. "We're really pleased," said Sean Steffee, who

co-trains Coleman with his wife, Livia Eckhardt. "Isabel just started leasing this pony, and this was their first show together." Coleman also earned the large green pony championship on King Midas, owned by the Coleman family's Sandy Creek Stables in Kiln, Miss., where Steffee and Eckhardt are based. Michael Newman of Pace, Fla., arranged both ponies for Coleman.

► Two sisters from Austin each took home a tricolor: **Rebecca Odom**, 13, was champion in the small junior hunter, 15 and under, division on her horse Christabel, and **Madeline Odom**, 14, was champion in the children's hunter, 14 and under, division on her horse Daisy Mae. Susan McMorris of Rio Vista Farm in Del Valle, Texas, trains the sisters.

► **Michael Wallace** of Argyle captured first place in the USEF Medal and ASPCA Maclay classes aboard Usher, owned by McLain Ward. Wallace, 16, trains with Julie Cleveland of Hillcrest Farm in Argyle.

USHJA International Hunter Derbies, with six top-five finishes, including wins at the Brownland Farm Summer (Tenn.) in June, and the Texas Sport Horse Cup in September. They were second in the USHJA International Hunter Derby at Pin Oak II, just one week prior to Spring Gathering.

During the HITS Ocala series (Fla.), Blomstrom showed Carson to ribbons in the large junior hunter, 15 and under, division and the WIHS Medal. But on weekends when there's a hunter derby, Carson only shows in one other division, either the high performance hunters or the juniors.

"Kristen and her family are awesome in that they want to keep him fresh," Calcagnini said, adding that Blomstrom has another junior hunter and a children's jumper to ride, as well.

Calcagnini said they'll likely enter Carson in one more hunter derby in Tyler, Texas, before the June-to-June qualifying period ends. "Then hopefully we'll do a couple more derbies in the summer," she said, "just to keep him going before we go to the derby finals in August."

Calcagnini has nothing but adoration for the young, untried horse on whom she gambled—and ultimately won—nearly two years ago.

"Carson is super sweet," she stated. "He loves carrots, he licks you, and he's very spoiled. I took him for a hand walk at the show the other day, and he was greeting everyone we passed, like, 'Hey, can I eat your hamburger?' He's the most chill horse, and he has the best mind."

Looking Ahead

Meanwhile, Calcagnini is settling into her new 20-acre farm in Argyle. She's grateful that her current customers are transferring their horses with her and that she now has a business partner: grand prix rider Scott Lenkart, formerly of Minnesota.

Calcagnini and Lenkart teamed up at the beginning of the Ocala circuit "to see how everything would go," Calcagnini explained, "and it went really well, so we just finalized our plans during the past several weeks. Spring Gathering marked our seventh week on the road."

Having flown solo for the past five

years, Calcagnini said she's happy to be working with a partner. "Having Scott onboard has helped me so much," she said. "It's been so incredible to have someone like him on the ground for me, especially in the derbies with all of his jumper

\$25,000 SPRING GATHERING GRAND PRIX Katy, Texas—Apr. 7

HORSE/RIDER	FAULTS	TIME	PURSE
1. MTM Genau/ Tracy Fenney	0-4	44.44	\$7,500
2. South Bound/ Martien Van Der Hoeven	0-4	47.94	5,500
3. MTM Timon/ Tracy Fenney	0-4	49.29	3,250
4. H.J. El Magnifico/ Eduardo Braun	0-8	44.41	2,000
5. Twilght/Katie Cox	0-12	50.89	1,500

22 horses competed.



Tracy Fenney continued her winning streak, scoring the top check in the \$25,000 Spring Gathering Grand Prix aboard MTM Genau.

background. I'm getting into jumpers a lot more now. A lot of my juniors have jumpers, and I'm getting ready to start a horse in the grand prix."

Calcagnini hasn't strayed far from her native city of Dallas, near where she began riding as a child at her aunt's farm in Flower Mound, Texas. She was just 13 when she became a working student for McCormick and Tracy Fenney. Two years later, she took the same role at the barn of North Texas trainer Colleen McQuay, until she aged out of the juniors and started working full time as a professional for McQuay. In December 2007, Calcagnini and her former husband, reiner Stefano Calcagnini, launched CSC Farm in Pilot Point. For the time being, her new farm with Lenkart will keep the CSC name.

Fenney The Grand Prix Genius

During the three-week run of two Pin Oak shows and the Spring Gathering show, Tracy Fenney of Flower Mound won four out of five grand prix classes on offer.

As a grand finale, Fenney and MTM Genau captured the \$25,000 Spring Gathering Grand Prix on April 7, beating 21 rivals on a challenging course set by Michel Vaillancourt.

"There were quite a few horses with time faults in the first round," Fenney observed. "Genau [who's nearly 17 hands and has a long stride] went within the time allowed, but he's usually a little bit slower because he takes more time in the air. So he must be getting quicker, and I'm excited about that, because when I showed him in Ocala, he had 4 time faults. So I'm happy to know he can go within the time allowed and still leave the jumps up."

McCormick and Fenney bought Genau, a Holsteiner (Cassini I—R-Quinta II, Corrado I), in March during the HITS Ocala series. "Mike saw him in the warm-up area and really liked him," Fenney said. "He sees things in different horses that some people might not see."

Soon after acquiring Genau, Fenney rode him to second place among 37 entries in the Welcome Jumper Stake at the Ocala Winter Finals in March. That same week, in Genau's first big event, the \$25,000 SmartPak Grand Prix, they placed 12th out of 30. Things steadily improved when the horse set foot in Texas: during Pin Oak I at the end of March, he and Fenney were third in both the \$30,000 and the \$25,000 grand prix. And at Pin Oak

II, they finished fourth in the \$30,000 grand prix.

"I'm so grateful to Mike for buying this horse," Fenney declared, "and all my other incredible horses, too."

In German, "genau" translates to "exactly" or "precisely." Some urban dictionaries translate the word as meaning "hell yeah," Fenney said with a laugh. "We have a friend who says 'genau' all the time, and I looked it up," she explained. "I liked the definition, so I thought it made a cute name."

Fenney said Genau jumps "hard and high," and that people frequently tell her she should ride him in the hunter derbies, "because he jumps so pretty and with such style."

He's also prone to mischief. "Genau is very playful," Fenney said. "The first couple of nights that we had him in Ocala, the night watchman was calling us from the barn to say he'd done this or done that, like bringing down a fan. He's still kind of a baby, so he's very busy."

Fenney's been very busy, too—with winning. "It's been a pretty amazing three months," she said, "because I won seven out of 14 grand prix [classes] in Ocala before these four grand prix wins in Texas. I feel so lucky to have the horses that I have."

Super Horse

At Spring Gathering, Fenney also won the \$15,000 Texas Pre-Green Super Stake on MTM U Call It, a 5-year-old gelding (by Westphalian sire Rock Forever) that she and McCormick imported from Europe last November.

Fenney said she chose his show title from a list of potential names she keeps handy, and he's known around the barn as "Reuben." "When I hear or read something that I like," she said, "I write it down to save for a possible horse's name."

Reuben, said Fenney, is "an over-achiever. He really likes to jump well, and he's just a cool horse. We didn't show him until the last few weeks of Ocala, but he's come along very far, very fast for a 5-year-old. He's just risen to the top of the class."

Fenney also was second in the pre-green stake on MTM Inside Scoop, owned by Didi and Kenneth

MacKenzie of Flower Mound, which is also home to MTM Farm. The town, despite its close proximity to the Dallas area, was spared any effects of the devastating tornadoes that ripped through North Texas on April 3.

"We kept calling home [from Katy]," Fenney said, "and they were telling us, 'The skies are orange...the skies are green...the skies are purple.' But it pretty much went around us. We had some limbs down and some washout on the roads, but that was about it." ●

► Results

Spring Gathering

Katy, TX—Apr. 3-7.

HIGH PERFORMANCE HUNTER CH: Carson, Kristen Blomstrom.

RES: NLF Shakespeare's Rhythm, Nordic Lights Farm LLC.

GREEN HUNTER CH: Celebrate, Mimi Herbert.

RES: Wayfarer, Jill Donaldson.

CONFORMATION HUNTER CH: Timber Ridge, Shane George.

RES: Paul Stuart, Wendy Hofmeister.

3'6"-3'9" PERFORMANCE HUNTER CH: Gia, Laurie Lewis.

RES: Refined, SHF Enterprises Inc..

3'3" PERFORMANCE HUNTER CH: Talkin' Smak, Hi Hollow Farm.

RES: Luck, Johnnie Martin Carey.

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

RES: Rockabye, Dianne Forehlich.

LOW AMATEUR-OWNER HUNTER, 36 & OVER CH: MTM Inside Scoop, Mr. & Mrs. Ken MacKenzie.

RES: Regatta, Emily Woodall.

PRE-GREEN HUNTER, SEC. A CH: Higgins, Genevieve Haas.

RES: For The Crown, NorthernSide LLC.

AMATEUR-OWNER HUNTER, 18-35 CH: Icing, Lindsey Robert.

RES: Timber Ridge, Shane George.

AMATEUR-OWNER HUNTER, 36 & OVER CH: Santiago, Shadyside Farm.

RES: MacArthur Park, Lynn Walsh.

LARGE JR. HUNTER, 15 & UNDER CH: Cavalier, Katie McDonnell.

RES: CR Carolato II, Buddrus Equine LLC.

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

RES: Libretto, Alliy Moyer.

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

RES: Midnight Hour, Fleur De Lis Farms.

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

RES: Usher, McLain Ward.

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

RES: Little Wonder, Kurstin Grady.

SMALL/LARGE PONY HUNTER CH: Footnote,