



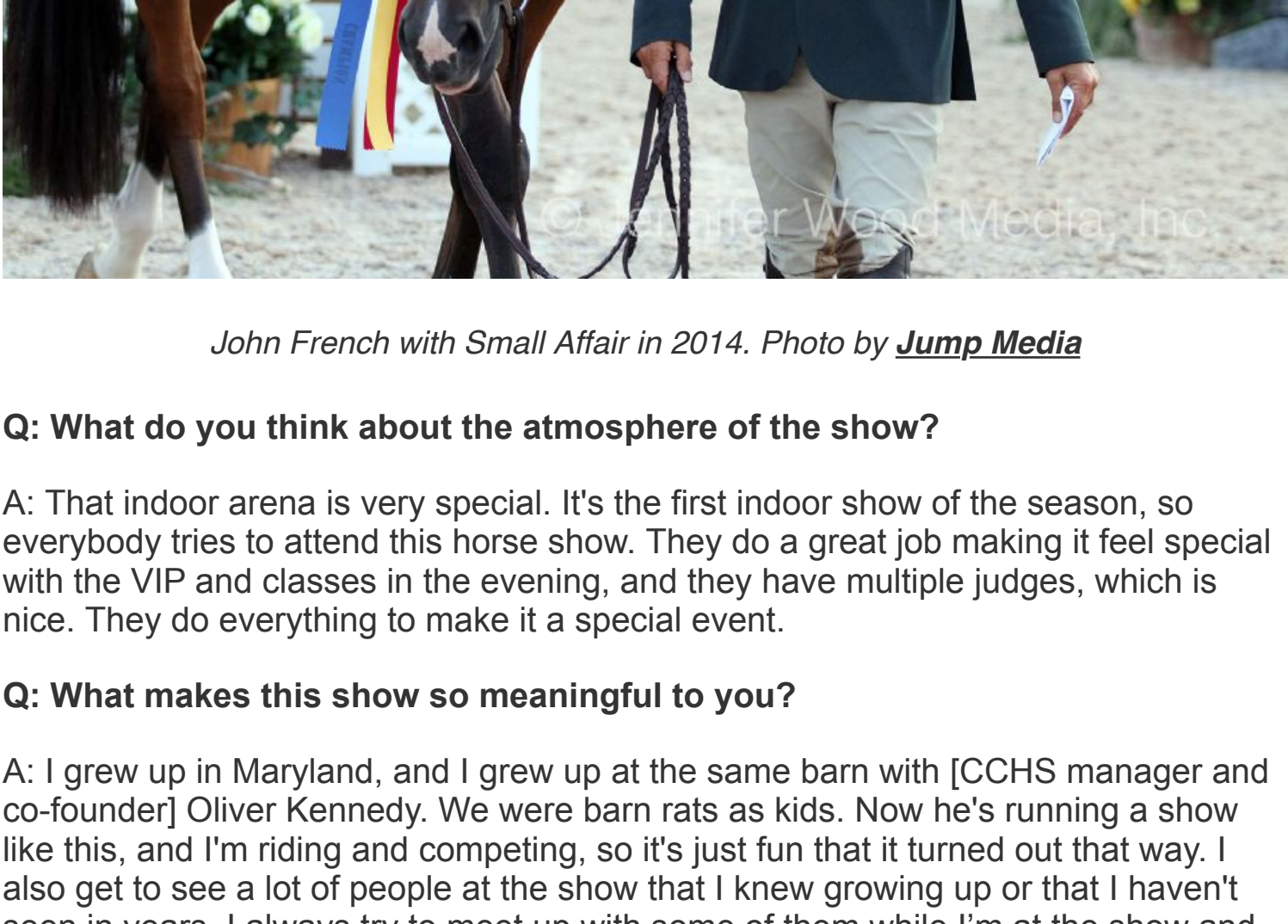
For Immediate Release | August 20, 2025
Contact: Jennifer Wood | JumpMedia@jumpmediallc.com

Capital Challenge Memories With John French

Q: What is your favorite thing about the Capital Challenge Horse Show?

A: My favorite thing is that it's an ultimate hunter show. They have the best of the best. They have the top young horses and the North American Green Hunter 3'-3" Championship. The regular hunter divisions are probably the biggest of the shows that we go to with the toughest competition all year. They also do special classes for the riders — we have the hunter challenges, and we have the World Championship [Hunter Rider] Professional Finals, amateur finals and junior finals. It's really geared to be a special hunter show.

The fact that anyone can enter Capital Challenge without qualifying throughout the year means you might even get horses that are recent imports coming to the show. I also think people come to look at horses and see what horses they might be interested in for the next year, so it's a special show in that way, too.



John French with Small Affair in 2014. Photo by [Jump Media](#)

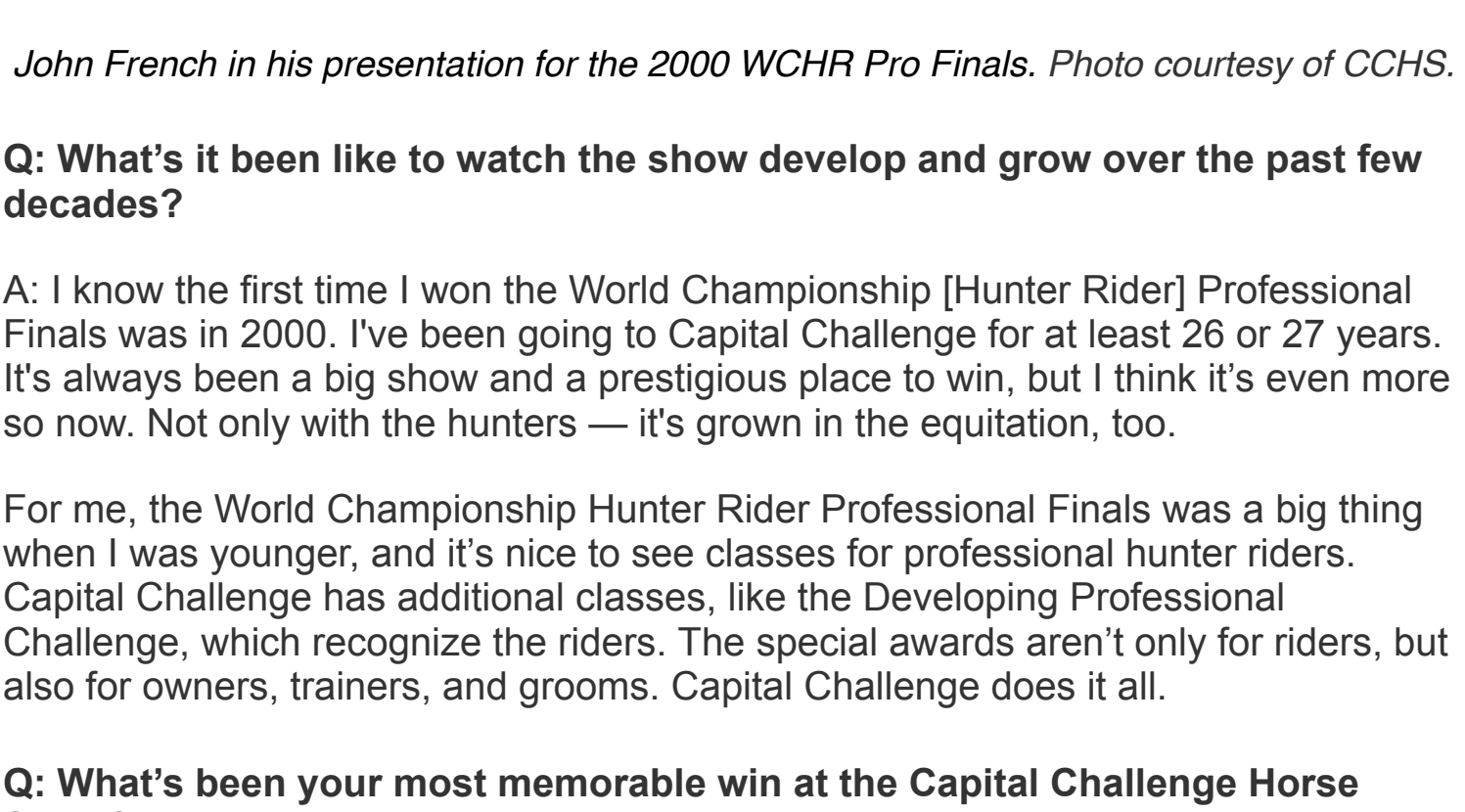
Q: What do you think about the atmosphere of the show?

A: That indoor arena is very special. It's the first indoor show of the season, so everybody tries to attend this horse show. They do a great job making it feel special with the VIP and classes in the evening, and they have multiple judges, which is nice. They do everything to make it a special event.

Q: What makes this show so meaningful to you?

A: I grew up in Maryland, and I grew up at the same barn with [CCHS manager and co-founder] Oliver Kennedy. We were barn rats as kids. Now he's running a show like this, and I'm riding and competing, so it's just fun that it turned out that way. I also get to see a lot of people at the show that I knew growing up or that I haven't seen in years. I always try to meet up with some of them while I'm at the show and make it something special where we can talk about the years growing up and how we made it. Being a successful professional was always a dream of mine as a kid, but I never thought it would actually happen.

Even my family gets to come and watch me, which is not something they normally get to do. My mom passed away a couple of years ago, but she would always come to watch me ride at Capital Challenge, so I always tried to do my best in front of her.



John French in his presentation for the 2000 WCHR Pro Finals. Photo courtesy of CCHS.

Q: What's it been like to watch the show develop and grow over the past few decades?

A: I know the first time I won the World Championship [Hunter Rider] Professional Finals was in 2000. I've been going to Capital Challenge for at least 26 or 27 years. It's always been a big show and a prestigious place to win, but I think it's even more so now. Not only with the hunters — it's grown in the equitation, too.

For me, the World Championship Hunter Rider Professional Finals was a big thing when I was younger, and it's nice to see classes for professional hunter riders. Capital Challenge has additional classes, like the Developing Professional Challenge, which recognize the riders. The special awards aren't only for riders, but also for owners, trainers, and grooms. Capital Challenge does it all.

Q: What's been your most memorable win at the Capital Challenge Horse Show?

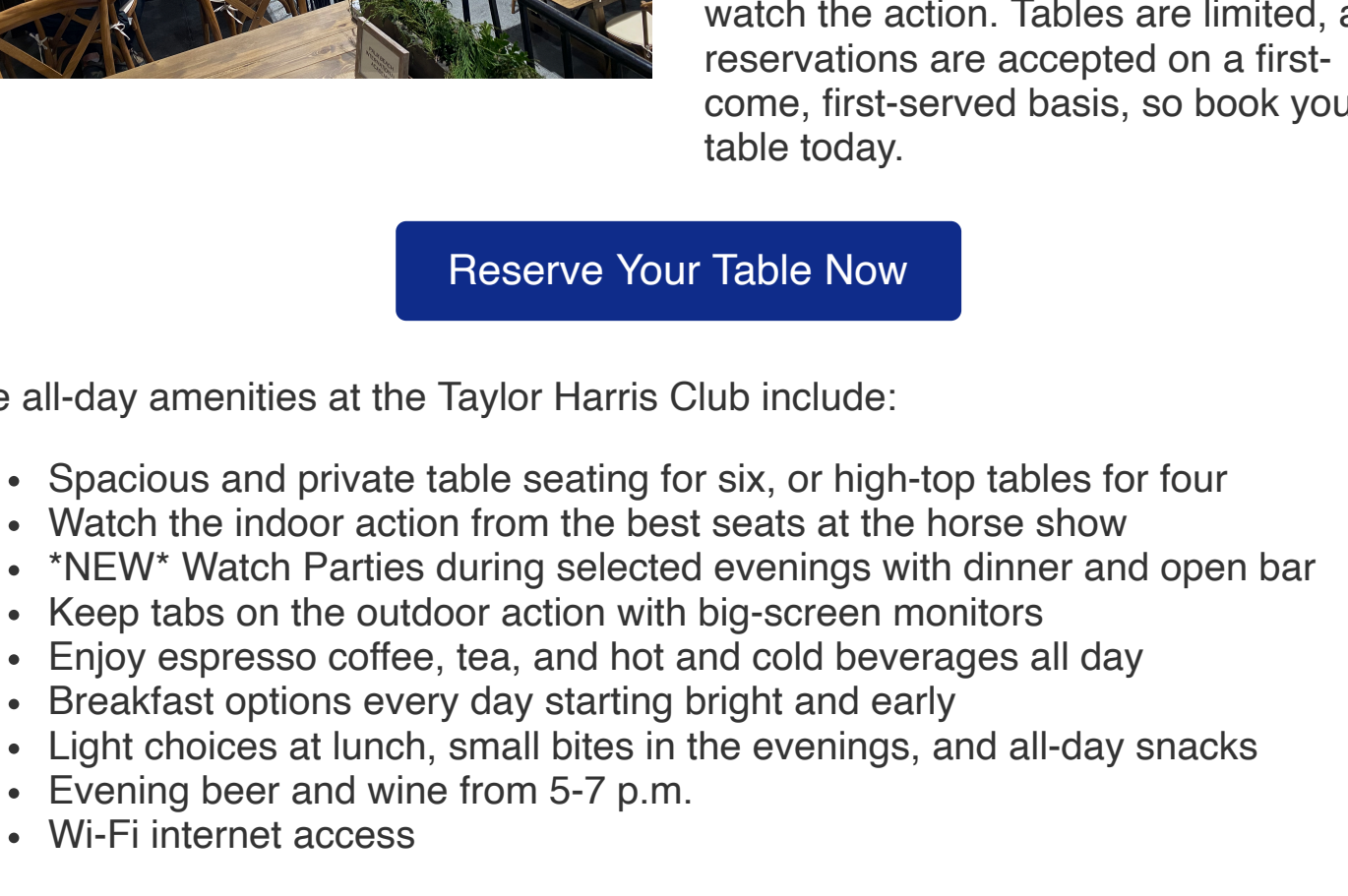
[Read More](#)

Sponsors Are Part of the Family at CCHS

The Hallman family has sponsored the Capital Challenge Horse Show (CCHS) since its inception and competed there almost every year as well. Led by Penny Hallman, Merrylegs Farm North is based in Oyster Bay, NY, while Merrylegs South is headquartered in Wellington, FL. Their dedication to CCHS shows how owners' support of the sport over the long term can help make a show special.

Daughters Bridget and Samantha Hallman showed in the first year of CCHS with trainer Bill Schaub and Bridget rode her well-known hunter Clyde Barrow. Both Bridget and Samantha went on to great success at Capital Challenge. Samantha Hallman and Lucky were the 2004 Grand Adult Amateur Hunter Champions, while Bridget captured her first Grand Amateur-Owner Hunter Championship in 2005 with the legendary Gray Slipper. They repeated the feat in 2006, and Gray Slipper was also the Grand Hunter Champion with Louise Serio in the irons.

Before that, Serio and Gray Slipper were winners in the Future Hunters (now the Green Hunters 3'-3"3") in 2001, and Serio won the Regular Working Hunter (now High Performance Hunters) championship in 2004 and 2005. To honor his incredible success at CCHS, Bridget donated the Gray Slipper Award in 2011, which is presented annually to the horse that has excelled at the highest level in both the Professional and Amateur-Owner divisions.

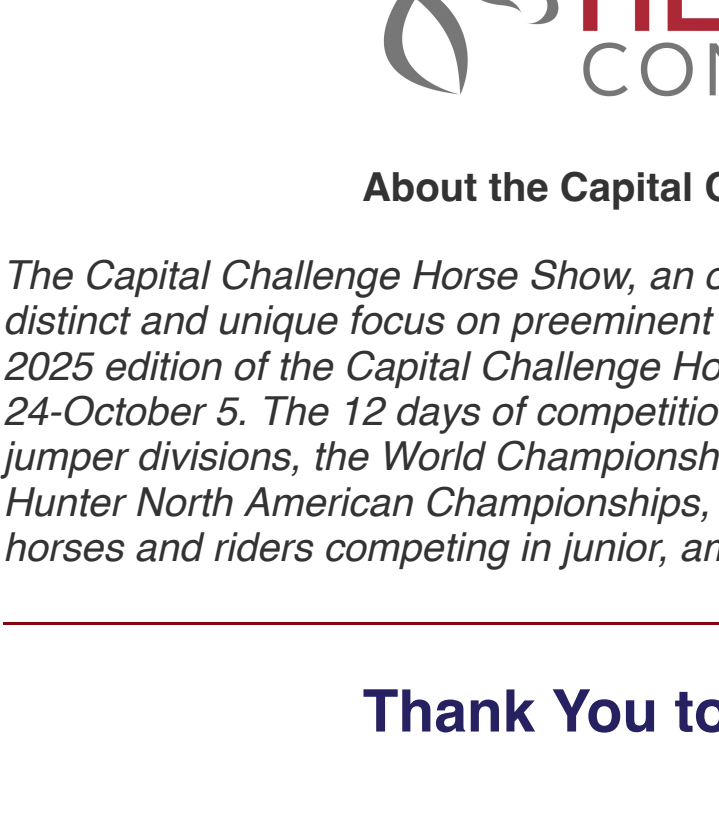


Bridget Hallman and Gray Slipper. Photo courtesy of CCHS

"When Capital Challenge started, it became the perfect addition to many of the other large shows in the area and is now a staple of the fall season. It takes place at a great facility, and the show always runs smoothly thanks to an incredible group of individuals," said Bridget. "Our accomplishments at the show over the years have made it a memorable place for all of us at Merrylegs South, and it is a privilege to sponsor each year."

[Read More](#)

Book a Ringside Table in the Taylor Harris Club



By reserving a private VIP table at the Taylor Harris Club, you and up to five others can watch every class, every day, while enjoying all-day amenities, a place to spread out, and refuge from the hustle and bustle when things get busy.

The Taylor Harris Club will host Watch Parties on selected finals nights, with dinner and a full bar while you watch the action. Tables are limited, and reservations are accepted on a first-come, first-served basis, so book your table today.

[Reserve Your Table Now](#)

The all-day amenities at the Taylor Harris Club include:

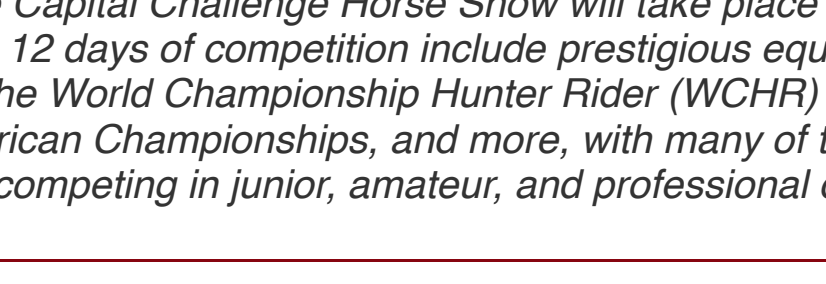
- Spacious and private table seating for six, or high-top tables for four
- Watch the indoor action from the best seats at the horse show
- "NEW" Watch Parties during selected evenings with dinner and open bar
- Keep tabs on the outdoor action with big-screen monitors
- Enjoy espresso coffee, tea, and hot and cold beverages all day
- Breakfast options every day starting bright and early
- Light choices at lunch, small bites in the evenings, and all-day snacks
- Evening beer and wine from 5-7 p.m.
- Wi-Fi internet access

Reserve your table when entering online or from the "Ringside Tables" tab at www.CapitalChallenge.org. For further information or to reserve directly, call or text Lisa Rossi at 202-255-8805 or email LisaRossi@CapitalChallenge.org.

Stay in Style With CCHS Lodging Partners

Find the perfect hotel for your stay at Capital Challenge Horse Show, many of which are offering 2025 CCHS special pricing. Click the button below for details.

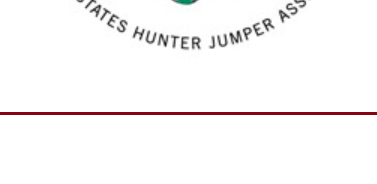
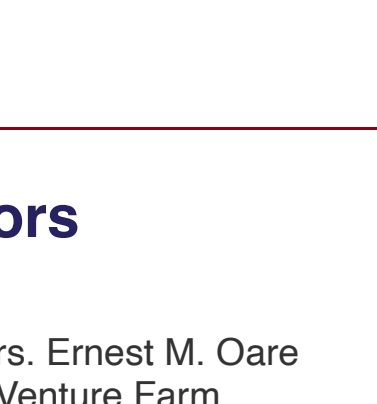
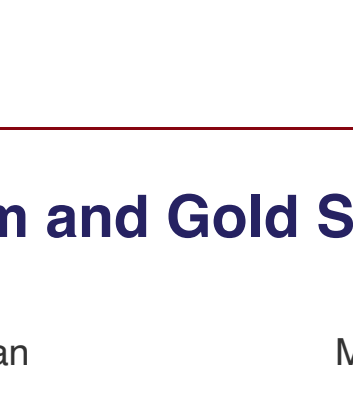
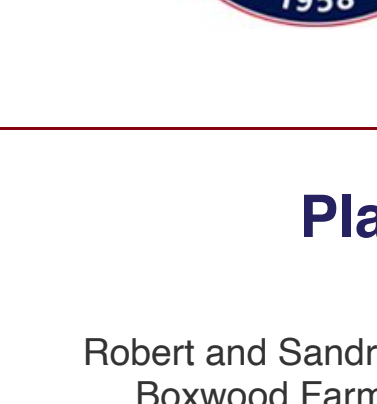
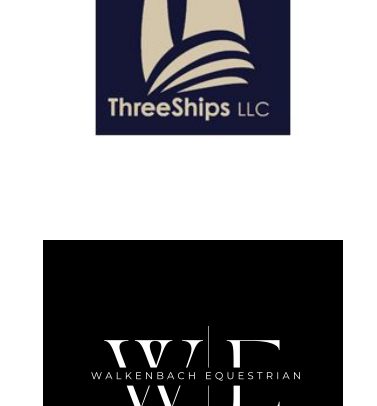
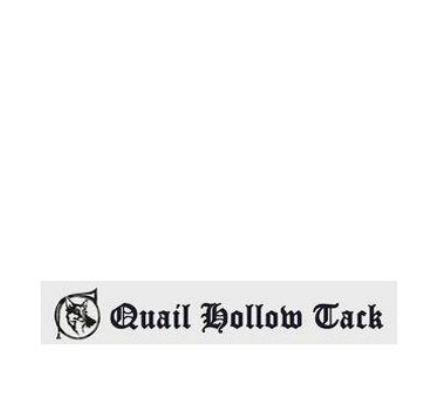
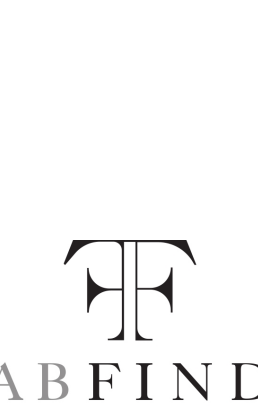
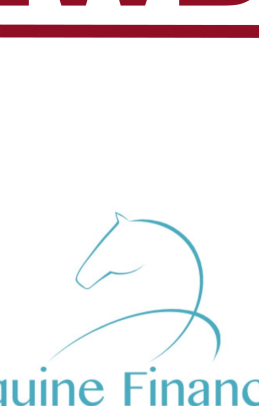
[Explore Hotel Options](#)



About the Capital Challenge Horse Show

The Capital Challenge Horse Show, an official USEF Heritage Competition, has a distinct and unique focus on preeminent hunter and equitation competition. The 2025 edition of the Capital Challenge Horse Show will take place from September 24-October 5. The 12 days of competition include prestigious equitation events, jumper divisions, the World Championship Hunter Rider (WCHR) Finals, the Green Hunter North American Championships, and more, with many of the country's best horses and riders competing in junior, amateur, and professional divisions.

Thank You to Our Sponsors



Platinum and Gold Sponsors

Robert and Sandra Bierman
Boxwood Farm South
Goodwin Family
Hallman Family
Ingram Family
Love Family Foundation

Mr. and Mrs. Ernest M. Oare
Next Venture Farm
Nolan Family
Stephanie Danhaki
Weisman Family
Wheeler Family

