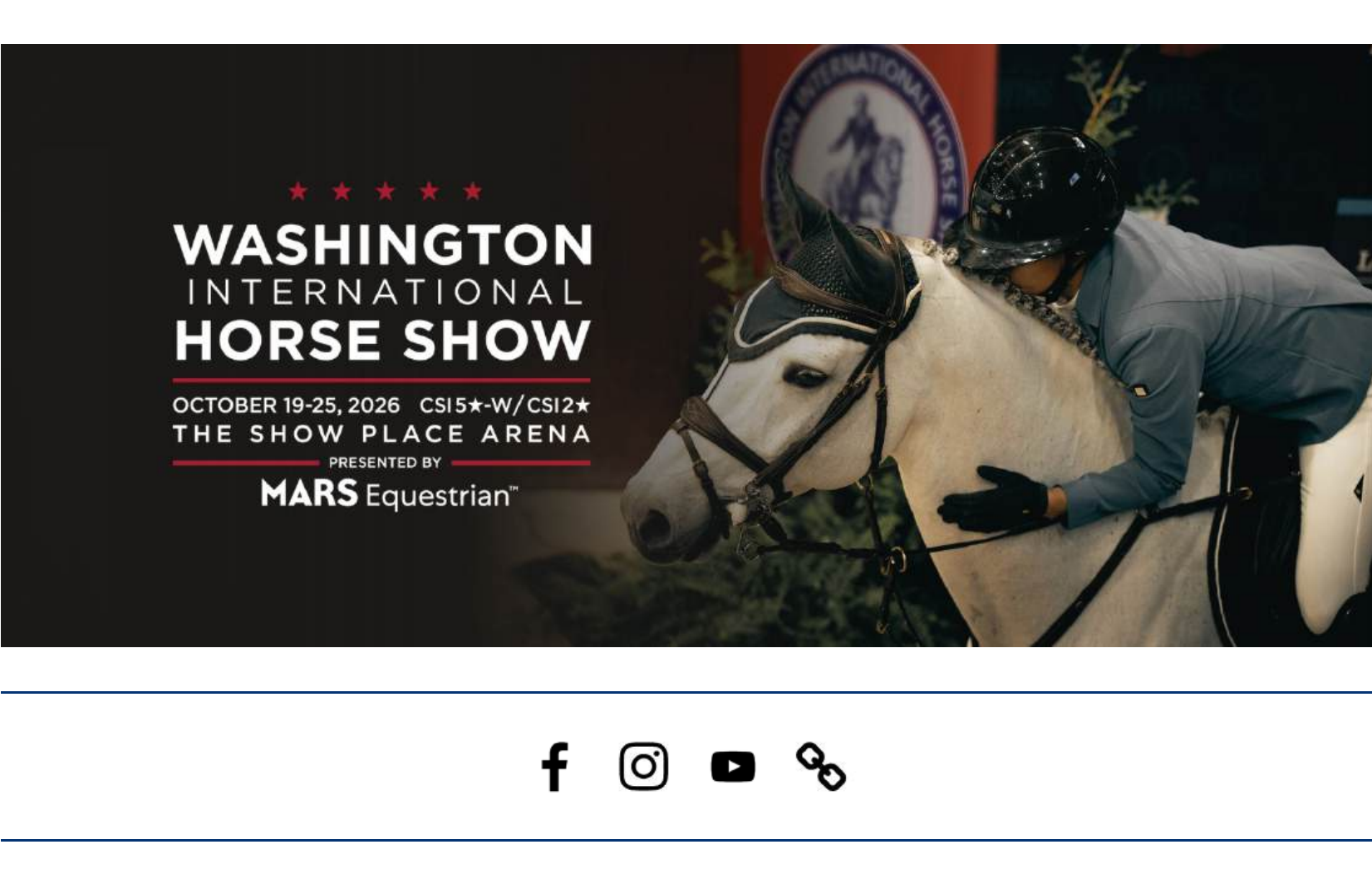




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A Night of Firsts for Pony Jumpers and Five-Star Fun as Ward and First Lady Triumph at 2026 WIHS

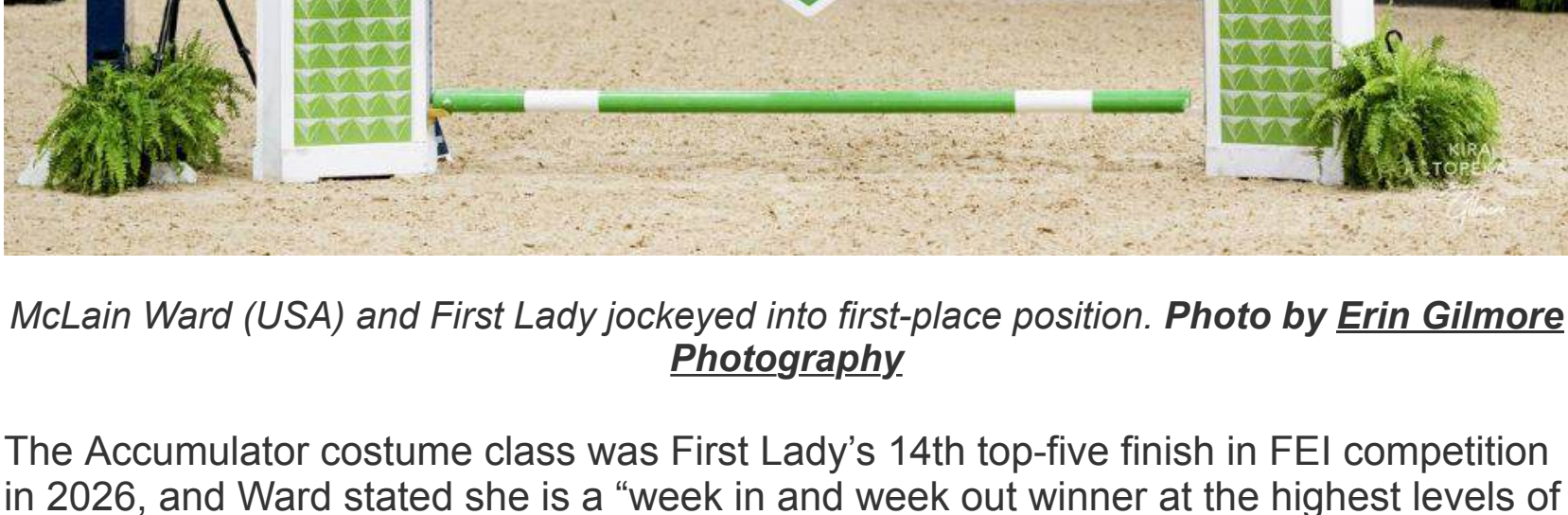
Upper Marlboro, MD – The 2026 Washington International Horse Show (WIHS), presented by MARS Equestrian™ hosted a full schedule of competition on Friday, October 23, ranging from Small Pony Jumpers to five-star international jumpers. McLain Ward (USA) and his dependable partner First Lady, owned by Robin Cleary Parsky, raced down the homestretch for victory in the \$63,000 FEI Accumulator Costume class. Estella Waldman, Ava Stryk, and Sofia Melluzzi were the first winners of the WIHS Pony Jumper Championships, presented by World Wide Technology.

Coverage of Friday's junior hunter grand champions and junior/amateur jumper winners will be issued on Saturday, October 24.

McLain Ward Jockeys His Way to the Top

"Jockey" McLain Ward and First Lady raced their way to the win in the \$63,000 FEI Accumulator Costume class by scoring the maximum of 65 points in the fastest time of 42.12 seconds. Skylar Wireman (USA) and Citoki, a 20-year-old Holsteiner gelding by Catoki x Chambertin owned by Shayne and Skylar Wireman, placed second with 65 points and a time of 43.16 seconds. Third place went to Mark Bluman (ISR) and Phelina de Septon, an 11-year-old BWP mare by Jensen van't Meulenhof x Landor S owned by Mario Deslauriers Inc., who had a time of 43.59 seconds and 65 points.

"It was a great feeling, because I knew she'd performed well," said Ward of his thoughts after landing from the last "joker" jump. "At that stage, I had a pretty good idea of what the time was, and I felt like we had it in hand, but I knew there were some difficult ones to come behind me. MARS Barn Night and the costume class are great Halloween traditions at WIHS, and it's fun to be able to participate."



McLain Ward (USA) and First Lady jockeyed into first-place position. **Photo by Erin Gilmore Photography**

The Accumulator costume class was First Lady's 14th top-five finish in FEI competition in 2026, and Ward stated she is a "week in and week out winner at the highest levels of the sport."

He continued about the 13-year-old Oldenburg mare (Don Diarado x Lordanos), "She's particularly handy inside, so in a small arena like this, it's really not a problem for her; it's an advantage. She's been a great partner. The last three years, she's really stepped up and been spectacular."



Skylar "Jessie from Toy Story" Wireman (USA) and Citoki finished second. **Photo by Erin Gilmore Photography**



Knight Mark Bluman (ISR) and his dragon, Phelina de Septon, placed third. **Photo by Erin Gilmore Photography**

Inaugural WIHS Pony Jumper Championships Are a Hit

The WIHS Small Pony Jumper Championship, presented by World Wide Technology went to Ka-Chow, a 14-year-old Welsh Pony mare by Farnley Tiber owned by Southside Equestrian LLC, and Estella Waldman (10, Palm Beach, FL). They were the fastest clear in the jump-off in a time of 22.559 seconds.

"She's very bouncy and fast," described Waldman of her pony. "She's turns really well. If you look somewhere, she'll turn. It's been great competing here, and my favorite part was the crowd. It means a lot to win because it's my last show on Ka-Chow and I wanted to do well for her. I'm grateful for my ponies and my trainers, Ali, Denise, and Kierstin Antoniodis.

Second place went to Madeleine Warren on Wheemhoeve's Gamekeeper, a 13-year-old Welsh Pony gelding by Wheemhoeve's Marko owned by Oakland Training & Sales LLC with a jump-off time of 24.076 seconds. Mattelyn Morrissey and Kit Kat, a six-year-old Welsh Pony mare owned by East Wind Farms LLC, finished third with a time of 24.284 seconds.



Estella Waldman and Ka-Chow won the WIHS Small Pony Jumper Championship. **Photo by Erin Gilmore Photography**

Ava Stryk and Gold Digger were the speediest to win the WIHS Medium Pony Jumper Championship, presented by World Wide Technology. Stryk and the 12-year-old KWPN gelding owned by North Run set an unbeatable time of 23.043 seconds. Closest to them were Addison Wright and Bella Galleria Arturo Amalfi, her own 13-year-old Dutch Warmblood gelding by Onbekend, who stopped the timers in 23.915 seconds. Estella Waldman had her second podium finish of the night, this time on Tiny Dancer, a nine-year-old Silla Argentina mare owned by Andres Orantes. They finished third in 24.403 seconds.

"It was really fun to ride in this ring," said Stryk, who is 11 years old and from The Plains, VA. "I was nervous, but once we started our course, I was like, 'We got this.' It means a lot to win because it's our last horse show together. I'll really remember all of the friends who are supporting me here."



The WIHS Medium Pony Jumper Championship victory went to Ava Stryk and Gold Digger. **Photo by Erin Gilmore Photography**

The final WIHS Pony Championship, presented by World Wide Technology was for Large ponies, and victory was awarded to Sofia Melluzzi and her pony Brock Bee Line, an 18-year-old New Forest Pony by Moortown Nobby. Originally from Oxfordshire, England, Melluzzi lives in Ocala, FL, and is 11 years old. They posted the fastest time of 23.727 seconds. Emilia Cannizzo and Pony Boy, her 16-year-old Welsh Pony gelding, finished second with a time of 23.901 seconds. Third place went to Brinleigh Gammill and Fenway Looking Glass, a nine-year-old Welsh Pony Cross mare by Empire's Power owned by Bethany Rolan.

"He's very strong, very quick, and loves to jump off," said Melluzzi of her pony. "He's a little bit opinionated though. The class was super fun, and I'm really thankful for the opportunity to be here. I was really trying to win and thought I could do it. I'm really happy!"



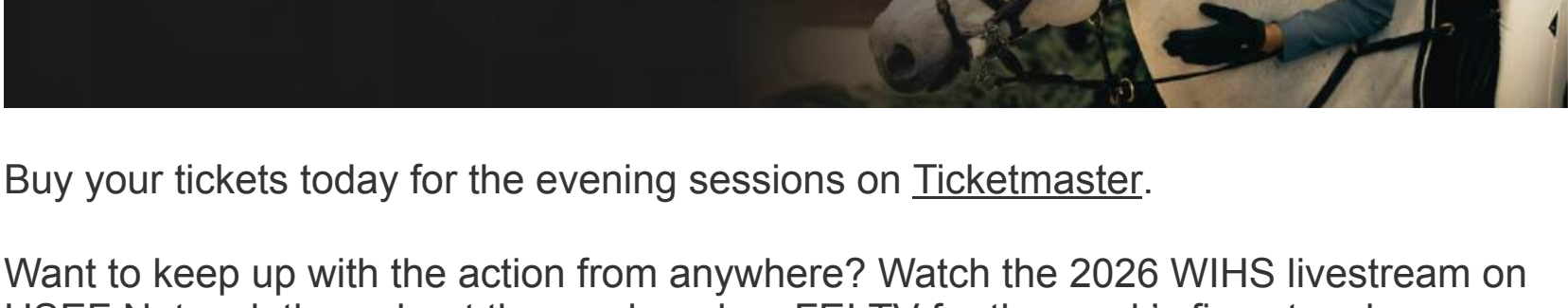
Sofia Melluzzi and Brock Bee Line were fastest in the WIHS Large Pony Jumper Championship. **Photo by Erin Gilmore Photography**

Jasper Bloomberg, who rode Del Toro K in the WIHS Large Pony Jumper Championship, was presented with the Pony Jumper Style of Riding Award.



The top three finishers in each championship were honored in a podium presentation, joined by ringmaster Phil Thomas, David Steward II and David Steward of World Wide Technology and WIHS President Vicki Lowell. **Photo by Erin Gilmore Photography**

The feature class of the week at the 2026 WIHS is on Saturday, October 25, as the five-star jumper riders contest the \$340,000 Longines FEI Jumping World Cup™ Washington CSI5*-W. Daytime competition will highlight the pony hunters before the \$50,000 Ambassador's Cup Grand Prix CSI2* is held at 1 p.m. The country's best junior equitation riders will close out daytime competition with the final jumper phase of the WIHS Equitation Final, and the top 10 work-off will start the evening session competition. Outside of The Show Place Arena from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., a variety of activities will take place for free during Kids' Day, presented by Land Rover Alexandria, including face painting, pony rides, horseplay jumping, crafts, and more.



Buy your tickets today for the evening sessions on [Ticketmaster](#).

Want to keep up with the action from anywhere? Watch the 2026 WIHS livestream on [USEF Network](#) throughout the week and on [FEI TV](#) for the week's five-star classes.

Daytime admission is free throughout the week. Parking is free at all times.

[Don't Forget Your Tickets!](#)



[Read the 2026 WIHS Souvenir Program](#)

For more information, visit www.wihs.org.

About Washington International Horse Show, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit charitable organization

Established in 1958, the Washington International Horse Show is one of North America's most prestigious, competitive, and entertaining equestrian events with competition for international, professional, amateur, junior and child riders. Highlights include the Longines FEI Jumping World Cup™ Washington CSI5*-W for the President's Cup, the WIHS Equitation Finals and Children's and Adult Hunter and Jumper Championships, top national hunters and jumpers, plus popular community and charity events. WIHS is an official USEF Heritage Competition. For more information, visit wihs.org.

