

Jenny Karazissis and Undeniable were not to be denied in showcase class.

Coastal Southern California's traditional "June Gloom" weather was no match for the brilliant performances in the \$25,000 World Championship Hunter Rider West Coast Hunter Spectacular. Incorporating rounds at three fence heights, 3'6", 3'9" and 4'0", this fifth West Coast staging of the class drew a wide range of experience in horses and riders, highlighted by an eighth-place finish from 12-year-old Augusta Iwasaki on Vlock Show Stables' Boris.



But it was familiar professional faces and horses that took top honors. Jenny Karazissis and longtime ride, Undeniable, owned by Hope Town Farms, checked another impressive win off their wish list, finishing five points ahead, with an overall average of 180.75.

Finishing second this season was last year's winning rider and fellow member of West Coast Hunter royalty, John French, who hopped on his mount, amateur rider Lindsay Maxwell's Largesse, for the first time shortly before the class began. The pair earned an overall average of 175.75.

Hope Glynn and Sabrina Hellman's Lake Of Stars finished a close third with a 175 two-round overall score. That result actually tied with Lexi Wedemeyer and Balmoral's Virtue, with Glynn getting the nod based on tie-breaking methodology that weights one of the Spectacular's two-person judging panels' scores over another. Jamie Taylor and Catira, owned by Sue Lightner, were fifth with two solid rounds that earned an overall 171.25 score.

The class was adjudicated by two panels of esteemed judges. Panel One, whose second round score was the tie breaker in the morning's class, included Don Stewart, of Ocala, Florida, and Shane George, of Magnolia, Texas, and Panel Two was made up of Andrea Wells, of Morriston, Florida, and Lynn Forgione, of Cornelius, North Carolina.

Many Hunter Accolades

Although her Hunter world accolades are many, Jenny Karazissis' eyes lit up when describing the Spectacular win "as something that had been on my radar for some time." Owned by Hope Town Farms of Nashville, Undeniable was champion of the High Performance 3'6" Hunter division earlier this week during the Blenheim June Classic I at the Rancho Mission Viejo Riding Park in San Juan Capistrano.

French, who also earned the title for high-score professional earlier in the week, didn't mind having no prior experience riding Largesse. Trainer Archie Cox "gave me a few good tips before

the class,” he acknowledged.

“Sometimes not knowing the horse so well can be a good thing. You’re not thinking, ‘Oh, the horse can do this or that.’ You just ride the ride instead.”

All three top winners love the Oaks International Grand Prix Field’s big spaces, and course designer Thomas Hern of Plymouth, Massachusetts, made the most of it. As the mist turned to drizzle before the class’s 8 a.m. start time, Hern was confident conditions wouldn’t mar the day, noting that there are nice wide turns and the riders can make adjustments as needed.

Bold paces and brilliant jumping form were common denominators for the top three finishers. “I love that there were a lot of long gallops,” noted third-place earner Glynn. “There were not a lot of set numbers (for striding) so you could pick the canter that works best for your horse.”

And with such a big field, “You can really show off your horse’s canter,” said French.

A Special Class

High praise for the Spectacular was another commonality. “This is one of the few Hunter Classic type classes that still exists,” Glynn noted. “There are a lot of Derbies these days, with the different bonus points options, and this is really one of the few classes, on a big field, where you can showcase the classic hunter style. And, we don’t have to do a trot jump!”

The riders appreciated that the class was staged as the feature Hunter event, with no other Hunter classes underway at the same time. The Hilltop VIP was full of fans enjoying a Breakfast At Tiffany’s themed elegant brunch.

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