



# McNaught Makes Her Own Luck At Equestrian Classic I

*She and Lariccello top the grand prix at the Sonoma Horse Park in Northern California.*

Erin Gilmore

WITH FOUR HORSES from Helen McNaught and Duncan McFarlane's Outwoods Show Jumping entered in the \$30,000 SC Barns Grand Prix during the Equestrian Classic I at the Sonoma Horse Park, Petaluma, Calif., the odds were good that they might claim the win.

But when the British-born McNaught piloted one of her three mounts (the fourth horse was ridden by McFarlane) to the fastest time in a four-horse jump-off on July 30, she was still pleasantly surprised.

Lariccello, a 12-year-old Oldenburg (Lord Pezi—Hauptsutbuch, Cunterbunt), has been a victim of that one unlucky rail in grand prix classes this year. During the HITS Desert Circuit (Calif.) this winter, Lari-ccello picked up plenty of red and yellow ribbons without ever nabbing the win. Until now.

"In Thermal, the only fence he would touch would be the one he'd have down," said McNaught, of Castro Valley, Calif. "On Saturday at Sonoma I finally got lucky. He jumped great, and a couple of rails stayed up despite a rub."

McNaught, 44, used Lariccello's deceptively large stride to shave seconds off her time in a quick jump-off that beat second-placed Peter Breakwell and Lucas' (Landpheonix—Lola) time by seconds, even though Breakwell's smaller mount appeared to be galloping at a faster pace.

McFarlane finished third aboard Mr. Whoopy (Contendro—St. Pr. Hauptutbuch Whoopy). McNaught wrapped up the evening in eighth place with a fast 4-fault ride on Valois (Oklund—Nanda) for owner John Bramow and landed in the money once more in 11th with her own veteran grand prix mount Caballo (Coriano—Evita XII).

Course designer Michael Roy Curtis set a challenging track for the 28 entries, who jumped before sunset in



Helen McNaught and Lariccello jumped to victory in the \$30,000 SC Barns Grand Prix during the Equestrian Classic I at the Sonoma Horse Park.

(Deb Dawson Photo)



front of 1,000 spectators. One trouble spot came at the triple combination near the end of the course—an ascending oxer that rode into a short one-stride to one-stride where almost one third of the class dropped a rail.

Lariccello, or “Larry,” is also known as Rainman around the barn for his slightly obsessive nature and off-the-wall personality. In addition to throwing his hay net out of his stall and clear across the barn, if given the run of an open space, Larry will always move next to a wall or fence and paw intensely. And he is so connected to owner Alison Heafey that McNaught keeps her away from him before a big class or he loses his focus.

“He’s by Lord Pezi, and all of those horses are a little special,” noted McNaught. “They’ve got to be your friend, and they’ve got to want to do it for you. But Larry is a pretty solid horse, and hopefully I’ll be lucky enough to keep [the ride on] him.”

## ► Bringing Something New

Two years ago, show manager Ashley Herman left a high-profile career in the New York City finance sector to make an A-circuit competition venue of the Sonoma Horse Park, now in its second year of operation. Lying in a valley surrounded by vineyards and the rolling hills of California’s famed wine country, the Horse Park is never lacking for picturesque views. Herman has appealed to exhibitors and the local community by creating a welcoming show amid a high-class atmosphere.

“We’re really tuned in to the riders,” explained Herman. “We’ve made a point to be very approachable, and it’s a priority that we respond to comments or complaints immediately. We try to bring something new to each show, whether it be better awards, more prize money or entertainment for exhibitors and non-exhibitors alike.”

The Equestrian Classic and subsequent Giant Steps Charity Horse Show were both sold out with waiting lists, and trainers from as far away as Portland, Ore., and San Diego competed in the two-week series.

The entries in the grand prix showed the strength in local ranks; all but two riders call Northern California home. Local entries included sisters Jill and Jan Humphrey, who ride with Leone Equestrians in nearby Sacramento, and

\$30,000 SC BARNS GRAND PRIX Petaluma, Calif.—July 30				
HORSE/RIDER	FAULTS	TIME	PURSE	
1. Lariccello/Helen McNaught	0-0	35.03	\$9,000	
2. Lucas/Peter Breakwell	0-0	37.58	6,600	
3. Mr. Whoopy/ Duncan McFarlane	0-0	38.12	3,250	
4. Dance And Jump/ Lindsay Ramar	0-4	38.20	2,400	
28 horses competed.				

up-and-comers such as Lindsay Ramar, Haley Roberson, and Allison Kroff.

Prior to placing seventh in the grand prix with Washington, Kroff won Friday’s \$10,000 Equine Insurance Jumper Derby aboard her own Little Miss Sunshine. The 27-year-old rider and assistant to Gry McFarlane at Windfall Farm bought the flashy chestnut mare as a 4-year-old in Germany and imported her as a 6-year-old.

“The derby was really good for my horse,” said Kroff, who bested 24 other riders in the class. “She has the stamina to do it and is a little bit of a hot horse.”

The derby was set in the Horse Park’s back ring, and riders had to navigate a bank, tight turns, and ride in and out of a forest next to the ring.

“It was a really fun course for the horses to let loose a little. The time allowed was quite tight, and you had to get going a bit to make it,” added Kroff. “I think that people really enjoyed seeing a different take on the course. Everyone packed up there against the rail, and people were hooting and hollering and cheering the riders on.”

Kroff plans to keep bringing Little Miss Sunshine along, hopefully to the grand prix level, while simultaneously juggling her duties at Windfall Farm and competing her other horses.

## ► Juggling Comfort Zones

John French handled double duty of a different type, by making tracks back and forth between the jumper and hunter rings during Thursday’s \$10,000 Perfect Products Open Hunter Derby.

With only the top four horses called back for a derby work-off, French moved up with a bold ride to win the class with Symon, a petite, California-bred gelding owned by Alison Baileys. Just 10 minutes prior and a few yards across the VIP berm, French piloted Chawi De Laubry (Parco—Venus De Laubry), to a fifth-

placed finish in a 1.40-meter jumper class, which served as a warm-up to his effort with the 9-year-old Belgian Warmblood gelding in Saturday’s grand prix.

“In the jumpers you have to be fast and quick, and I’m not quite as comfortable with that as I am with the hunters,” said French. “So when I finished with the jumpers I was relieved, and it was like I could relax once I was back in the hunter ring.”

French and Symon, a 15.1-hand gelding, have only been paired together since the beginning of the year.

“He has a little stallion personality. He’s not afraid of anything or anybody, and for a little horse he’s got a lot of jump,” said French. “He acts a little stallion when you go to jog him in the ring, but you can use that to get him going, and then off he goes.”

French and Symon were sitting fourth going into the work-off, but French’s bold gallop to a single oxer, followed by a rollback turn to a trot fence were flawless, earning them the points to move up and win. It was Symon’s first hunter derby win.

“I knew I had to come up in the work-off,” said French. “He landed on all the leads he needed to be on, and on the one tight turn that we had to turn back and jump, he came at it just quiet enough. That round couldn’t have gone any better.”

Hope Glynn, who has dominated the West Coast hunter derbies all year, placed in the top 10 with four mounts, including second with Emma Townsend’s CR Haribo.

Glynn used the show as a prep for her first appearance in the USHJA International Hunter Derby Final in Kentucky this month. Based nearby at Sonoma Valley Stables, which she runs with her husband Ned, Glynn is a fervent supporter of the one show that “allows me to sleep in my own bed at night,” and the SVS contingent was out in force. The barn brought home tricolors in nearly 12 divisions.

### PETALUMA, CA—JULY 26-31.

**1.35M JUMPER CH:** Lariccello, Alison Heafey.

**RES:** Carthageno, Jan Humphrey.

**1.30M JUMPER CH:** Cindarco, Rebecca Lewis.

**RES:** Lexia B, Branscomb Farm LLC.

**1.20M JUMPER CH:** Minette, Katrina Montinola.

**RES:** Calvin, Helen McNaught.

**1.15M JUMPER CH:** Universe, Rebecca Lewis.

**RES:** Eurocommerce San Francisco, Erin Bland.

**1.10M JUMPER CH:** Solana, Maila Rehnberg.

**RES:** Lottie, Madison Bradshaw.

**1.05M JUMPER CH:** Ostello, Savanna Little.

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