

2nd Annual Maury River Hunter Trials

Despite threatening weather, the 2nd Annual Maury River Hunter Trials was held April 2, 2011, at the Virginia Horse Center in Lexington, VA and enjoyed by over 70 competitors, numerous tailgaters, sponsors, spectators, volunteers and judges on the rolling cross country fields of the Horse Center. Organizers

The event is run by the Virginia Horse Trials, headed by Brian and Penny Ross, in conjunction with the organizing committee of Donald Clark, Brooks Cushman, Henley Gabeau, Dr. M. Brent Hall, and Liz Kiss. Foxhunters themselves, the committee developed the hunter trials as a way to celebrate the end of the fox chasing season, to bring positive publicity to the sport, and to benefit the local hunt clubs. The committee plans for the hunter trials to be an annual event, with the 3rd running scheduled for April 7, 2012.

Judging

This year's event was judged by Joy Crompton, Farmington Hunt's MFH. The show offered something for everyone: over-fences classes for future hunters ('puddle jumpers'), second flight (2's) and first flight (3's); hunter on the flat classes and a hilltoppers class. There were open and qualified fox hunter divisions, for those who hunted at least six times in the past season. Area hunt clubs represented included Glenmore, Rockbridge, Farmington, Middlebrook, Bedford and Stonewall, all of which vied for the Clifford J. Hunt Memorial: most points accumulated by a hunt club. The Clifford Hunt Memorial Championship

Many remember Cliff Hunt, who passed away in December 2010. Cliff was an avid foxhunter and genuine horseman; among Cliff's many accomplishments, he served as whipper-in to the Blue Ridge Hunt for almost 25 years, chaired the Upperville Colt & Horse Show, and authored 'The Keys to Good Horsemanship'. Cliff and his wife Laura retired to Middlebrook, VA in 2004. Laura judged the Hilltopper division and the Appointments and Turnout classes at this year's hunter trials. At the end of the day, Farmington Hunt walked away with the Clifford Hunt Memorial Championship, sponsored by Dr. M. Brent Hall of Raphine Animal Clinic. Farmington earned 195 points during the show, followed by Rockbridge Hunt as the reserve champions. The Melvin Poe Cup

Another highlight of the event was the Melvin Poe Cup, sponsored by Brooks Cushman of Winbrooke Farm, and awarded by the legendary Melvin himself, in attendance with his wife Peggy. The photo at (left/right) shows Melvin and Brian Ross congratulating Cheryl Microusticos, who with her handsome bay, WoW! Graphic's Up & Coming ('Uzi'), accumulated the most points in the First Flight Open division. Cheryl and Uzi also won the Glenmore Hunt First Flight Qualified Foxhunter Championship, presented by Dan Jones, Huntsman and Joint-MFH of Glenmore Hunt. Despite weather alternating between periods of sun, sleet, and rain, with nonstop blowing wind, Uzi flowed around the courses with ease, placing in the top three in Hunt Teams, Hunter on the Flat, Handy Hunter, Field Hunter over Fences, and the Field Master's Chase. Cheryl hunts with Stonewall Hounds and Farmington Hunt. Parade of Hounds

Spectators sadly missed out on the planned Parade of Hounds, as some of the Rockbridge Hounds' pack picked up a cough after their glorious run at the Carolinas Foxhound Performance Trials the previous week. At the Inaugural Hunter Trials in 2010, the Glenmore Hunt paraded their hounds during the lunch break, showcasing for spectators the beauty and pageantry of our sport. David Law Handy Hunter Award

The David Law Handy Hunter award went to Brodie Lower from Farmington Hunt. Wendy Higginson of Swoope, VA sponsored this first flight class in honor of David Law to thank him for donating his farrier services to the hunter trials, and in honor of his many years at the anvil. It's surmised that David has trained half the farriers in Central Virginia, and he used to shoe the famous Gray Goose, an international event horse in the 80's. Other Honors

Other top honors went to Cathi Ecklund of Rockbridge Hunt, who was Reserve in the First Flight Qualified division riding Irish Penny, owned by Julie Bullock, DVM. Cathi placed first in the Appointments class on Irish Penny and second on Camedic, with whom she was also Reserve Second Flight Qualified Champion. Camedic is owned by Diane Gibbs, who hunts her regularly with the Glenmore Hunt. Juniors were well represented, with the Camp Mont Shenandoah Junior Championship going to Rebecca Barber on Twain. Full results can be seen on www.vahorsetrials.com. Tailgate Competition

The hotly contested tailgate competition was this year a tie between the Rockbridge and Glenmore Hunts. After Rockbridge took home the tricolor last year, Glenmore came back with a vengeance and their Asian Fusion theme was

creative and visually appealing, organized by Mary Lee McDavid. Hugh Brown masterfully coordinated Rockbridge's traditional Virginia Gentleman-themed tent, complete with decadent bourbon-iced brownies. The tailgate competition is an area of the event the organizers hope to expand, so plan on joining us next year! Tailgate spots are offered to sponsors as well as sold to competitors and spectators alike.

The Maury River Hunter Trials's proceeds benefit the three local hunt clubs: Glenmore Hunt, Rockbridge Hunt and Middlebrook Hounds, as well as the Virginia Horse Trials. The event is made possible by many volunteers and sponsors, too numerous to print. For more information about the competition, including sponsorship opportunities, visit us on Facebook or see the Virginia Horse Trials website. We hope to see you on April 7, 2012!