



## Crown Affair Conquers *The Chronicle Of The Horse*/USHJA International Hunter Derby At HITS Desert Circuit III

*John French proves again that he's the derby master.*

Molly Sorge

JOHN FRENCH MIGHT not have Rumba—the horse on which he won the inaugural USHJA International Hunter Derby Finals (Ky.) last year—in his string anymore, but he hasn't let that stop him from winning.

Under the lights on a crisp desert evening on Feb. 12, French rode Crown Affair to the top of the \$10,000 *The Chronicle of the Horse*/USHJA International Hunter Derby at the HITS Desert Circuit III in Thermal, Calif. He also claimed second aboard the striking gray gelding Cruise.

**“My sister asked me, ‘Did you miss being out there at all?’ And I said, ‘Not for one second!’ ”**

—Gail Morey

French led the class after Round 1 with Crown Affair, having scored 189 points. Cruise was just behind him, scoring 188. And in the handy round, Crown Affair solidified his lead with two stellar scores of 89 plus 7 bonus points. Jessie Lang and the

elegant gray stallion C. Quito placed third.

“That was so much fun,” said Gail Morey, who owns Crown Affair. “I’ve never had a horse in a class of that caliber. My sister asked me, ‘Did you miss being out there at all?’ And I said, ‘Not for one second!’ It was such a treat to watch. I’ve always thought he’s a very special horse, but he’s never really stepped up and won something on that scale. I’m happy for ‘Crown’ that he was getting his due.”

Crown, a 14-year-old stallion, primarily shows in the amateur-owner division with



(Flying Horse Photography Photo)

Owner Gail Morey was thrilled to watch John French ride her Crown Affair to the top of the \$10,000 *The Chronicle of the Horse*/USHJA International Hunter Derby at HITS Desert Circuit III.



Morey. Morey started riding with French last year and turned over the Holsteiner's reins to French on a few occasions.

"I did him in a few shows last year in the regular working. We just pick a few special classes for him," French said. "He's super scopey, so the bigger the jumps the better. Classes like this are great for him because it gives him something to look at. He was jumping incredibly tonight."

In contrast, the second-placed horse, Cruise, is just 7 and was showing in his first hunter derby. French sold the horse last year to Jessica Singer, who rides with Archie Cox. Cox asked French to show the horse just for the one week of the HITS Desert Circuit, and they earned the green conformation hunter championship before starring in the derby.

"He's kind of unflappable," French said of Cruise, a Holsteiner (Colman—Lawienja). "He's quiet. I like horses you can put leg on and go with. I'd rather that than a hot or nervous horse."

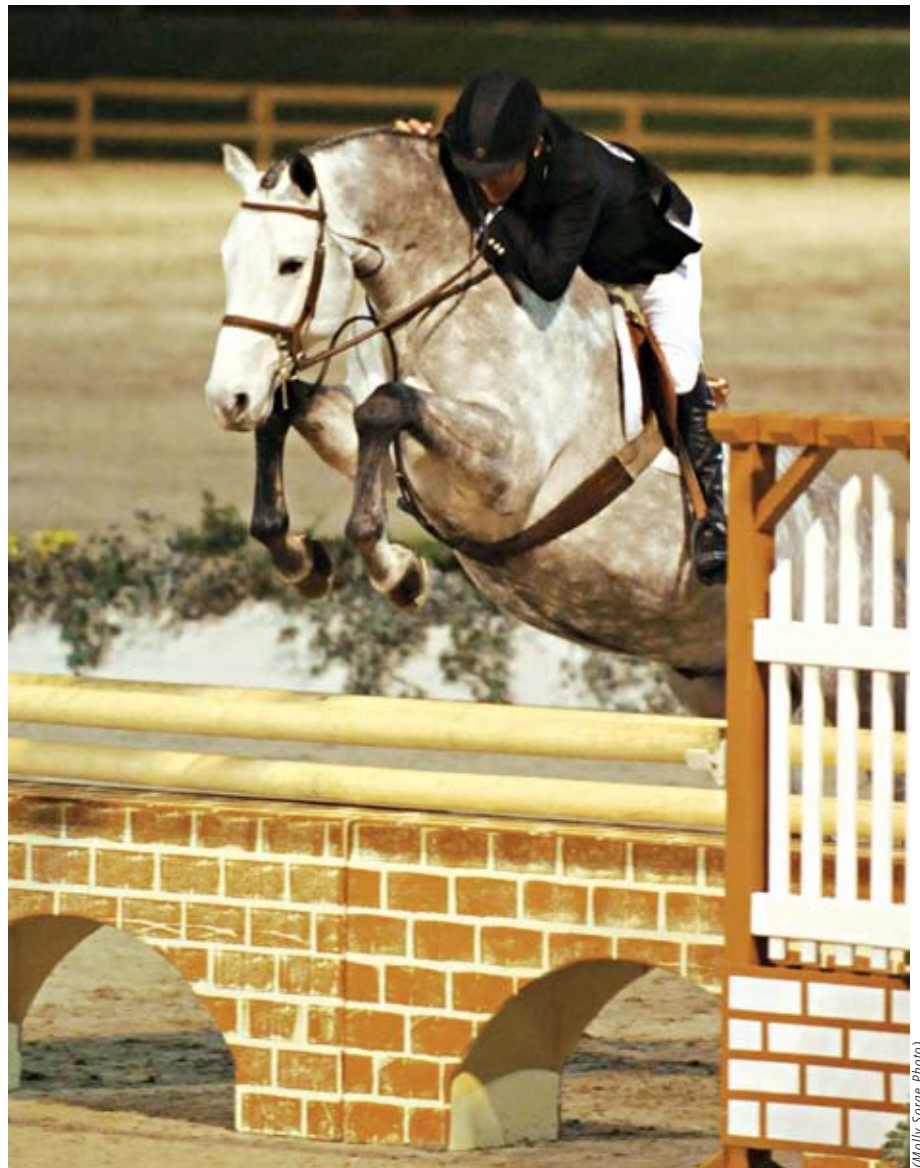
## ► He's Got Style

The derby's first round, held on the expansive grand prix field and in the evening under the lights, was a galloping, open course that allowed riders to show boldness. There were four four-foot options, including at a split-rail snake fence. French and Crown Affair tackled all of the higher options.

In the handy round, riders went straight from the in-gate up the middle of the ring to a forward seven-stride line. Then there was a bending four- or five-stride line to a bounce, set with split rails at about 2'6". After negotiating the bounce, riders circled around and then walked through the space between the bounce the other way. After the walk, they picked up a canter and jumped a natural wood panel fence. The course finished with a tight roll-back to an in-and-out and a long gallop to the last oxer.

"I'm glad there was a related distance to the bounce—it's not my favorite thing to do," French said. "To start off with a forward line going away from the gate and then going right to the bounce and then to the walk was tough. But I knew I could just really gallop to that last oxer, and he'd jump it great."

Morey bought Crown Affair 4½ years ago from fellow amateur Laurie Lewis. "I'd always admired him," Morey said. "Jeff and Shelley Campf had him during his green years, and I used to watch him go. I always thought he was the kind of horse I'd like—beautiful with great jumping style. I didn't know anything about his breeding.



(Molly Sarge Photo)

John French and Cruise claimed second in the \$10,000 *The Chronicle of the Horse*/USHJA International Hunter Derby.

<b>\$10,000</b>					
<b>THE CHRONICLE OF THE HORSE/USHJA INTERNATIONAL HUNTER DERBY</b>					
Thermal, Calif.—Feb. 12					
Judges: Panel 1: Keith Hastings, Betsy Perry & Panel 2: Phyllis Farland, Randy Roy					
HORSE/RIDER	1ST ROUND		2ND ROUND		TOTAL
	PANEL 1 Score/Bonus	PANEL 2 Score/Bonus	PANEL 1 Score/Bonus	PANEL 2 Score/Bonus	
1. Crown Affair/John French	86/9	86/8	89/7	89/7	381
2. Cruise/John French	86/6	88/8	85/6	86/6	371
3. C. Quito/Jessie Lang	84/8	78/7	88/8	87/6	366
4. Bingo Bongo/Jenny Karazissis	79/8	82/7	87/7	84/7	361
5. Bentley/Melissa Doddridge	85/8	84/7	82/6	81/6	359
6. Play Through/Hope Glynn	79/4	80/4	87/7	83/8	352
7. Weatherly/Hope Glynn	76/3	79/4	85/6	85/8	346
8. Granada/Nick Haness	77/4	80/5	83/8	83/5	345
9. Kasimir/Hope Glynn	79/1	81/4	80/8	82/5	340
10. Copperfield/Devon Gibson	69/4	84/6	76/4	79/4	326
11. Delux/Melissa Doddridge	81/6	77/5	75/0	72/2	318
12. Night Cap/Colleen Biemer	76/4	76/5	40/4	40/2	247

32 horses competed.



# HORSE SHOWS

Jessie Lang and C. Quito traveled from Wyoming to California to take third in the \$10,000 *The Chronicle of the Horse*/USHJA International Hunter Derby.

“I saw that Laurie owned him and happened to watch him because he was in my division and further enjoyed him. Laurie and I laugh about the infamous taco truck that was parked at [the former HITS Desert Circuit showgrounds] that Crown didn’t want to go past, so he was for sale. So, I owe that guy,” she added.

Crown is by the famous Holsteiner Cor De La Bryere and is a well-behaved stallion. Morey hasn’t used him for breeding all that often, however. “He has a lot of babies on the ground up in the Northwest, but I don’t promote him much. I’m picky about who he gets bred to. Part of it is that he’s a show horse first, so right now we just offer frozen [semen], and some people don’t want to go that route,” she said.

“I wasn’t looking for a stallion, but when I had him on trial I figured I’d look up his pedigree and was amazed at how well bred he is,” said Morey, who noted he’s out of a Capitol I mare. “I figured I should start educating myself about the breeding side. Eventually, that will be his job, but right now he needs to be a show horse.”

## ► C. Quito Multi-Tasks

C. Quito, who placed third in the derby with Lang, is another competitor you’d never know was a stallion. “He really is a family horse. You can just get on him and go. He’s a remarkable stallion,” Lang said.

She shows “Quito” in the regular working division, while owner Margot Snowdon shows him in the adult amateur hunter classes. Snowdon’s daughter, Arianna, also rides Quito in the amateur-owner division.

“He’s the most amazing horse to ride. He’s normally quieter in the regular working hunter ring than he was out there under the lights. He’s great in the bridle, and he’s the easiest thing to ride and train,” Lang said.

C. Quito’s handy round moved him up from fourth after Round 1 to third. “I don’t think any of us realized how related the distance to the bounce was going to be. It was kind of an odd thing to stick out there all of a sudden for a horse,” Lang said.

“I wanted to be accurate. I wanted to



(Molly Sorge Photo)

get down the first line well enough and make the bounce work. I wanted to be as consistent as I could be and then really gallop the last jump,” she explained. “He turns really well. When I watched the turn after the in-and-out it looked tight, but he did it easily. I had a lot of room in there.”

Lang and Quito had a long way to travel to show at HITS Desert Circuit. Lang lives in the Jackson Hole, Wyo., area. “We have a real commitment to do this [sport] because it’s not easy to show from there. It’s a lot of driving! We don’t get to show as often as most, and it’s hard. But it’s worth it,” she said.

“I’m from Virginia, but I’ve lived in Jackson Hole for 20 years. I’d shown a lot, and I was ready to show less. I’m glad I moved. It put a damper on the career, but it’s well worth it. Life is about more than showing horses. It’s a really beautiful and great place to live, and to have a life outside of the horse shows. We hike and ski. I have a 13-year-old son, and it’s a great place to raise a family.”

Lang runs her business, Rendezvous Show Stables, out of a farm in Victor, Idaho, which is close to Jackson Hole. She

gets welcome help from Bob McDonald, dressage rider Debbie McDonald’s husband, on the ground, and Bob helped her for the derby as well.

They show in California and Colorado in the summer months, after spending the winter at Thermal. “We usually go to Parker, Colo., in May, because it’s close to us—meaning it’s 11 hours instead of 18!” Lang said. “Luckily, Quito is the kind of horse that you don’t have to show constantly.”

Snowdon bought Quito in August of 2008, and she and Lang definitely had the derbies in mind when they picked out the Belgian Warmblood. “He’s a great derby horse. His style is beautiful, and he’s got a lot of scope. He’s a player—he loves all of it. It’s fun to have one like that. Margot is excited and supportive about the derbies and about the horse,” Lang said.

C. Quito (Parco—M. Quita Van Het Eetseveld) hasn’t had a big breeding career yet, but Lang and Snowdon plan to change that. “We’re starting to promote the breeding this year. He collects easily, and you can show him the next day. He has one mare in foal in Idaho. We want to get some babies,” Lang said. 🐾

**“He really is a family horse. You can just get on him and go.”**

—Jessie Lang