

# DERBY FINALS DAILY NEWS



**VOLUME II - CHAMPIONSHIP ISSUE- AUGUST 18, 2023**

2023 OVERALL CHAMPION - JOHN FRENCH & MEREDITH LIPKE'S PARADIGM

*Phelps* SYDNEY JONES



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# 2023 DERBY FINALS OVERALL CHAMPION

MEREDITH LIPKE  
& PARADIGM



*Phelps* SYDNEY JONES

2023 PLATINUM PERFORMANCE/USHJA  
INTERNATIONAL HUNTER DERBY CHAMPIONSHIP

OVERALL CHAMPION  
2023 DERBY FINALS - ROLEX STADIUM



*Phelps* JILLIAN EBERLEIN

JOHN FRENCH  
& MEREDITH LIPKE'S PARADIGM

Leading from wire to wire, John French and Meredith Lipke's Paradigm put in a repeat performance of yesterday's Classic Round win, laying down a practically flawless spectacular performance in tonight's final Handy Round to take home the coveted Overall Championship honors for Section A of this year's Platinum Performance/USHJA International Hunter Derby Finals. The Overall Reserve Championship went to the Meridian Farm, LLC entry, Drumroll, with Geoffrey Hesslink in the irons - the pair also won the Tier II Overall Championship. Rounding out the top three were Daryl Portella's Laskano and Jimmy Torano, riding out of Wellington, FL.



*Phelps* SYDNEY JONES

2023 PLATINUM PERFORMANCE/USHJA  
INTERNATIONAL HUNTER DERBY CHAMPIONSHIP

OVERALL CHAMPION

2023 DERBY FINALS - ROLEX STADIUM

FRENCH, ON  
THE WIN:

French won the inaugural Derby Finals in 2009 with Rumba, "It has been a long time - I won the first one (Derby Finals) and I have been hoping to do it again and it has not happened, it finally happened tonight," French said, "I came in to tonight with a three point lead or so, and it was just enough to squeak by. I do not think there has ever been one this close before."



MEREDITH LIPKE & PARADIGM

*Phelps* JILLIAN EBERLEIN

2023 DERBY FINALS OVERALL CHAMPION

The 2023 Platinum Performance/USHJA International Hunter Derby Championship Handy Round got underway in the Rolex Stadium Saturday evening with Section B (Tier II) going first, followed by Section A, which was comprised of the top thirty riders from yesterday's Classic Round. Called back in reverse order of lowest to highest Classic Round score, yesterday's top four took to the stage for the Handy Round just as the sun was setting.

Under the bright stadium lights, fourth place Classic Round finishers Brian Feigus and Magic Moment, a Redfield Farm/Emil Spadone entry, laid down a beautiful trip with a couple of little mistakes that put them just out of the ribbons. Worthy of note, Magic Moment has only been in the country for about ten days and Feigus only sat on him for the first time yesterday! Next up was Cheryl Olsten's Lafitte de Muze and Amanda Steege, who had an unlucky rail, a rarity for the unbelievable jumping Lafitte. That left it down to yesterday's top two - French & Hesslink.

Geoffrey Hesslink picked up a gallop and never looked back, laying down an exceptional trip on Drumroll for Meridian Farm, LLC earning scores of 92.75 and a pair of 98's, plus high options, for a 300.75 Handy Round score - that, coupled with yesterday's 298.25, came to a grand total of 599.00. That set the bar high for yesterday's winners and last to go - John French and Meredith Lipke's Paradigm would need to score at least a 298.25 to win. They did just that. French and Paradigm's exceptional trip embodied everything a Derby win should be - grace, scope, style, pace, handiness and overall brilliance. Receiving scores of a 97.50, 95.75, and 93.25 gave them a 298.5 tonight, a 599.25 overall, and the Overall Championship title by .25 of a point. What a class, what a horse, what a ride!

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2023



PLATINUM PERFORMANCE/USHJA  
INTERNATIONAL HUNTER DERBY  
CHAMPIONSHIPS

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OVERALL RESERVE CHAMPION & TIER II CHAMPION

GEOFFREY HESSLINK  
& MERIDIAN FARM, LLC'S DRUMROLL



*Phelps* JILLIAN EBERLEIN

2023 PLATINUM PERFORMANCE/USHJA  
INTERNATIONAL HUNTER DERBY CHAMPIONSHIP

OVERALL RESERVE CHAMPION  
& TIER II OVERALL CHAMPION



GEOFFREY HESSLINK  
& DRUMROLL

In perhaps the closest finish in the history of Derby Finals, Hesslink and Drumroll's Overall Score of 599.00, after the Classic and Handy Rounds, was just a mere .25 behind John French & Paradigm's 599.25. The pair captured not only the Platinum Performance/USHJA International Derby Finals Overall Reserve Championship, but also the Tier II Overall Championship.

Tonight's finish was the second 1-2 finish for Hesslink and Meridian Farm, LLC's Drumroll this week as they also took home Overall Reserve Championship honors and Tier II Overall Championship honors in the 3'6"-3'9" section of the Platinum Performance/USHJA Green Incentive Finals on Thursday. Under the lights of Rolex Stadium tonight, Hesslink and the 2014 Holsteiner gelding by Diamant De Semilly laid down a spectacularly beautiful Handy Round to take home both the Tier II (Section B) Overall Championship and the Section A Overall Reserve Championship.

Drumroll and Hesslink's partnership is relatively new, "Drumroll came to us in mid June," Hesslink shared, "He met us at the Traverse City Horse Shows during the WCHR week. The timing did not work out for me to show him in any regular or practice classes during the week, but Kelly Mullen, John Roper and Liza Towell - who have trained him over the past two years - all said, 'If there is a horse to trust, it's him.' Knowing how confident and talented he is, I entered him in the \$100,000 Midwest Hunter Spectacular where he went beautifully to win. Having that be our first outing together gave us a lot of confidence in each other and was such a special way to start my time with him."

Speaking into how rare it is to have a horse that is both a Division winner and a Derby winner, Hesslink said, "I have been lucky enough to ride some amazing horses in my career. Drumroll is definitely one of those horses, the feeling he gives you is indescribable. He is a true winner and tries to win every time he enters the ring. I think the most important quality in a horse is their desire, and he gives it his all 100% of the time. He is a less is more type of guy, he knows how to do his job perfectly so I just try to stay out of his way. It is hard to find a horse that can be successful in both the normal Hunter Divisions and the Derbies and special classes, but he always rises to the occasion. I am so grateful for the opportunity to ride a horse like him." (Continued on next page)

## 2023 PLATINUM PERFORMANCE/USHJA INTERNATIONAL HUNTER DERBY CHAMPIONSHIP

For Hesslink tonight held a bit of déjà vu as he had an identical result with Cadoretto in 2017, "I showed Cadoretto in the 2017 USHJA International Derby Finals where we finished second in Section A and won Section B, just like this year. It was very special to come back here and repeat such a great result on a new horse. Derby Finals is the most important and special hunter event of the year and I look forward to it every time. It has a special feeling and a way of bringing out the best in horses and riders, which I think is so special. My horses always seem to rise here and show off their best efforts. The courses and jumps are normally different and more impressive than we see the rest of the year so it's exciting for both the riders and the horses to see a change. I hope to compete in Derby Finals for many years to come."

Walking into the ring tonight, "Drumroll knew it was go time," Hesslink said, "He was immediately impressed and really used the atmosphere to his benefit. He jumped absolutely out of his skin, it took me a second to get comfortable and get into the groove. The first part of the course happened quite quickly so I just tried to stay present and give him the support he needed. He just gets in the groove and gives you so much confidence. The course was relatively straightforward, so I tried to make sure I stuck to my gallop and stayed neat. He walked up to the oxer in 8 strides after the split rail, which I believe was the only horse to do that all night. His scope and stride are on another level!"

When asked about the evolution of his career and how his experience this year with Drumroll differed from that of 2017 with Cadoretto, Hesslink said, "When I competed with Cadoretto I put a lot of pressure on myself. I was much younger and less experienced at the time. I really wanted to prove myself and show how special my horse was. He was only six years old at the time, and had only done a few derbies. This year, I knew Drumroll was more than qualified and capable, and I was much more relaxed knowing I had already won a big night class on him. Honestly all I wanted to do was stay out of his way and give him the ride he deserves. He loves a big gallop and a loop in the reins, so this class and this ring were made for him!"

Speaking into his career and the growth of Hesslink Williams, LLC, the business he shares with Brendan Williams, Hesslink expressed immense gratitude for the people and horses who have been an integral part in the team's success saying, "Since 2017, Brendan and I have been so lucky to have wonderful clients and horses that have helped me get to where I am today - I would not be here without them. I am so thankful to Cadoretto and Andre Dignelli for giving me the confidence and assurance that I could do this and continue to live my dream. I am so thankful for my entire team - the horses and people that surround me are the best. It would be impossible for me to have the success I have had without them."

DRUMROLL,  
OWNER CAROLINE SIGNORINO  
OF MERIDIAN FARM, LLC,  
& GEOFFREY HESSLINK



JILLIAN EBERLEIN

2023 DERBY FINALS - THE CLASS & THE COURSE

JACOB POPE  
& FORGET ME NOT FARM'S  
UNBELIEVABLE



*Phelps* JILLIAN EBERLEIN

2023 PLATINUM PERFORMANCE/USHJA  
INTERNATIONAL HUNTER DERBY CHAMPIONSHIP

# THE CLASS & THE COURSE

2023 DERBY FINALS - HANDY ROUND - ROLEX STADIUM



To win at Derby Finals is truly an art - a fine line and delicate balance between risk and ultimate reward. Historically, scores have been given in a format of raw score, plus handy points, plus high option points. This was the first year that handiness was built in to the raw score and only high options were added on top. Set across the expansive nearly 3.5 acre arena, the beautifully designed Alan Lohman course featured a number of various opportunities and tests alike. As many would say, this is a humbling sport, and at Derby Finals the game of risk and reward comes front and center.



The higher the risk, the higher the reward. For some the risk paid off, for others, it was not their night. Rolex Stadium saw everything from inside turns going awry, to hand galloping past the distance, to tight roll backs that sliced not only the angle, but also the rail right off the top. Yet, for those whose risk paid off in reward, the beauty of the derbies - the brilliance of forward pace, the spectacular jumping style, exceptional handiness, and seemingly never ending scope - were on full display here in Kentucky tonight.

Lohman provided riders with numerous opportunities to acquire points for both handiness and high options. Each jump was stunningly, and sizably, built. There were four high options ranging from 4'3" to a substantial 4'7" at the last - an impressively large oxer coming home towards the gate. Handiness opportunities could also be seen throughout - not only in the track taken regarding inside turns and when and where to hand gallop, but also in the obstacles themselves - a few of which were highly unique, and rarely seen elsewhere.



2023 PLATINUM PERFORMANCE/USHJA  
INTERNATIONAL HUNTER DERBY CHAMPIONSHIP

THE CLASS & THE COURSE

2023 DERBY FINALS - HANDY ROUND - ROLEX STADIUM



"THE PEN"

Perhaps the most interesting "obstacle" on course was "The Pen" (Pictured Above), which was a rectangle of jumps with the long sides being a line of end-to-end rustic/hedge/straw verticals, while the short sides were half-log and half-rustic vertical. Riders were asked to jump into The Pen on the one long side and jump out the other long side in two strides. That part most seemed okay with, it was the next part that was a bit more tricky. After jumping out of The Pen in two, it was a rollback to trot the log to jump back into the pen, that part was also relatively okay for most. The last phase of The Pen was what got most horses and riders - after the trot jump back into The Pen, they had to then roll back *within* The Pen and jump out over the short side vertical.

Horses nor riders were likely to ever have seen a test such as this, and on more than one occasion, the roll back within The Pen gave competitors a run for their money - some set their eye on jumping out of the long side rather than making the turn to jump out of the short side, others had trouble getting the change inside The Pen to make the turn back to the vertical out, and perhaps most common, was a change or break in stride back to trot as some just were not able to make the turn in time.

The second rather unique obstacle was an "Angled Two-Stride" set along the lake side of Rolex Stadium with two side by side verticals, to two side by side oxers. Riders could choose to take the inside track and do two, or the outside track and do three, most chose to go inside in two.

Over the last 14 years, the USHJA International Hunter Derbies have paid out over \$18 Million in prize money. Tonight's class offered a total of \$223,350 to be spit up with 80% of the prize money going to Section A and 20% going to Section B (Tier II). Standing at the top of the podium for Section A, French was handed a winner's check for \$37,719.35.

2023 DERBY FINALS COURSE DESIGNED BY ALAN LOHMAN

# 2023 DERBY FINALS - RESULTS & SPECIAL AWARDS

GEOFFREY HESSLINK  
& DRUMROLL



*Phelps* SYDNEY JONES

2023 PLATINUM PERFORMANCE/USHJA  
INTERNATIONAL HUNTER DERBY CHAMPIONSHIP

CHAMPIONS & RESERVES

2023 DERBY FINALS - AUGUST 19, 2023

2023 INTERNATIONAL DERBY FINALS  
OVERALL SECTION A - CHAMPION & RESERVE

**OVERALL SECTION A CHAMPION**

***PARADIGM***

RIDER - JOHN FRENCH

OWNER - MEREDITH LIPKE

**OVERALL SECTION A RESERVE CHAMPION**

***DRUMROLL***

RIDER - GEOFFREY HESSLINK

OWNER - MERIDIAN FARM, LLC

2023 INTERNATIONAL DERBY FINALS  
OVERALL SECTION B - CHAMPION & RESERVE

**OVERALL SECTION B - TIER II CHAMPION**

***DRUMROLL***

RIDER - GEOFFREY HESSLINK

OWNER - MERIDIAN FARM, LLC

**OVERALL SECTION B - TIER II RESERVE CHAMPION**

***DAYDREAM***

RIDER - HAYLIE ROLFE

OWNER - HAYLIE ROLFE

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**SPECIAL AWARDS**

2023 DERBY FINALS - AUGUST 19, 2023

2023 USHJA INTERNATIONAL DERBY FINALS  
SPECIAL AWARDS

**LEADING AMATEUR RIDER**

CALLIE SEAMAN - NEW YORK, NY  
& SEAMAN'S DIAMANTE

**LEADING JUNIOR-OWNER RIDER**

GIGI PHILLIPS - CHARLOTTE, NC  
& PHILLIPS' THUNDERBIRD

**LEADING JUNIOR RIDER**

MADDIE TOSH - ALPHARETTA, GA  
& DR. BETSEE PARKER'S ULYSSES

**RIDER STYLE AWARD**

CHRISTOPHER PAYNE  
CINCINNATI, OH

**THE ALBERTO RAMIREZ INTERNATIONAL DERBY  
GROOM'S AWARD**

JUAN AGUILAR AND MARCOS MARTINEZ  
GROOMS OF FREE SOLO, LLC'S HH EAGLE SCOUT  
RIDER - QUENTIN JUDGE

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# OVERALL SECTION A RESULTS

2023 DERBY FINALS - AUGUST 19, 2023

	HORSE	RIDER	OWNER	SCORE
1	PARADIGM	JOHN FRENCH	MEREDITH LIPKE	599.25
2	DRUMROLL	GEOFFREY HESSLINK	MERIDIAN FARM LLC	599.00
3	LASKANO	JIMMY TORANO	DARYL PORTELLA	586.50
4	ESTIMATED PROPHET	NICK HANNESS	ROARING FORK FARMS, LLC	582.00
5	DAYDREAM	HAYLIE ROLFE	HAYLIE ROLFE	577.40
6	RED RYDER	HANNAH ISOP	TRACY FREELS	577.25
7	AUTOGRAPH	HUNT TOSH	CEIL WHEELER	572.90
8	CAVALETTO LOMA Z	NICK HANESS	WEST COAST EQUINE PARTNERS, LLC	571.50
9	CHAPPY	GREG CROLICK	CAROLE CHASE	562.75
10	MILAGRO	JOHN FRENCH	KENT FARRINGTON, LLC	555.25

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# OVERALL SECTION B RESULTS

TIER II - 2023 DERBY FINALS - AUGUST 19, 2023

	HORSE	RIDER	OWNER	SCORE
1	DRUMROLL	GEOFFREY HESSLINK	MERIDIAN FARM LLC	599.00
2	DAYDREAM	HAYLIE ROLFE	HAYLIE ROLFE	577.40
3	SOMETHING BLUE	JOSH DOLAN	MEG ROBINSON	549.50
4	MAGIC MOMENT	BRIAN FEIGUS	REDFIELD FARM	541.75
5	REIGN	CHRIS PAYNE	PROVENCE LLC	525.50
6	MALIBU KEN	TIFFANY CAMBRIA	KYM SMITH	512.00
7	ULYSSES	MADDIE TOSH	DR. BETSEE PARKER	493.50
8	THUNDERBIRD	GIGI PHILLIPS	GIGI PHILLIPS	493.00
9	MANGO CART	SHAINA MACDUFFEE	ANNIE GRABER-WELLS	487.00
10	DIAMANTE	CALLIE SEAMAN	CALLIE SEAMAN	478.50

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# CLASSIC ROUND RESULTS

2023 DERBY FINALS - AUGUST 18, 2023

	HORSE	RIDER	OWNER	SCORE
1	PARADIGM	JOHN FRENCH	MEREDITH LIPKE	300.75
2	DRUMROLL	GEOFFREY HESSLINK	MERIDIAN FARM, LLC	298.25
3	LAFITTE DE MUZE	AMANDA STEEGE	CHERYL OLSTEN	297.75
4	MAGIC MOMENT	BRIAN FEIGUS	REDFIELD FARM	296.75
5	CARDENTOS	NICK HANESS	HLF EQUESTRIAN, LLC	294.75
6	RED RYDER	HANNAH ISOP	TRACY FREELS	291.00
7	TANGLED UP IN BLUE	HALIE ROBINSON	3P EQUINE PARTNERS, LLC	290.00
8	ESTIMATED PROPHET	NICK HANESS	ROARING FORK FARMS, LLC	290.00
9	LASKANO	JIMMY TORANO	ISALOU, INC.	288.00
10	UNBELIEVABLE	JACOB POPE	FORGET ME NOT FARM	288.00

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