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## Press Release

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### Maya Nayar Takes Home Top Honors in Hunterdon Cup on Day One of Junior Hunter Finals

**Written by:** Lauren Baker  
**Client:** Brandywine Valley Summer Series  
**http://www.brandywinehorseshows.com/**  
**Release Date:** 2016-07-11

**Devon, PA – July 11, 2016 –** As the 2016 U.S. Junior Hunter National Championship East Coast kicked off at the Devon Horse Show grounds during the Brandywine Horse Shows, 76 of the nation's best equestrian riders gathered to vie for the top honors in the prestigious USHJA Hunterdon Cup, and it was Maya Nayar who went wire to wire to bring home the blue ribbon.

The large starting field was whittled down as they competed over Skip Bailey's course, with the top 20 returning to attempt the handy round – a unique test that combines the precision of equitation with the handiness of the hunters.

In the classic round, Nayar's forward, confident ride on Connaro scored her an 89 to take over the top spot, while reserve champion Emma Kurtz and Clearway sat in fifth place with 85 points as the riders headed into the handy round.

"Connaro was my main Medal/Maclar horse," Nayar explained. "I know him really well. This course suited his style, and based on the courses we've been doing throughout the year, it seemed natural to do him in this class. The first round really let you gallop forward to jumps, and that's something I've been working on."

Judge Frank Madden commented, "In the first round, it really became about who knew their horse's stride. We could tell when the kids had confidence to go down the lines, and there were other ones that second guessed themselves and stuck in an extra stride, but Emma and Maya looked like they were on the attack. It was a very good class."

The handy course gave the riders a variety of options, including an option on the directions from which they took the first two fences. Following the first two fences, riders advanced to the third fence along a bending line before being asked to roll back and complete the course.

As Kurtz returned for the handy, she came prepared to impress and rode more assertively to earn a score of 89 points from the judges, giving her a total of 174 points.

Nayar was next to show, and again delivered a confident ride, proving to the judges that her success in the classic round was not a fluke. The judges rewarded the bold ride with a score of 90, giving Nayar a clear lead with a total of 179 points.

"I was really proud of my horse and how we worked together," Nayar said. "We were able to keep the lead all the way through, and I was really proud of that. I came in here hoping to have two really solid rounds. To make it into the top four, let alone to win, was incredible."

Judge Ken Smith said of Nayar's rides, "We thought Maya won all the rounds. She was on top in both. She rode confidently in both rounds – she looked like she wanted to win the class."

After the handy round, the judges called back the top four riders for further testing. Sitting in first and second place, Nayar swapped horses with Kurtz, while third- and fourth-place riders, Taylor St. Jacques and Grace Boston, switched mounts to ride the test.

The judges instructed the riders to canter directly to an oxer with whiskey barrels

underneath, counter-canter down a bending line, and turn back for a series of rollbacks before slowing to a sitting trot and exiting the ring at a walk.

"We only had two minutes to flat, and then we got two jumps, so it was definitely a little nerve-wracking," Kurtz said of the test. "You don't know the horse at all, and you have to go in and jump these big, scary jumps. The horses were all incredible, though, so it wasn't a big deal."

Holding consistent in their scoring, the final order would stay the same after each rider made small errors in their tests, leaving Nayyar in first, Kurtz in second, St. Jacques in third and Boston in fourth.

"I was a little nervous for the test, but I thought it was fair," Nayyar admitted. "Clearway and Connaro are kind of similar in that they're large and they have big strides, so I just tried to ride him just like my horse, and it worked out."

Stacia Madden, who trains Nayyar, said that she loves the unique hunter feel of the USHJA Hunterdon Cup, and the fact that the final test encourages the riders to think independently.

"I like this class because it's so hunter-oriented," Stacia Madden said. "I really like the focus on having two different, very clear rounds to concentrate on. Getting into the final round, you know you're going to switch horses, and you're not able to help the kids at the point. I really love that as a test to see how the kids think on their own, especially at the middle of the year like this."

Riders will return to the Dover Arena Tuesday morning at 7 a.m. to compete in the under saddle and handy rounds. Under saddle scores will account for 20 percent of each horse's overall total, while the handy round accounts for the remaining 40 percent.

To learn more about the 2016 U.S. Junior Hunter National Championship East Coast, hosted by the Brandywine Horse Shows, visit <http://www.brandywinehorseshows.com/>.

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