

## Olympian Featured in Blowing Rock Hunter Derby

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Melanie Smith Taylor, Olympic Gold Medalist and prolific Grand Prix show jumping rider will judge the Hunter Derby at the 90th Blowing Rock Charity Horse Show. The Hunter & Jumper divisions of this historic horse show continues on July 23 for two weeks of Hunter & Jumper competition with the Hunter Derby scheduled for Saturday, August 3. Smith, a resident of Memphis, and her late husband, Lee raised and trained thoroughbred horses for polo, showing and pleasure riding on their Wildwood Farm in nearby Germantown, TN. Melanie's show jumping achievements are legendary. From an early childhood riding on the farm, she went on to gain international fame as both a competitor and a trainer. In 1978, she earned the American Grand Prix Association's Lady Rider of the Year, the overall Rider of the Year and her horse Val de Lore was named Horse of the Year. That accomplishment confirmed forever that women could perform on even terms with men, leading to the decision to discontinue the separate Lady Rider award. Melanie became one of only two riders ever to earn the "Triple Crown of Show Jumping" by winning the American Invitational, the International Jumping Derby and the American Gold Cup. She remains the only person to win all three events on the same horse. Melanie was a member of the US Equestrian Team's Gold Medal squad at the 1979 Pan American Games in Puerto Rico. In 1982, she won the World Cup Final and was awarded Sportswoman of the Year by the United States Olympic Committee. Also in 1982, she was inducted into the Tennessee Sports Hall of Fame. A crowning achievement for any rider, Melanie rode her beloved Calypso to a team Show Jumping Gold at the Los Angeles Olympics and was a finalist for the Sullivan Award, given to the nation's top amateur athlete. Melanie retired from competitive riding in 1987 but continued to serve the horse world as a television commentator for events including the Olympic Games and World Championships. She also continues her passion for training and teaching young riders. Burr Collier, Chair of Blowing Rock Charity Horse Show Foundation said. "Having Melanie in Blowing Rock to judge our most prestigious hunter class is a distinct honor. She is so widely respected as a "rider's rider" and as a completely fair and impartial judge that this year's winner will carry an added sense of accomplishment. We were very fortunate that she could add Blowing Rock to her busy judging and teaching schedule." On judging in Blowing Rock, Melanie responded, "It is exciting for me to judge this particular class at this particular horse show. The competition here is the best of the best and everyone who rides hunters knows a ribbon at Blowing Rock is a treasured accomplishment. I am truly thrilled to be a part of this historic and challenging event." The Hunter Derby, scheduled for Saturday afternoon August 3 at the Blowing Rock Equestrian Preserve, is the signature event of show hunter competitions. The top 12 horses will split a purse of \$10,000 with \$4,500 going to the winner. Grandstand seating is \$5 a day. More at [www.blowingrockhorses.com](http://www.blowingrockhorses.com)