

**Get Behind Your Driver and Help Chester Make History as the First Combined Driver to Win Equestrian of the Year!**

## **Calling All Drivers To Vote For Combined Driver Chester Weber To Win 2011 USEF Equestrian Of The Year Title**

Ocala, FL (December 27, 2011) – Combined driving is one of the fastest growing equestrian sports in the United States and boasts the elegance of dressage, the excitement and stamina of the marathon phase, and the precision of the cones. In 2011 an American Combined Driver blossomed on both the national and international stage, taking home multiple wins and earning himself the Becky Hart Trophy. Chester Weber, America's most decorated combined driver, has been named an Equestrian of Honor, and is now in the running for the prestigious Equestrian of the Year title. If he wins, Weber will become the first Combined Driver ever to be named the Equestrian of the Year. Weber's history of competitive success and generosity to equines and equestrian sport make him a prime candidate for this award. The entire driving community is encouraged to get behind their driver and help Weber make history!

Weber is one of eight equestrians in the running for the 2011 USEF Equestrian of the Year title – the most esteemed and sought after award in the country. It is now up to the USEF general membership, the USEF Board of Directors and the Media to select the winner. Cast your vote now for Weber to make history by going to the USEF website and voting for Weber. Voting is open now and closes January 4, 2012. The winner will be announced at the USEF's annual Pegasus Awards Ceremony in January.

Weber's stellar show record, along with his upstanding character and desire to support and give back to the equestrian community, helped him win the 2011 Equestrian of Honor title. Each of the eight USEF Equestrians of Honor were awarded a unique competitive trophy and Weber won the 2011 Becky Grand Hart Trophy, representing the best competitor of any horse or pony breed in international driving, endurance, reining, vaulting or Para-equestrian competitions.

Weber had a remarkable 2011 competitive year, but throughout the year he took time out of his schedule to support the equestrian community, from serving as the Chef d'Equipe for the World Pony Team Championships to serving as a member of the USEF Board of Directors. Weber was also willing, at the drop of a hat, to donate carriage rides to charitable events and promote the sport of combined driving. Drivers across the country are predicting that Weber will be a phenomenal ambassador for the USEF and all equestrian disciplines – in addition to giving the sport of driving a fantastic boost – if he drives away as the 2011 Equestrian of the Year.

Weber had an award-winning 2011, which saw him in the winner's circle on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean, while at the same time breaking in a new pair of horses to his talented team. Weber kicked off the year by winning the FEI Four-In-Hand at the Sunshine State, Little Everglades and Live Oak CAI-B. Weber then headed across the pond where he and his team, including two new horses from Jane Clark, turned in one brilliant performance after the next to keep the American flag flying high at some of Europe's most prestigious events. Weber's European wins also put him first in the standings for the FEI World Cup qualifications.

"We had a fantastic European tour and I was very proud of all my horses and each member of Team Weber. We work really well together as a team, and it certainly takes an amazing group of people to keep Team Weber driving into the winner's circle," Weber said. "Our European tour included wins at CAIO Veces, CAI Altenfelden and CAIO Riesenbeck. We had our best results ever at Aachen, it was truly a memorable summer!"

Weber finished up 2011 in the winner's circle at the Katydid Combined Driving Event in Aiken, South Carolina, and at the USEF National Four-In-Hand Driving Championships where he was the Reserve Champion. Weber has long been known as one of the strongest supporters of Combined Driving, and thanks to his expertise and experience Weber served as the Chef d'Equipe for the U.S. drivers in their Bronze Medal win at the World Pony Team Championships. Weber, who is an "r" driving judge, also served as the chef for the FEI World Pair Championships.

Weber said he is thrilled to be one of the eight equestrians named as an Equestrian of Honor. “It is such an honor each time I represent the United States during a competition and it is an even bigger honor to be named an Equestrian of Honor and win the Becky Grand Hart Trophy. I love the sport of Combined Driving, it truly is my passion, and it is a great joy in my life to be involved in the USEF and the USET. I was named to the USET Foundation Board of Trustees early this year and that was certainly another fantastic moment in my career,” Weber said.

Bonnie Jenkins, Executive Director of the USET Foundation, said, “Chester and our other Trustees are people that have shown their leadership with the United States Equestrian Team through their involvement as ambassadors in International High Performance activities, and for their charitable support of our United States Equestrian Teams.”

Weber has spent years supporting the equestrian community and serves on the USEF High Performance Driving Committee, the National Driving Committee, the Safety Committee, the Hearing Committee, the Licensed Officials Committee and the Driving Technical Committee. Weber is also the chairman of the Active Athlete’s Committee and served on the Dressage Search Committee.

Weber, who was part of the winning Silver Medal 2010 Alltech FEI World Equestrian Games Combined Driving team, was named a USEF Equestrian of Honor in 2008 and won the Becky Hart Trophy that year. Weber’s star horse, Jamaica, was also in the spotlight in 2008 when he won the USEF Farnam/Platform Horse of the Year title. In keeping with the “pay it forward” mentality that Weber is known for, Weber donated Jamaica’s winnings – a year’s supply of feed -- to two horse rescue groups in Florida.

Jamaica’s rags to riches story captivated the nation as he was rescued from a slaughterhouse before famously becoming part of Weber’s record-breaking international Four-In-Hand Combined Driving team. Now 20 years old and happily retired at Weber’s Live Oak Stud in Ocala, Jamaica was a member of seven of Weber’s National Four-In-Hand Combined Driving National Championship teams. “Jamaica was a once-in-a-lifetime horse with a once-in-a-

lifetime story,” Weber said. “It humbles me to think that I was able to be part of his life and his story.”

In addition to setting records around the world, Weber has made it his mission to educate the equestrian community about Combined Driving. In 2011, he once again took his team to the Washington International Horse Show to demonstrate the art of combined driving. Weber draws large crowds wherever he goes and is always willing to pose for photos, sign autographs and talk about driving. Weber has dedicated himself to raising money for charities, the USEF and the USET. He regularly donates carriage rides at silent auctions, appears on radio and TV shows to talk about combined driving, lectures at colleges and supports education by sitting on college boards. Weber has a team of sponsors who stand behind the dedicated and gifted athlete, and the entire organization that is Team Weber. “It takes a small village to compete and behind my organization is certainly a village. It is an honor to sit in my carriage and be a part of it,” Weber said.

In addition to his outstanding competition accomplishments, which includes representing the U.S. in three World Equestrian Games, Weber is a prime mover in the organization of three combined driving events, including the top rated CAI-B Live Oak International. Taking place on his own Live Oak Stud, 2012 CAI-B Live Oak International will for the first time include a Grand Prix jumping division. Weber’s name has become synonymous with Four-In-Hand driving throughout the world and Weber is known as the “driver with the plan.” Weber has been on the forefront of Combined Driving for many years, and in 2004 he became the first American to win the prestigious German Fahrderby at Riesenbeck, an achievement he repeated in 2008. Weber also accomplished what no other American has done before, when in 2008 he won the Individual Silver Medal at the World Driving Championships.

Fans of the legendary driver will certainly want to see Weber named the 2011 USEF Equestrian of the Year – a title he truly deserves! To vote for Weber, go to the USEF website at [http://www.usefnetwork.com/news/7915/2011/12/14/usef\\_announces\\_the\\_2011\\_equestrian.aspx](http://www.usefnetwork.com/news/7915/2011/12/14/usef_announces_the_2011_equestrian.aspx). Voting is open from now until January 4<sup>th</sup> and the winner will be announced on January 14, 2012, at the 2012 Pegasus Dinner during the USEF Annual Meeting in Cincinnati, Ohio. To learn more about Weber and his combined driving team, visit their website at [www.chesterweber.com](http://www.chesterweber.com).



*Photo: Calling all drivers to vote for Combined Driver Chester Weber to win the 2011 Equestrian of the Year title. If Weber is named the Equestrian of the Year, he will make history as the first combined driver to ever be awarded the title. Go to the USEF website to vote! (Photo courtesy of PicsofYou.com)*