

Stars shine at the silver anniversary of Rolex



As the sport of three-day eventing celebrated an astonishing 25 years of name-brand support from Rolex Watch USA, Winsome Adante once again proved himself to be the best horse in America, winning Rolex Kentucky CCI**** for the third time in four years. *text by Patrick Field and Michelle Dunn*

Kim Severson and “Dan” left nothing in doubt, leading from their dressage test Friday afternoon, to the final stadium round on Sunday. They finished an unheard of 17 points ahead of their closest rivals, Phillip Dutton (AUS) and The Foreman.

A feat only achieved by one other rider in the history of Rolex (Bruce Davidson and Dr. Peaches, who won in 1984, '88 and '89), Severson and Winsome Adante not only won for the third time, but also back-to-back, having bested the field in 2004 as well.

“Dan is pretty amazing,” exclaimed Severson. “He was just about a perfect horse this weekend.”

Not to be overshadowed are the incredible achievements of Phillip Dutton, who finished three horses in the top five. In addition to his second place finish with The Foreman, he rode Nova Top to fourth and Hannigan to fifth. The reigning Olympic gold medallist Leslie Law (GBR) brought his young prospect Coup de Coeur to Kentucky and rode to a third place finish.

Law has great hopes for this horse,

believing him to be a possible European Championship mount.

“Kim was really in a class of her own this weekend,” remarked Dutton graciously remarked. Law, who was unable to attend the final press conference as he was whisked off to catch a late flight to Badminton, sent word that, “Kim may be the current Olympic silver medallist – but she was pure gold this weekend.”

Top placed Canadian, Hawley Bennett of British Columbia, finished with her trusted Olympic partner Livingstone in 19th place, having amassed a somewhat uncharacteristic

PHOTOS BY MICHELLE DUNN



Rebecca Howard and Big Wave Dave



Hawley Bennett and Livingstone



Lesley Grant and Timber Spirit

50 plus time penalties on cross-country. "It was luck of the draw, but very difficult to ride my dressage test following Darren (Chiacchia) and Windfall 2," said Bennett. "I actually thought my dressage test was better than last year, but I was marked 10 points higher (this year).

"On cross-country, he was not moving out of his rhythm. He just would not go any faster. I also noticed his

breathing was not quite 100 per cent - something just seemed off - so I let up and didn't push him." As it turned out, "Hank" was suffering from the same problem afflicting so many others that week: severe allergies to the elevated pollen levels in Lexington. Just three days earlier, USA Today had reported the number one city in America in 2005 for seasonal asthma and allergies was Lexington, Kentucky.

Rolex Kentucky Three-Day Event

Lexington, KY
April 27 - May 1, 2005

| Pl. Horse | Rider | Country | Dressage | X-Country | Stadium | Total |
|------------------|----------------|---------|----------|-----------|---------|-------|
| 1 Winsome Adante | Kim Severson | USA | 38.2 | 0 | 0 | 38.2 |
| 2 The Foreman | Phillip Dutton | AUS | 51.2 | 0 | 4 | 55.2 |
| 3 Coup de Coeur | Leslie Law | GBR | 46 | 4.4 | 5 | 55.4 |
| 4 Nova Top | Phillip Dutton | AUS | 51.8 | 0 | 8 | 59.2 |
| 5 Hannigan | Phillip Dutton | AUS | 54.4 | 0.8 | 4 | 59.2 |
| Canadians | | | | | | |
| 19 Livingstone | Hawley Bennett | CAN | 62.2 | 58.4 | 12 | 132.6 |
| 20 Timber Spirit | Lesley Grant | CAN | 76.8 | 44 | 16 | 136.8 |
| 21 Balladeer Ted | Peter Gray | CAN | 77.8 | 59.6 | 6 | 143.4 |
| Big Wave Dave | Rebecca Howard | CAN | 60.4 | 13.6 | W | W |

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"Looking ahead, I would like to hope we can get to Burghley in the fall or perhaps Adelaide (Australia) next year in preparation for WEG," said Bennett. "I'd love for him to get out and see another course other than Rolex. But he's a seasoned Team horse now – he really has nothing to prove."

Ontario's Lesley Grant, competing in her first Rolex four-star, finished in 20th place with her own Timber Spirit. "It far exceeded my expectations," she said. "The course, the atmosphere, the excitement – it left me hungry to go back next year and do better. It was totally satisfying to show the world that I



Peter Gray and Balladeer Ted

The Canadian Eventing Team's newest member

Balladeer Ted, Peter Gray's mount at this year's Rolex Kentucky Three-Day Event, was, until recently, owned by Jorge and Mandy Bernhard's Connewirrico Sport Horses of Orangeville, Ontario. The couple has decided, however, to donate the 11-year-old gelding to Equine Canada.

Their decision was, according to Gray, influenced greatly by the riders they have met over the years while traveling with Peter to various events. "I think a deciding factor for sure, was that they have witnessed first hand the difficulties so many top Canadian riders have in keeping their best horses in Canada," he said. The deal was finalized the week prior to Rolex, and officially announced at the annual "Red & White" Canadian supporters party Friday afternoon at Rolex.



Ted, a 16.3 hand Irish Thoroughbred by Mr. Lord, was purchased by the Bernhards in the winter of 2003 in Ireland. At that point, Ted had raced (slowly), steeple-chased, and had successfully completed two CCI*** events. Gray saw his potential immediately. The Bernhards, both riders, have other horses with Gray, including Apple Cider with whom Mandy will be competing this season.

"We are very pleased to be donating Balladeer Ted, a wonderful event horse, to the CET, thus ensuring he will continue to campaign for Canada," announced Mandy Bernhard. "We will remain actively involved with Balladeer Ted, and his rider Peter Gray, through ongoing sponsorship and support. Peter and Ted have formed a strong partnership and we firmly believe they will successfully represent Canada in the future. We wish them, and Equine Canada, all the very best."

Michael Gallagher, chair of the Canadian Eventing High Performance Committee, said there are rigorous steps involved in having a horse accepted for donation by Equine Canada.

"The donation of a horse involves a very thorough process which includes evaluations by industry experts, veterinary inspections and a review of the past

competition records," he said. "Equine Canada's policy is to only accept a horse in the donation program if it is reasonably capable of representing Canada internationally over the next two years.

"Several checks and balances are included in the Equine Canada policy for horse donation. The National Coach of the discipline or the High Performance Committee of the discipline must approve the donation. Once that approval has been reached, the Discipline Committee must approve the donation. After that, the International Committee must then approve the donation.

"Once a donated horse has retired from International Competition, most disciplines attempt to find a Young Rider who will be able to learn from the horse, and compete the horse at lower levels of competition," Gallagher explained.

"We are very grateful to Mr. Jorge Bernhard for the donation of Balladeer Ted to our Team. This donation insures that Ted will continue to be ridden by a Canadian rider. This is truly a world class horse that could potentially represent Canada at the World Equestrian Games in 2006 and the Olympics in 2008 under the experienced guidance of Peter Gray," Gallagher concluded.

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am a four-star rider, not a very good one yet, but a four-star rider nonetheless, and that my boy Tim is indeed a very, very special horse."

To further her desire to do better next year, Grant will be spending a year working for the legendary Bruce Davidson Sr., having worked in the past for Hugh Graham, Gary Van der Ploeg and Garry Roque. "I am aiming for the Team – I won't hide it. We went a little cautiously on cross-country since in



Phillip Dutton and The Foreman

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Canada there are only a limited number of horses that can get you around a four-star course. If you're aiming for a Team and you only have one great horse, you have to exercise a little self-preservation to make sure you don't jeopardize that."

Peter Gray, returning to the four-star level since last riding around Badminton in 1991, piloted Balladeer Ted to a 21st place finish, gaining valuable experience for his new Canadian Eventing Team mount "Ted" (see sidebar).

At 47, the past Canadian Eventing Team Coach, and former Olympic rider (Bermuda), was riding in the Rolex CCI**** for the first time, having competed extensively in Europe as well as serving on the FEI Eventing Committee. "To put some perspective on it, you have to realize almost 80 per cent of all event riders will likely ride fewer than a dozen four-star events in their entire career," said Gray. "This was my first four-star in 14 years! And Rolex is nothing if not all about the atmosphere. Since there are so few competitions of this stature, it's very difficult to develop a

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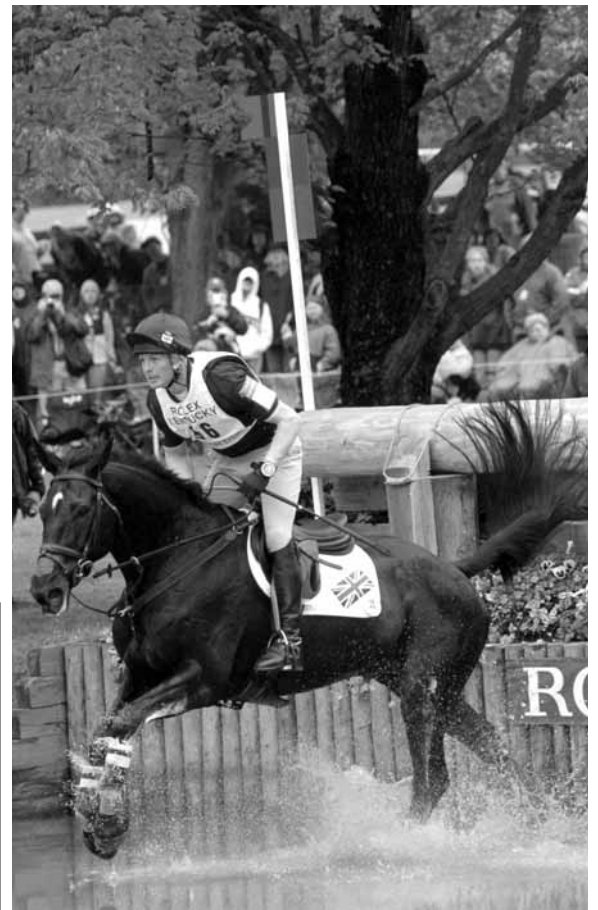
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“Kim may be the current Olympic silver medallist – but she was pure gold this weekend.” ~ Law

horse comfortable enough to be competitive (at dressage) in this particular atmosphere.

“Ted froze up a little. It was a small regression which, unfortunately, took us right out of contention. And once you are not going to be competitive, you don’t want to push for time on cross-country or steeplechase, when the footing and weather conditions are less than ideal,” he explained.

“We will likely spend this summer going to advanced dressage shows and




Leslie Law and Coup de Coeur

maybe some jumper shows – we likely won’t event now until Richland Park and Wits End in the fall.”

From a coaching perspective, Gray was asked his thoughts on the performance of the Canadians this year. “Rebecca Howard is one of our best riders right now. She’s currently riding with David and Karen O’Connor, and her horse should excel at the short format competition. It was also very satisfying to watch (Lesley Grant’s) Timber Spirit complete his first four-star. I took him to his very first one-star, and we placed second at Bromont,” he reflected.

Ted’s “groom” Paul Delbrook received the Zeppa International Trophy for Best Turned-Out Horse at the first and third veterinary inspections. “Next year, Peter (Gray) will be grooming for *me*,” laughed Paul when it was all over.

Howard and Big Wave Dave had been leading the Canadian contingent following the cross-country day, moving from 19th place after dressage up to 10th place by the end of the day Saturday. Unfortunately, they did not present for the third veterinary inspection Sunday morning and thus did not complete the competition. 

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