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No longer a bridesmaid Phillip Dutton Wins Rolex

by with Patrick Field and Michelle Dunn



Riding for America, Phillip Dutton has finally won the Rolex Kentucky CCI 4* Three-Day Event, with Bruce Duchussois' 15-year-old Irish Sport Horse gelding Connaught.

After an incredible five second-place finishes with five different horses, last year's runner-up jumped one of only two double-clean stadium rounds to clinch the top spot over Becky Holder and Courageous Comet. In a jam-packed Johnson Arena, Dutton (West Grove, PA), who jumped second to last, put all the pressure on Holder, who came into the arena without a rail in hand. Although the pair had been working diligently on show jumping, two rails (although respectable compared to most this year) were enough to relegate them to second place.

"It feels a lot better to win than get second!" said Dutton at the press conference following the competition. "But I haven't been too worried about it – everyone else seems to be more worried about it than me. I am particularly proud of the way Connaught performed over the whole weekend. It really was his weekend."

Phillip Dutton won Rolex, after five second place finishes in a row, with Connaught.



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PHOTO BY MICHELLE DUNN

Rolex Kentucky Three-Day Event CCI 4*

Lexington, KY
April 23-27, 2008

Pl.	Horse	Rider	Country	Dressage	Cross-Country	Stadium	Total
1.	Connaught	Phillip Dutton	USA	41.3	0.4	0	41.7
2.	Courageous Comet	Becky Holder	USA	39.3	0	8	47.3
3.	Critical Decision	Missy Ransehousen	USA	53.3	0	4	57.3
4.	Brandenburg's Joshua	Stephen S. Bradley	USA	50.7	6.8	0	57.5
5.	Tipperary Liadhnan	Kim Severson	USA	54.6	0	8	62.5
6.	Theodore O'Connor	Karen O'Connor	USA	58.2	0	8	66.2
7.	The Good Witch	Jennifer Wooton	USA	56.1	3.2	8	67.3
8.	From	Stephen S. Bradley	USA	42.6	5.2	20	67.8
9.	Woodburn	Phillip Dutton	USA	55.0	0	14	69.0
9.	Neville Bardos	Boyd Martin	AUS	55.0	0	14	69.0
<i>Canadians</i>							
12.	Kingpin	Mike Winter	CAN	52.6	6.4	12	71.0
15.	Buenos Aires	Sandra Donnelly	CAN	55.6	11.2	12	78.8
17.	Livingstone	Hawley Bennett	CAN	58.7	0	24	82.7
18.	Madison Park	Kyle Carter	CAN	70.4	0	16	86.4
20.	Colombo	Selena O'Hanlon	CAN	55.6	29.6	12	97.2
	Paleface	Waylon Roberts	CAN	67.0	0	-	elim



PHOTO BY MICHELLE DUNN

Becky Holder (USA) came second riding Courageous Comet.

Mike Winter and Kingpin were the top Canadian pair, in 12th place.



PHOTO BY MICHELLE DUNN

usually pull rails as a result. My goal for today was to keep him moving forward, relaxed and confident. I was very pleased with his performance today," said Ransehousen.

Canadians on the Scene

The large Canadian contingent finished out of the top 10, led by Mike Winter and Kingpin in 12th. David O'Connor, Team Technical Advisor, was very pleased with how everyone performed.

"This was a big weekend for Canadian eventing," he commented. "Five in the top 20 is great. Now we're looking to make that three in the top 10."

Sandra Donnelly was 15th aboard Buenos Aires.



PHOTO BY ANDREW BAILLI

Becky Holder, of Mendota Heights, Minnesota, and the expressive grey Thoroughbred gelding Courageous Comet, had led the field with a dressage score of 39.3, having added nothing to their score on Saturday's cross-country phase.

"I'm not too sad to come in second to Phillip Dutton," laughed Holder. "I would have much rather won, but I expected them to have a clear round so I was mentally prepared for the pressure."

Missy Ransehousen (Unionville, PA) with mother Jessica's Critical Decision, rounded out the top three placings, when a double clean round on Saturday propelled them from 12th to fourth, and a single stadium rail upped them into the top three.

"I must say I was thrilled. My horse can get very excited by the crowds, and we



PHOTO BY ANDREW BALLIN



PHOTO BY CLIX

Hawley Bennett and Livingstone (left) were 17th, followed by Kyle Carter and Madison Park in 18th.

Having six Canadians who were all competitive in an Olympic year at a major qualifying event is defining, and should bode well for the future.

Winter and Kingpin sat in third following the first day of dressage competition, having put down a career-best test at the four-star level. A clean cross-country round with a few time faults, followed by 12 stadium faults (12 seemed to be by far the average number of jumping faults over a very tough course) dropped them out of the top 10. Winter thought his cross-country round was one of Kingpin's best, although it took "five or six jumps" to settle down among the crowds of over 50,000 lining the course. O'Connor praised Winter saying: "Mike just gets better and better. He has progressed exponentially over the past two years."

Sandra Donnelly, with Buenos Aires, ended up in 15th, having survived a spectacular miscommunication in the stadium ring to finish on an overall score of 78.8. Although she too had time penalties on cross-country, Buenos Aires jumped around confidently, progressing from 20th after dressage to 17th heading into Sunday. O'Connor described her cross-country ride as "a classy performance," making note that the pair truly seem "a solid base for a Team."

Hawley Bennett and her faithful campaigner Livingstone made the long journey from California memorable, with a spectacular cross-country round that shot them from 25th after dressage, to 12th by the end of Saturday. At the finish of cross-country, Bennett was ecstatic.

"He's just amazing! I love him, from the start box to the finish line!" she said.

Unfortunately, their stadium round was not up to its usual standard, as 'Hank' got his tongue over the bit at the third fence, and racked up 24 faults, to finish in 17th overall.

Florida-based Kyle Carter with Madison Park had a frustrating weekend from start to finish.

"He (Madison Park) is truly capable of putting down a winning dressage test," expressed Carter Friday afternoon, as the pair sat in 34th place. "To have the mistakes we had, it's really throwing it away."

'Parker' redeemed himself on cross-country, however, jumping around cleanly and making a tremendous effort at the famed Head of the Lake, over the second brush to enter the water. The few time faults were enough to vault the pair up the leader board to 19th place, where they eventually finished. Heart-stopping moment number two came at the Sunday morning jog, when Parker skidded, panicked and fell down onto the loose footing covering the pavement. Fortunately, the pair had already been accepted, and Parker suffered no after effects from the fall.

For Selena O'Hanlon and Colombo, just driving in the front gates at the Kentucky Horse Park was a major breakthrough. Having read how tough the course could be at Rolex, O'Hanlon said she actually felt better after walking the track! After putting in a respectable and workmanlike dressage round, they had an "educational" cross-country round, which included a single stop and time faults. O'Hanlon was "disappointed" with the round, but pleased Colombo had finished well. Another 12-fault stadium round brought them up from 25th after cross-country to 20th overall. David O'Connor



PHOTO BY MICHELLE DUNN

remarked "This has been a fantastic experience for Selena. Her learning curve has been completely vertical and she is a very exciting prospect for the future."

Waylon Roberts of Port Perry, ON, had one of those weeks at Rolex that could only be described as a roller coaster. With a lovely dressage test that was unfortunately marred by some tension in the flying-changes (for some reason nothing new in eventing dressage), the pair sat 32nd going into Saturday, with a score of 67. Roberts, at 19, the youngest rider to tackle Rolex this year, then proceeded to give a cross-country lesson to anyone interested in watching. A textbook double-clean round on Saturday propelled them up the scoreboard, to 18th, before being 'spun' at the Sunday morning jog with an ever-so-slight over-reach. O'Connor didn't beat around the bush: "Waylon could be a star of the world, not just Canada."

Roberts spent some time in England in 2007, at show-jumping legend John Whitaker's yard, and is looking forward to returning to England to further his skills. In the meantime, however, the pair will head to Bromont to try and qualify for Hong Kong.

Waylon Roberts and Paleface were sitting in 18th place following cross-country, but did not pass the final jog and were eliminated before the show jumping phase.

Tragedy Strikes

What should have been a weekend to celebrate fantastic achievements, however, was, of course, made sober by the losses of The Quiet Man, ridden by Sarah Hansel and Laine Ashker's Frodo Baggins.

The Quiet Man sustained a shoulder injury as a result of a fall at the Footbridge, and Frodo Baggins flipped rotationally over the Flower Basket, resulting in a fracture at the base of his skull, and severe lung injuries. Both were humanely euthanized at Hagyard Veterinary Hospital, and Ashker was air-lifted to a local hospital where she has undergone treatment for her numerous broken bones (see www.laineashkereventing.com for updates from her family.)

The only remotely positive thing that may result from the rash of injuries and even fatalities plaguing the eventing community of late (15 rider fatalities over the past two years) is the complete and total overhaul the sport of eventing is now undergoing. There is no single answer to fix the problems, but speed, control, experience, fence design and the qualification and upgrading processes are all coming under fire as starting points to making the sport safer.

Extracted from an open letter from David O'Connor, USEF President and Kevin Baumgardner, head of the USEA, the following initiatives have been proposed; to be implemented immediately:

1. If a horse has a rotational fall, horse and rider are suspended from competing for three or six months.
2. If a horse has a rotational fall, horse and rider lose their qualification at the level at which they are competing.
3. If a rider falls off on the course they are eliminated.
4. Open oxers on courses at every level are made frangible.
5. If a horse falls related to a jump both horse and rider are suspended from competing for one month.

It's not the be-all and end-all and it won't solve eventing's problems in the public eye, but it's a solid start to making eventing safer for horses and riders, at Rolex and beyond. The rest is up to us, as riders, trainers, owners and supporters. Eventing has reached a tipping point and we owe it to our equine partners to do everything it takes to ensure their safety while they ensure ours. 🐾

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