

Erynn Ballard posts two wins in Palgrave last week

By Bill Rea

There's no denying that it was a good week for Erynn Ballard.

The Palgrave area resident was competing in the first phase of the Classic @ Palgrave over the weekend at the Caledon Equestrian Park.

Friday saw her prevail against 39 other horse and rider combinations to take the \$10,000 Open Welcome, presented by Antares, aboard Thalys Z.

It was a closer competition Sunday, but she and Thalys Z prevailed to take the \$30,000 Grand Prix, presented by RAM.

It was a busy field that went into Friday's event. the course was not too taxing, as there were a total of seven time faults handed out to the 40 entries. As a result, 19 of them turned in clear rounds, making for a crowded jump-off.

Ballard was a busy woman that afternoon, as she had four entries, and two of them made it to the second round. EDISON P got through the course without any difficulty, but the time wasn't too impressive, ending up in 16th place.

Francois Lamontagne of Saint-Eustache, Quebec, was very fast on Vigo Massuere. They completed the course clear in 38.43 seconds, and it look for a while like that time would be unbeatable.

Ballard and Thalys Z were the last ones in the ring, so she knew the time to beat, and shaved better than half a second off the standard to take top spot, stopping the clock at 37.86 seconds to take the win.

Beth Underhill of Schomberg made it to the jump-off on Count Me In, but she was about three seconds of the pace and finished 10th.

Kathryn Dafoe of Nobleton rode Eos van de Donkhoeve to a 14th-place showing. Jay Hayes of Orangeville was 15th in Riva and Nicole Walker from Aurora came in 17th on Excellent B.

That Thalys Z provided the necessary speed when required came as no surprise to Ballard.

?That is probably one of the fastest horses I have in the barn,? she commented, adding Thalys is the name of a high-speed train that runs between Paris, Brussels and London. ?She's basically a high-speed train.?

Ballard added she knew the win was in her grasp heading to the end of the jump-off.

?I took a big run at the last jump,? she said. ?That's probably where we won the class.?

The field Sunday was a lot smaller, with only 24 entries, and Ballard riding only Thalys Z. There were only seven that turned in clear rounds, and Ballard did not have the advantage of going last. She was the third competitor to take to the course, but she set a time of 41.89 seconds that no one could quite match. Underhill and Count Me In were very close, with a time of 41.93, but that was only good enough for second place.

Walker was third on Falco Van Spieveld, completing the course in 42.72 seconds. Hayes was sixth, riding Riva.

Ballard was also not surprised the competition was keener Sunday.

?Always for the big-money class,? she observed.

She agreed her mount, a nine-year-old Belgian warmblood mare is a great competitor. She's owned by The Thalys Group of Ijamsville, Maryland.

She added she had been concerned that they were taking the jump-off a little slow.

?I thought I was a little cautious,? she said.



Erynn Ballard of Palgrave was unbeatable last week at the first phase of the Classic @ Palgrave at Caledon Equestrian Park, winning events Friday and Sunday. She did it on Thalys Z, who was clearing one of the jumps in Sunday's event.



Schomberg's Beth Underhill made it to the jump-off Sunday on Count Me In, but they fell just 0.04 seconds shy of the winning time.



Aurora's Nicole Walker guided Falco Van Spieveld over one of the fences during the jump-off in Sunday's \$30,000 Grand Prix. They came in third in the event.