

Big day for Kingridge stables at Caledon Equestrian Park in Palgrave

By Bill Rea

A recent Sunday was a pretty good day for King City's Kingridge Stables.

Gloria Epstein of Kingridge took both the champion and reserve status June 9 in the Greenhawk Adult Amateur 36+ Hunter Stakes in the 2013 Classic @ Palgrave Phase 2 at Caledon Equestrian Park in Palgrave.

"I don't know if that's ever been done before," she said.

Later in the day, Hugh Graham, riding Kingridge's Distant Star 3E, turned in two faultless rounds to take the \$20,000 Ram Equestrian Grand Prix.

Epstein commented the day was particularly interesting because her season has gotten off to a rather slow start.

She took the championship aboard Moonshadow, and the reserve honours were on Midnight Hour.

She said these are two very good, but very different horses, but added that combination likely helped her. Having to get used to two different mounts required more concentration.

"You can't go into mental neutral," she said.

Epstein added her association with Graham was a big factor too. They have worked together for 20 years.

"Hugh and I communicate very well," she said, adding every time she's in the ring, she concentrates on what he's told her. "I have such respect for him."

For his part, Graham's victory in the Grand Prix was pretty decisive.

The Schomberg resident's mount was a 13-year-old Canadian warmblood, bred out of Kingridge.

There were 17 entries in Sunday's event, but Graham and Distant Star were one of only three combinations to make it to the jump off.

Schomberg's Mac McQuaker was first into the ring for the jump off on Jameson. His time would prove one-one hundredth of a second faster than Graham's, but two downed rails added up to eight jumping faults.

Lexus Arbuckle of Guelph, riding Castor Van de Kranenburg, turned in a clear jump-off round too, but her time was about four seconds off the pace.

Ryan Roy of King City almost made it to the jump off, but he and Limbo 124 picked up a time fault, meaning they had to settle for fourth place.

McQuaker was fifth on Vilana S, knocking down a rail to collect four jumping faults.

Sixth and seventh place was taken by Caledon's Yann Candele, riding Vortex and Brooklyn Blues respectively.

Graham said he's been very pleased with the consistent season his winning mount has had so far, having placed third and fourth in her last two outings.

"She's on top of her game," he said.



Hugh Graham guides Distant Star 3E over the last fence in the jump off to take the title in the \$20,000 Ram Equestrian Grand Prix. Photo by Bill Rea



Gloria Epstein is seen here riding Moonshadow in competition. Photo courtesy of shootphoto.ca