

## Canada takes second in \$100,000 Wellington Nations' Cup

The Canadian Show Jumping Team of Tiffany Foster, Eric Lamaze, Ian Millar and Jonathon Millar placed second in the \$100,000 CSIO4\* Nations' Cup, presented by Kingsland Equestrian, recently at the Winter Equestrian Festival in Wellington, Florida.

A total of nine countries contested the \$100,000 Nations' Cup, including Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, France, Ireland, Mexico, the United States and Venezuela. Canada entered as the defending champions, having celebrated its sixth victory in the Wellington Nations' Cup in 2014.

At the end of the first round, Canada was sitting third with a total of eight faults. The United States led the way with a perfect score of zero. Such was their strength that the first three riders on course – Todd Minikus, Candice King and Margie Engle, all posted clear rounds, giving anchor rider McLain Ward the luxury of not having to jump. Venezuela, increasingly gaining strength on the world stage, was counting four faults for second position.

Tension continued to build as the second round progressed. Following a brilliant clear in the opening round, Canada's lead-off rider Foster, 30, of Vancouver, B.C., had four faults in the second round. Riding Tripple X III, a 13-year-old Anglo European stallion owned by Artisan Farms LLC, Foster had a rail at the Artisan Farms vertical at fence six, set just past the ingate.

Jonathon Millar, 40, of Perth, Ontario, posted matching scores of four and four in the first and second rounds. In the first round, he and Calvin Klein, an 11-year-old Swedish Warmblood gelding owned by Millar Brooke Farm, had the back rail of the 'b' element of the double combination set at fence five, immediately following the open water. In the second round, the pair successfully rode that difficult line only to incur a rail at the Spycoast liverpool at fence seven.

Coco Bongo made his Nations' Cup debut under 2008 Olympic Champion Lamaze, 46, of Schomberg. While the pair surprisingly faulted at the open water in the first round, they would make no such mistake in round two, posting a perfect score of zero. A 10-year-old Rheinlander stallion, Coco Bongo is now the 10th horse owned by Andy and Carlene Ziegler's Artisan Farms LLC to represent Canada in Nations' Cup competition.

Making his 127th Nations' Cup appearance, Ian Millar, 68, of Perth, was riding in the anchor position for Team Canada. Riding Dixson, a 12-year-old Belgian Warmblood gelding owned by Susan and Ariel Grange, Millar posted the drop score of eight faults in the first round. In the second round, Millar needed to jump clear to keep Canada ahead of the Irish. Thriving off the pressure, the 10-time Olympian delivered a perfect performance, reminding the audience why he is considered a legend in the sport.

While Canada was able to post a two-round final score of 12 faults, the United States simply could not be caught. With only eight faults picked up in the second round, it was enough for an American win without Ward having to jump.

Canada was able to hold off the Irish, who placed third with a total of 16 faults, followed by Venezuela in fourth with 20 faults. Mexico took fifth position with 28 faults while France rounded out the top six with 30 faults. Brazil, Argentina and Colombia failed to be among the top six countries that qualified for the second round.

For Canadian Show Jumping Team chef d'equipe Mark Laskin, Canada's second-placed performance marked a step up from two weeks ago when Canada tied for third in the \$200,000 Furusiyya Nations' Cup in Ocala, Florida.

"We could have just as easily had a couple double clean performances," remarked Laskin of Langley, B.C. "Eric's horse, which he hasn't ridden that long, barely had the water, and he made the correction in the second round. Tiffany could have just as easily been double clear. Jonathon was a little unlucky with both of his fences and just as easily could have been clean, too. He's solid and jumped really well."

Having Lamaze and Ian Millar riding for Team Canada is always an advantage for Laskin.

"It is always great for me to have two of the best riders ever sitting in the third and fourth position," said Laskin. "When the chips are down, they are going to come through; we can almost put it in the bank. For Ian, knowing that he needs a clear to improve our position gives him that extra motivation. I think that's what he lives for. He is just an amazing rider."

Alas, the United States signalled their intention to win right from the start by posting three clears in the opening round and leaving their anchor rider on the bench.

"The U.S. was right on form; they had their nose out in front to win and we just couldn't catch up," noted Laskin. "We were second out of nine teams with the Americans really on their game. They were not missing a beat on their home turf."

With six wins apiece, Canada and the United States are now tied for the most wins in the Wellington Nations' Cup since its inception in 2002.

The next Nations' Cup event on the calendar for the Canadian Show Jumping Team takes place April 23 to 26 in Coapexpan, Mexico, where Canada is the defending champion. It is also the second of three North American qualifying events in the North and Central America and Caribbean League for the Furusiyya Nations' Cup Final in Barcelona, Spain. The top two teams in the League

earn an invitation to the Fursiyya Nations' Cup Final in Barcelona, Spain, from September 24 to 27. In 2014, Canada finished second in the Final in Barcelona.