Canadian Show Jumping Team horse Showgirl retired

Showgirl, the horse acquired for Yann Candele and the Canadian Show Jumping Team in 2013, officially retired following her last competition at the Winter Equestrian Festival in Wellington, Florida, March 18.

The top-placed Canadian horse at the 2011 Pan American Games in Guadalajara, Mexico, under Jonathan Asselin, Showgirl was acquired for Candele by a group of owners committed to supporting Canadian show jumping known as The Watermark Group. The 2008 Canadian Olympic Champion Eric Lamaze orchestrated the purchase of Showgirl and was one of her owners alongside John Edwards, Jennifer Rogers's Uplands Farm, Deborah Roy's Albro Creek Farm, and Andy and Carlene Ziegler's Artisan Farms.

?As Canadians, we have great riders but struggle to keep top horses for them to ride,? said Lamaze, who has won Olympic gold, silver, and bronze medals for Canada. ?Yann is a world-class competitor and teammate, and I felt acquiring Showgirl was the perfect opportunity to support both a talented athlete and strengthen the Canadian Show Jumping Team. Luckily, this great group of people agreed with the idea of securing a horse specifically with team competition in mind, and did not hesitate to join me in forming The Watermark Group.?

Under Candele, Showgirl, a 17-year-old chestnut selle francais mare, represented Canada at the 2014 Alltech FEI World Equestrian Games held in Candele's birthplace of Normandy, France. There, Candele and Showgirl were the top performing members of Canada's eighth-placed team.

The following year on home soil, Candele and Showgirl were instrumental in leading Canada to the Team Gold Medal at the 2015 Pan American Games. The victory also secured a starting place for Canada at the 2016 Rio Olympic Games.

?Winning the gold medal, as well as qualifying for the Olympics, in front of our friends and fans was an unbelievable experience, and it was great to share that with the owners of Showgirl, who were all in attendance,? said Lamaze, who was Candele's Pan Am Games teammate alongside Tiffany Foster and Ian Millar. ?It was extraordinary to see everyone coming together with a common goal, and to see Yann and Showgirl doing great things for Canada.?

In addition to representing Canada at two major games, Candele, who lives in Caledon, and Showgirl claimed the 2013 Canadian Show Jumping Championship title and, in 2014, led Canada to victory in the Nations' Cup in Florida, as well as second place in the ?1,500,000 Furusiyya FEI Nations Cup Final in Barcelona, Spain.

?It was very exciting,? said Candele, who represented Canada in a total of nine Nations' Cup competitions with Showgirl. ?I want to thank everyone for their support and for giving me the opportunity. I was very pleased to see the owners coming together to try to put the best team possible together for Canada. There were many very special moments together, and I want to thank each of the owners for giving me this incredible time with Showgirl.?

When Showgirl ended her international jumping career in 2016, the reins were passed to Mackenzie Edwards of Calgary, the 20-year-old daughter of Watermark Group member, John Edwards. In her final competition, Showgirl left all the rails in place with Edwards in the $15,000 High Amateur-Owner Classic held March 18, at the Winter Equestrian Festival in Wellington. Showgirl will now enjoy a well-earned retirement, potentially as a broodmare.

?I would like to thank the owners for supporting Yann Candele and the Canadian Equestrian Team in this venture, and for securing an incredible horse for Canada,? concluded Lamaze. ?It was great to see a group people come together to support a Canadian athlete and make another fantastic horse available to Canada for major games team competition. They are all terrific owners ? truly a great group of people ? and so generous in their support. I can't thank them enough for believing in the idea, and for believing in Canadian show jumping.?

Yann Candele and Showgirl, owned by The Watermark Group, represented Canada at the 2014 Alltech FEI World Equestrian Games in Normandy, France, and led Canada to a team gold medal at the 2015 Pan American Games in front of a home crowd in Palgrave.Photo by Starting Gate Communications

Showgirl, pictured with Yann Candele, has been retired following an illustrious international show jumping career for Canada.Photo by Starting Gate Communications