

Canadian show jumping team takes fourth, following jump-off for bronze

The Canadian Show Jumping Team finished fourth last week at the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, following a jump-off for the bronze medal in the Team Final.

Individually, 2008 Canadian Olympic Eric Lamaze of Schomberg was the only rider to post a perfect score of zero in qualifying competition to top the leaderboard heading into the Individual Final Friday.

Yann Candele of Caledon, Tiffany Foster, Amy Millar and Lamaze were tied with Germany with a total of eight faults to force a jump-off for the bronze medal following the two-round Team competition held Aug. 16 and 17. France claimed the gold with a total of three faults while the United States took silver with five.

In last Wednesday's competition, Candele, 45, was once again the pathfinder for the Canadian team. Riding First Choice 15, a 13-year-old Hanoverian gelding owned by the Watermark Group, Candele made it all the way to the end of the course before dropping a rail at the final fence for four faults.

Foster, 32, of North Vancouver, B.C., kept Canadian hopes alive by producing the first clear round of the Team Final riding Tripple X III, a 14-year-old Anglo European stallion owned by Andy and Carlene Ziegler's Artisan Farms and Lamaze's Torrey Pines Stable. "He was unbelievable today, he was on another level," said Foster of her mount. "We had a lot of pressure today, and we knew a zero would go a long way. I picked up a gallop and never pulled on my reins once! I wanted to be clear, and I knew my horse could do it. He tried his heart out, and was there with me every step of the way. I'm so happy that I could produce a clear round today."

As the third rider in the rotation, Millar, 39, of Perth, Ontario, picked up a total of 12 faults in the combinations at fences six and 11 riding Heros, one of only two nine-year-old horses contesting the show jumping events at this year's Olympic Games.

The pressure was on Lamaze to deliver a clear round to keep Canada's score to eight faults and in contention for the bronze medal. The 2008 Olympic Champion did just that, guiding Fine Lady 5 around the course fault-free with more than five seconds to spare. With a team total of eight faults, Canada was in bronze medal position with only Brazil and Germany capable of forcing a jump-off. Brazil's anchor rider Pedro Veniss picked up five faults riding Quabri de l'Isle to take the home side out of contention. However, four-time Olympic gold medalist Ludger Beerbaum would make no such mistake, jumping clear with Casello to tie Germany and Canada with eight faults.

Under Olympic rules, all four team members return for the jump-off with the best three scores counting. When the first three riders for the German team - Christian Ahlmann riding Taloubet Z, Meredith Michaels-Beerbaum with Fibonacci, and Daniel Deusser aboard First Class - all posted perfect scores of zero, the bronze medal was secured as Canada could not drop the four faults incurred in the jump-off by Candele, despite another brilliant clear effort by Foster and Tripple X III.

"We were in a great position, and we were unlucky not to be in the medals," said a disappointed Lamaze, who was part of Canada's silver medal team at the 2008 Beijing Olympics. "Tiffany had the wall down yesterday and Yann had the last fence today. If you eliminated just one of those scores, we would have been silver. Could have, would have."

"Yesterday's course was a bit friendlier but today was the real deal with an Olympic-calibre course and every rider at their best," continued Lamaze. "To go clear today was a bigger task than it was yesterday. It's hard to win a medal, but I also think we were very unlucky to be fourth. If you look at the teams we beat to be fourth, we really did our best. I'm incredibly proud of everyone's performance."



Yann Candele of Caledon and First Choice 15, owned by the Watermark Group, helped Canada to a fourth-place finish in the Team Final in Rio last week. Photo by Arnd Bronkhorst Photography