Kelly Soleau wins Grand Prix event in Palgrave

By Bill Rea

The nice thing about going last in a jump-off is you know what the time to beat is.

That's just what Kelly Soleau of Marlborough, Connecticut, did Saturday in the RAM Equestrian Challenge Grand Prix as part of the 2014 Equestrian Festival at Caledon Equestrian Park in Palgrave.

Soleau, riding Centre Ice, was among the two of 17 entries who turned in clear rounds in the opening session. The other was achieved by Jonathan Millar of Perth, aboard Star Power. The course was designed by Mariana Azevedo, and it proved tricky, as several of the competitors drew time faults.

Millar was first into the ring in the jump-off, and he and his mount turned in a flawless performance in 44.91 seconds. Knowing what she had to beat, Soleau and Centre Ice shaved a little more than two-and-a-half seconds of the time to beat, completing the clear round in 41.91 seconds.

?I just tried to be as fast as I could,? she said later. ?I'm glad I did.?

Centre Ice is a 14-year-old Dutch Warmblood, who Soleau bought from the Millars. But she didn't think Saturday's success got any noses out of joint.

?I think they're pretty excited,? she said. ?He's a pretty special horse to all of us.?

Soleau was also impressed with the improvements that have been made at the Equestrian Park, in anticipation of next year's Pan Am Games.

?It's wonderful,? she said. ?The improvements are absolutely unbelievable.?

?They've really stepped it up here,? she added. ?It's world class.?

Third place Saturday went to Keean White from Rockwood, who guided For Freedom Z through as clear round, but it took them about a second too long to do it.

Neil Badcock of King City was on his way to a clear round on Corrido in good time, but they came in for a bit of grief on the second last jump and he had to settle for fourth place with four faults.

Soleau was also entered on Itty Bitty, and they finished fifth with four faults.

Palgrave area resident Chris Sorensen was the only Caledon rider in the field, and he had two mounts. It wasn't a great day, as he picked up eight faults on Recadis-B for and eighth place finish, and 12 on Bonaire.

Kelly Soleau of Marlborough, Connecticut, guided Centre Ice to victory Saturday in the RAM Equestrian Challenge Grand Prix.Photo by Bill Rea

Palgrave area resident Chris Sorensen was the only Caledon rider in the field, neither Recadis-B or his other mount Bonaire made it to the jump-off.Photo by Bill Rea