

Millar picks up a win before going to watch Games in Rio

By Bill Rea

While the eyes of the equestrian world are going to be focused on Rio for the next little while, there was plenty of excitement at Caledon Equestrian Park last week.

The event was the Summer Festival at the Palgrave facility, and it saw two major jumping competitions.

Last Thursday was the \$35,000 FEI Open Welcome, presented by Greenhawk. It saw Olympian and ?Captain Canada? Ian Millar narrowly beat Olympian Beth Underhill from Schomberg.

The \$50,000 FEI?Jumper Classic went Sunday with Nina Fagerstrom of Cumberland winning.

There were 35 horse and rider combinations taking to the track Thursday, and nine of them made it to the jump-off.

Underhill went first, riding Count Me In, and completed the shortened course in 38.28 seconds with no faults. Some of the riders who followed were faster, but they kept knocking rails down. Millar was the seventh to enter the ring aboard Teddy du Bosquetiau, and they really stepped on the gas to get through the course clear in 37.6 seconds.

The course was the creation of Michel Vaillancourt, who Millar said is ?a very excellent course designer.?

?I thought he had a bit too much course today,? he added, noting it seemed to stress jumping and control. ?It wasn't just run and be crazy.?

Millar also pointed out Underhill was at a bit of a disadvantage, having to go first in the jump-off. That meant he knew what he needed to do to best her.

?Beth laid it down pretty hard,? he added.

Millar also had lots of praise for his horse, a 12-year-old Belgian Warmblood belonging to Emily Kinch, who competed for Barbadoes in last year's Pan Am Games.

The Games in Rio are the first Olympics in recent memory in which Millar is not riding for Canada. His mount Dixson developed a sinus condition earlier in the year and required surgery.

?He didn't recover in time,? he said, adding Dixson is now almost completely recovered.

But the Millars are represented at the Games. His daughter Amy has taken her place on the show jumping team, riding a horse he trained. He also said he'll be in the Rio for the competition.

?I wouldn't miss it,? he declared.

Things didn't go quite as well Sunday. Millar and Teddy du Bosquetiau were the first of 30 entries out on the course, which was designed by Vaillancourt too, but they knocked a rail down and that kept them out of the jump-off.

Fagerstrom was the first of seven to turn in a clear round, riding Flower, an 11-year-old Belgian Warmblood mare.

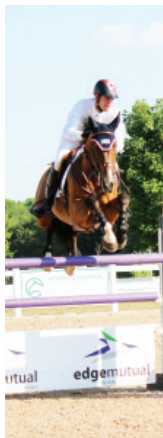
They were first to go in the jump-off, and set down a time of 36.72 seconds that proved pretty hard to beat. Kean White of Rockwood was faster aboard Corette, but they missed one jump and had to settle for fifth place. Millar's son Jonathan had the only realistic chance to catch Fagerstrom, but he was a full second off the pace.

?I think it was a great course,? Fagerstrom commented after the ribbons had been presented.

She pointed to a triple combination late in the course. ?The horses need to be confident to jump it well,? she said.

Fagerstrom said she's been riding Flower for about four years.

?She's very confident,? she said. ?She has a fighter's mind.?



“Captain Canada,” Ian Millar and Teddy du Bosquetia cleared this jump in last Thursday's jump-off on the way to victory in the \$35,000 FEI Open Welcome, presented by Greenhawk, as part of the Summer Festival at Caledon Equestrian Park. Photo by Bill Rea



Nina Fagerstrom of Cumberland said her mount Flower “has a fighter's mind.”