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Davidson Shows They Way At Galway Downs International Three-Day Event

Temecula, Calif., Nov. 1, 2013-- Buck Davidson brought three horses from his stable in Pennsylvania to contest the CCI3* at the Galway Downs International Three-Day Event, and, after dressage, he looks as if he may be holding the winning hand.

Davidson was the first rider into the ring on The Apprentice, and he set a standard no one else could match, scoring 48.9 penalties. An hour later, he came closest to that score, earning 50.6 penalties on Absolute Liberty. And then he concluded the class by riding Petite Flower to seventh place, scoring 55.2.

In between, Lauren Billys, representing Puerto Rico, rode Ballingowan Ginger into third place (51.7).

The Presenting Sponsors of the Galway Downs International Three-Day Event are: Equine Insurance of California, Land Rover, Professional's Choice, the California Horse Trader and the PRO Tour.

"I blew it with the last one," said Davidson with a sigh about Petite Flower. "I was on the winner in the warm-up. She was 5 points better than the others."

Davidson said that a spectator ran over the berm behind the judge at C, just as he was performing his entrance halt, frightening the Thoroughbred mare bred by his father, Bruce Davidson Sr. "And she never settled after that. It's the worst score she's ever gotten. But at the end of the day, we still have to jump the jumps tomorrow.""

The Apprentice, 9, finished fifth in the CCI3* at Galway Downs last year, but "due to a lot of stupid things happening this year, like me getting hurt and not being able to run him, he's missed a lot of time. But he was very good today. I'm really excited about that."

Davidson said that since all three horses are still relatively young and inexperienced at the three-star level, he'll be a bit cautious

with them on Ian Stark's dramatically redesigned cross-country course.

"I didn't come here to be second, but I've got to jump the jumps first," said Davidson, who stands first on the U.S. Eventing Association's 2013 leader board. "I know the competitive side of me, which sometimes gets me in trouble sometimes. I'm going to go for it, but I may have to back off it a little bit.

"These three horses have had little things happen leading up to this, and I'm glad I could bring them out here for the chance for them to get the experience. I have confidence in all of them, but it will be a step up for all three."

Davidson, who rode here in 2011 and 2012, expects Stark's course to be especially decisive. "Ian's made a tougher course than has ever been here before. It's not huge, but you've got to be deadly accurate," he said. "Some of them are nearly four-star questions. If you can't jump an angled brush or an angled corner, it will be a long day for you."

Billys, who won the CCI2* in 2012 with Ballingowan Ginger, said she plans to walk the course three to four times, to be sure she knows exactly where the shortest routes lie.

"I like it. But especially at the end, there's a lot to do," she said. "I think it will have more of an effect on the results than usual, maybe because it's not what people have planned for."

Stark's most significant change is at the beginning and the end of the CCI courses. All three start and finish on grass, in the polo field at the center of the training track, and Stark's routes take horses up and down the berm surrounding the track three to six times, depending on the course. Stark expects these short but steep climbs to have a significant impact on the physical challenges of the course.

"There's going to be a temptation to go too fast early, and there are some stiff jumps at the end that they'll need to save some petrol for," said Stark. "Of course, if people think it's more difficult, they tend to ride it better. I think it's all very jumpable, but people have to be tuned in the whole way round."

Matt Brown, who's second in the CCI2* with BCF Bellicoso, is glad has two horses to ride first in the CCI1*, before he rides his three horses in the CCI2*. (In the CCI2*, Brown also stands fourth with

Super Socks BCF and sixth with Aida. In the CCI1*, he stands sixth on Happenstance and 11th on Dasset Theme BCF.) He hopes he'll gain some insight in the CCI1* as to how to ride the CCI2*.

"I don't really know what to expect. The course feels much more broken up than it used to, so it will be really interesting to see how it affects people's times. In the past, I haven't felt like time has been much of an issue if your horse is fit," said Brown.

"You have to really be on the time early, because you're not going to make it up at the end," he added. "There are so many changes, that I'm not sure what to expect tomorrow."

Maya Black, the CCI2* dressage leader on Doesn't Play Fair (46.2) was waiting to walk the course until after she'd done dressage. Her concentration paid off, with the 8-Year-old Holsteiner scoring 46.2 to just nip BCF Bellicoso (46.5).

"I was looking forward to putting in a good test, and he was very consistent. I couldn't be more pleased," said Black, 25, from Whidbey Island, Wash. In 2012, the pair finished second in the CCI1*. This is their first CCI2*.

Doesn't Play Fair stands a relatively small 15.3 hands, but "he has a huge personality. That's how he got that name: He's a beast around other horses. He has many nicknames that shall not be said aloud. He thinks he's bigger than he is."

Tami Smith also concentrated on her dressage ride today, and it paid off by winning the CCI1* by 2.6 points. With Fleur de Lis, she scored 40.4 penalties, to relegate James Alliston on Talisker and Stacey Winter on Serenade (tied at 43.0) to second place.

"He was super – really workmanlike," Smith said of the 7-year-old Dutch Warmblood. "He stayed very rideable and soft."

All three international divisions ride over the cross-country course on Saturday, starting at 9:00 a.m. with the CCI1*. The CCI2* starts at noon, and the CCI3* starts at 1:50 p.m.

The standings at the top of the two divisions of the Training Level Three-Day changed only slightly on their speed and endurance day. Kristi Nunnink, on Lord Lombardi (29.6), stills leads division A, while Joe McKinley moved up from third to second on Romulus (30.0). Kiera Davis, on Laconic (30.6) still holds the lead in division B,

while Katie Yozamp, on Wishbone (32.2), moved up from fourth to second.

Live streaming for the CCI3* continues Saturday and Sunday on PRO Tour Series Radio, which can be found on UStream, the Galway Downs website or the PRO Website.

Faultline will perform as the musical headline act on Saturday night, playing from 6:00 to 10:00 p.m. Faultline, a five-member, Southern California-based party band, says their music has only one purpose: to keep the dance floor full of people. They combine rhythm and blues, Motown, disco and more to create a memorable live-music experience.

And three more musicians – guitarist Gil Gillem, guitarist Larry Thompson and guitarist James Wells – will entertain fans on Saturday afternoon, performing in each of the three oasis points on the cross-country course (at noon, 1:20 and 3:00 p.m.).

Each oasis will feature food by one or more of the four gourmet food trucks scheduled to be on site, complemented by local wine and beer.

The Gold Medal Sponsors of the Galway Downs International Three-Day Event are: Devoucoux, Ian Stark Equestrian Center, MD Barn Master and Sunsprite Warmbloods.

The Silver Medal Sponsors are: Charles Owen, Embassy Suites Hotel, Holiday Inn Express, Majyk Equipe, SmartPak Equine and Temecula Creek Inn.

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General admission for the Galway Downs International Three-Day Event is \$10 per day in advance, \$15 at the gate, with children under 12 free when accompanied by a paying adult.

Patron's passes – which include seating in the ringside tent, lunch and a full selection of beverages – are available for \$55 per day on Thursday, Friday and Sunday and \$75 for Saturday, in advance.

For all advance ticket reservations, go to www.galwaydowns.com.
For more information on the Galway Downs International Three-Day Event, visit www.galwaydowns.com or call 951-303-0405. To learn more about eventing, visit the U.S. Eventing Association's website (www.useventing.com).