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Bennett-Awad and Gin 'N Juice Aim For Repeat At Galway Downs

Temecula, Calif., March 21, 2014 – Canadian Olympians Hawley Bennett-Awad and Gin 'N Juice, winners of the CIC3* at the Galway Downs International Horse Trials in 2013, will be aiming to win two in a row on March 28-30 at the Temecula Downs Event Center.

Bennett-Awad, 36, has based her training operations at Kingsway Farm, across the street from Temecula Downs, for a decade. It was there that she met Gin 'N Juice, who was bred by the Kingsway Farm owners, Terry and Linda Paine. "She caught my attention right away – she was walking around on her hind legs, then leaping through the air!! I'd never seen such an athletic little horse before!" recalled Bennett-Awad of Gin 'N Juice, now 14.

Since that exciting introduction, they've also won the Bromont CCI3* (Canada) in 2009 and were members of the silver-medal Canadian team at the 2010 Alltech FEI World Equestrian Games in Kentucky. In 2012 they were members of the Canadian team at the London Olympics, and this year Bennett-Awad hopes to join the Canadian team at the 2014 Alltech FEI World Equestrian Games, Aug. 23-Sept. 7, in Normandy, France.

But they'll be facing stiff competition in the 18-horse CIC3* field at Galway Downs. Kristi Nunnink, of Auburn, Calif., and her powerful gray mare R-Star finished third in 2013, leading after the show jumping phase before 8.8 time faults cost them the victory.

Lauren Billys, of Sanger, Calif., and Ballingowan Ginger won the CCI2* at the 2012 Galway Downs International Three-Day Event and then finished second in the 2013 CIC3* at the Woodside International Horse Trials. Plus they won the advanced division against most of these horses at the Twin Rivers Horse Trials in late February.

Debbie Rosen, of Calabasas, Calif., and The Alchemyst are a highly experienced pair who defeated Ballingowan Ginger while winning the CIC3* at Woodside last October. Jolie Wentworth, of Crockett, Calif., and GoodKnight are another experienced pair who've finished well at Galway Downs: They placed second in the CCI3* in 2011, fourth in 2012, and second again in 2013. And odds-makers wouldn't dismiss Gina Miles, who won the Galway Downs CIC3* in 2008 on her way to winning the Olympic silver medal. She'll be riding SVR Ron this time.

British Olympian Ian Stark has been designing the Galway Downs cross-country course since 2007, and he says that this spring “there are no major changes – as I’m saving them for the CCI in November!”

But Stark cautions that “the riders shouldn't think it will be 'a walk in the park.' We're doing lots of tweaking and moving some of the portable fences to new places, along with making subtle changes to the lines at some of the more familiar combinations.”

The CIC3* division of the Galway Downs International Horse Trials is one of 11 member events of the Adequan/USEA Gold Cup/PRO Tour Series for 2014. Riders in each of these events seek to qualify for the series final, worth \$40,000, at the American Eventing Championships on Sept. 25-28. Galway Downs is one of the two California events in the series.

Each of the more than 75 international horses will perform in dressage on Friday morning and then negotiate the testing show jumping course in the late afternoon. Then, on Saturday afternoon, they'll gallop over Stark's cross-country course, in reverse order of standing, to determine the winners.

The action continues on Sunday, though, with the three upper levels of the national divisions navigating the show jumping course and the two lower levels navigating the cross-country course, from 8:00 a.m. until approximately 2:00 p.m.

Competitors and fans will enjoy the return of what's become a Galway Downs tradition – food trucks, local wines and micro-brews, and live music in three oasis locations around the cross-country course. This year's food trucks are Super Q (www.superqfoodtruck.com), Two For The Road (www.twofortheroadsd.com) and Sweet Treats (www.sweettreatstruck.com). Live bands will also be playing at the receptions on Thursday and Friday and at the awards dinner on Saturday evening.

The Adequan/USEA Gold Cup Series, California HorseTrader, Equine Insurance of California, and Sunsprite Warmbloods are the Presenting Sponsors of the Galway Downs International Horse Trials.

The Gold Medal Sponsors are: Devoucoux, MD BarnMaster, Ian Stark Equestrian Centre and Professional's Choice.

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General admission for the Galway Downs International Horse Trials is only \$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 also available for \$55 per day on Friday and Sunday, \$75 for Saturday, or \$150 for the weekend in advance. For advance reservations, go to www.galwaydowns.com.

For more information on the Galway Downs International Horse Trials, 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).