

For Immediate Release
PHOTOS AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST

For More Information:
Contact Press Officers John Strassburger & Heather Bailey
707-217-5072/phoenixenterprisesPR@gmail.com

Nunnink Is a Star At Galway Downs International Horse Trials

Temecula, Calif., March 29, 2013 – Kristi Nunnink and R-Star captured the overnight lead in the CIC3* at the Galway Downs International Horse Trials with a strong dressage performance and a double-clear show jumping round to score 47.3 penalties. Double-clear show jumping rounds were rare in all three international divisions today.

“I actually kind of thought [the show jumping] was a little small when I walked it,” said Nunnink, from Auburn, Calif. “I was quite shocked when two of the three people before me had rails.”

R-Star, a 12-year-old, gray Holsteiner mare that Nunnink has owned and ridden for eight years, never looked in danger of touching a rail as she soared over the fences.

“It rode really well, and she really jumped super well,” said Nunnink. “She’s kind of got all the pieces put together [now]. She can get to a lot of different spots and get herself out.”

In the CIC3*, only two other riders besides Nunnink managed a double-clear round: Canada’s Hawley Bennett-Awad on Gin ‘N Juice and Bunnie Sexton on Rise Against. Their efforts have them placed second and fifth respectively. James Alliston of Great Britain, winner of the Galway Downs CIC3* in 2011 and 2012, holds down third and fourth places with Tivoli and Jumbo’s Jake.

Nunnink is a veteran of Galway Downs, and she’s using this competition as preparation for her fourth trip to the Rolex Kentucky Three-Day Event in late April. So she has some added pressure on her for tomorrow’s cross-country phase.

“[I think it] looks quite rideable and a nice, forward [course],” she said. “It’s a pretty big course. The only thing I’m nervous about is I was told to make the time.”

In the CIC2*, James Atkinson of Canada and Gustav grabbed the lead in dressage and added no penalties in the show jumping, to head into the cross-country phase tomorrow with a score of 46.8. Gustav was originally purchased by his mother-in-law, Carolyn Hoffos, to make a bid for the 2012 London Olympics, but that goal proved to be “too much, too fast,” according to Atkinson, who elected to drop him down a level.

“He’s done some advanced, he’s probably more experienced than he needs to be for this level,” he said of the 14-year old chestnut gelding.

Atkinson, a California transplant from Manitoba, is the trainer at Copper Meadows farm in Ramona, Calif. He’s currently a cross-country course designer at the national level, working toward earning his international course design license. That gives him a particular appreciation for Ian Stark’s cross-country course.

“Ian always does a great job. I think it’s right on the money,” he said. “I don’t think it’s freaking anybody out. He sets the tone of the course early – you’ve got to kick and get the horses confident.”

Still Atkinson isn’t counting on his blue ribbon quite yet. “Cross-country isn’t Gustav’s strongest phase,” he admitted with a laugh. “He likes to jump too high.”

Julie Flettner and her dependable mare Ping Pong lead the CIC1* standings. They added only 2 time penalties over a challenging show jumping track to stand first with a score of 46.0. Maya Black and Doesn’t Play Fair stand second (49.3), and Jolie Wentworth and Bally Quinn made a giant ten-spot climb to third with one of only three double-clear clean rounds. The other two clear rounds belonged to Cori Davis on A Golden Effort and Kimberley Low on Bonita.

“She actually was a little bit lazy in the warm-up, but then she lit up when she went in,” said Flettner, of Petaluma, Calif. “I had time faults because I was trying too hard to bring her back.

“She tries really hard at shows, but not at home,” she continued. “I thought the course rode nicely. On her, I like courses like this with more turns.”

Although Flettner and her 13-year-old Hanoverian mare have won almost every preliminary level competition in California, she isn’t taking Stark’s cross-country course for granted.

“It’s definitely going to be a challenge. When we won the CCI1* here in November, she looked at a few [jumps]. I think it looks like a really fun course, but I’ll have to ride a little bit,” she concluded.

Tomorrow, the horses who completed today’s dressage and show jumping will gallop over the more than 30 jumps on the cross-country course designed by Ian Stark of Great Britain, who’s designed the Galway Downs course to great acclaim since 2007. The Galway Downs event will continue on Sunday, with the more than three hundred horses in the five national divisions competing on either the show jumping or cross-country courses.

Talented local musicians will be playing on Saturday and Sunday, headlined by Tony Suraci’s “The Highwayman Show” on Saturday night and climaxed by teenager Jillian Calkins on Sunday afternoon, after the conclusion of show jumping. The kids will also enjoy an Easter Egg Hunt at 2:00 p.m. on Sunday.

For the complete musical line-up and to buy tickets visit the Galway Downs website (www.galwaydowns.com).

The CIC3* division of the Galway Downs International Horse Trials is one of 15 member events of the Adequan/USEA Gold Cup/PRO Tour Series for 2013. Riders in each of these events aim for top prize money and prizes while seeking to qualify for the series final at the American Eventing Championships, where the purse is \$40,000.

Equine Insurance of California and the PRO Tour are the Presenting Sponsors of the Galway Downs International Horse Trials.

The Gold Medal Sponsors of the Galway Downs International Horse Trials are: The *California Horsetrader*, MD Barnmaster, Professional’s Choice and Sunsprite Warmbloods.

The Silver Medal Sponsors are: Charles Owen, Holiday Inn Express, JC Resorts and Majyk Equipe.

The Bronze Medal Sponsors are: American Medical Response, American Horse Trials Foundation, Auburn Laboratories, Big Horse Feeds, Cavalor, CWD, Finish Line Horse Products, Geranium Street Equestrian, Point Two Air Jackets, Riding’s Publications Inc., Ride On Video, SmartPak, Triple Crown Nutrition and Voltaire Design.

General admission for the Galway Downs International Horse Trials is only \$12 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. 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).