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

Alliston Leaps To The Lead At Galway Downs International Horse Trials

Temecula, Calif., March 27, 2015— James Alliston and his veteran partner Tivoli put in a fault-free show jumping round late Friday afternoon to take over the lead in the CIC3* at the Galway Downs International Horse Trials.

“He was really good,” said Alliston, who represents his native Great Britain but lives in San Ramon, Calif. “I haven’t showed him a lot recently, so it’s nice to know he can be tired from doing dressage and show jumping today and still jump carefully. In this format, you worry if they can do that.”

Alliston and Tivoli, 15, stood in fourth after the dressage phase on a score of 49.5 penalties, but their faultless show jumping round moved them to the top of the leaderboard.

“I thought [our test] was pretty good,” said Alliston. “I did an extra flying change, and that sort of hurt the score a bit. The walk was good, though. I think if I hadn’t had that mistake, it would have been a really good score.”



James Alliston and Tivoli are leading the CIC3* at the Galway Downs International Horse Trials.

(Sherry Stewart photo)

Matthew Brown and Super Socks BCF took the lead in dressage with a score of 46.9, but two rails (8 faults) and 5 time faults knocked them all the way down to 10th. Jennifer McFall and High Times had stood second on 48.2, but they lowered three rails down to drop to 11th. Brown stood third after dressage (48.8) on his other horse, Happenstance, and a single rail kept them in the third spot.

"I had a little bit of an off day show jumping-wise," said Brown ruefully. "My horses were jumping out of their skin, and I think I have to work the cobwebs off. I had a couple of not-so-good turns."

John Michael Durr and Ruth Bley's *Ésprit De La Danse* hold second place heading in to tomorrow's cross-country. They stood seventh after dressage (52.4 faults), but a smooth, faultless round vaulted them up second.

"She was amazing," said Durr, of Castro Valley, Calif. "She was more rideable than she's ever been. Today was the biggest leap forward she's every made."

Durr was also thrilled with his partner in the show jumping ring, and credited Alliston with a last0-minute tip. "The mare was super," he said. "My buddy [Alliston] told me that there were some time penalties and to hustle."

The three top three-star riders are looking forward to Ian Stark's cross-country course, over which they'll run in reverse order of placing, creating a thrilling finish to the competition. Both Durr and Alliston are using this as their final prep for the Rolex Kentucky Three-Day Event, and they see this event is a key moment in their preparation.

"My wife [rider Kimmy Steinbuch] has told me that if I don't go fast, I don't get to go to Rolex, because I tend to stop for lunch," said Durr with a laugh. "The point of the day is to operate at pace and to run through the gear box."

Alliston has a similar plan. "I like to run him near the speed that you're going to show at Kentucky," he said. "No sense in going and having 20 time penalties. I don't ride a billion advanced horses, so I have to use this run to make sure my eye is in."

"The course starts out with a bunch of big tables, bigger than we're used to seeing," said Durr. "It looks like a really good, confidence-building run--big but not overly gymnastic. There's plenty to do out there—lots of places to get a 20 for a refusal."

"I haven't seen it all yet," admitted Alliston. "At the last show, he was jumping quite steeply into the waters, so I'll be interested to see if it's something he keeps doing. Hopefully the ground is nice and

soft for him.”

Brown’s also holds the lead in the CIC2* on BCF Bellicoso. He took the dressage lead (44.5) and then added one unlucky rail at the last show jump, but he holds the narrowest of leads, standing 0.4 penalties ahead of Barbara Crabo and Over Easy, who moved up from third, after second-placed Rubicon and Nikki Ayers lowered three rails.

“[Bellicoso] had a great day,” said Brown, of Petaluma, Calif. “We had the last fence down, because I sort of relaxed too much and relied on him too much. He needed my help. He’s just a super-fun horse to ride in the dressage and jumping.”

Bellicoso, 9, had some time off last year, and all of Brown’s horses are just getting going, so he’s approaching the courses with a slightly different mindset. “I think both the courses have good questions—[Ian’s] not giving anything away. For Happenstance, it’s his first three-star, so its a chance to go out and do some bigger things. For all three of the horses, this event is all about getting these horses back into shape.

“So I need to go at pace, but I don’t think I’ll be pushing the time. Bellicoso is coming back into fitness, so I’ll gauge how he is and let him tell me how fast to go,” he added.



Matt Brown and BCF Bellicoso are leading the CIC2* at the Galway Downs International Horse Trials. (Sherry Stewart photo)

In the CIC1* Heather Morris and Russell's Reserve, 6, performed a faultless show jumping round to maintain their dressage lead going in to cross-country.

"He's a pretty good horse," said Morris of Lewisville, Texas. "He won the American Eventing Championships at training level last year. He loves the cross-country."

Morris will have a 3.1-point lead over second-placed Pam Fisher and Rigby as she sets out over Stark's course.

"It looks good," she said of the course. "There are a couple of things I was a little bit worried about. There are some good questions that I'll be interested in seeing how he reads."

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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.

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).