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Davidson Jumps To The Top of Galway Downs International Three-Day Event

Temecula, Calif., Nov. 1, 2014— With no jumping faults on the cross-country course and the second-fastest time of the day on Copper Beech, Buck Davidson put himself in position to win the CCI3* at the Galway Downs International Three-Day Event for the second consecutive year. Davidson won the CCI3* in 2013 on Petite Flower.

Davidson and Copper Beech will take a score of 50.00 into the final show jumping phase.

Barbara Crabo rode Eveready II to the day's fastest time to climb from fifth place to second place (53.2), and Maya Black rode Doesn't Play Fair to the day's third-fastest round to hold third place (55.2).

Boyd Martin, with whom Davidson had been tied for the lead after dressage, retired Trading Aces after a refusal at fence 19, the third of four water complexes. Davidson was on course at the same time, and he said he saw Martin walking off the course as he galloped between fences. "I felt badly for him—he's a friend and a teammate, and you hate to see it not work for anyone. So I said to myself, 'OK, let's settle down and not do anything stupid,'" said Davidson, of Riegelsville, Pa.

Davidson then finished 14 seconds slow (5.6 time penalties). Crabo finished 9 seconds faster (3.6 time penalties).

Crabo said it was the fastest three-star round she'd ever had, that she met her minute markers for the first four minutes of the 10-minute course. "I've been working going faster for so long, and I feel like we kind of slew that dragon today," said Crabo, of Scottsdale, Ariz.

Overnight rain caused event officials to postpone the start of cross-country phase by two hours while crews harrowed the tracks to help the morning sun and wind dry the ground out. Davidson said the wetter-than-usual ground had minimal effect on the CCI3* by the time they went in the early afternoon.

“The footing was certainly way better than last year--huge improvements,” said Davidson.

Black agreed. “The rain and footing were on everybody’s mind this morning. He had one or two little slips, but I hardly kicked him at all. I kind of just let him cruise around,” she said.

Davidson had high praise for course designer Ian Stark’s work. “I like Ian’s theme of riding forward, of going forward. There’s nothing tricky that smashes you in the face,” he said. “I think it’s a great thing when you can make a course that rides easy but looks hard or looks easy and rides hard. And he does that every time.”

Crabo said that she always looks forward to riding Stark’s courses at Galway Downs. “Ian builds a phenomenal course. He rewards you so much for being brave, and it makes the horses braver and braver,” she said.

Fourteen of the 17 CCI3* starters finished, with two eliminated and one retiring.

The ground was as its wettest for the CCI2*, which was the first division to start, and the finishing percentage was notably lower than for the CCI3*. Of the 25 starters, six were retired on course and three were eliminated.

Dressage leader Marilyn Little rode RF West Indie to a quick round that left her with a score of 56.0, just in front of James Atkinson on Gustav (56.7). Lauren Billys stands third on Castle Larchfield Purdy (62.3).

Little finished 25 seconds slow (12.0 time faults), and she said that she could have been about 10 seconds faster if she hadn’t had a big problem: the curb chain on RF West Indie’s bit broke at the first jump. “All of a sudden I felt like I had nothing but a halter on, with the broken curb chain hitting her in the side of the head. I didn’t have a whole lot of control, but she kept looking at the flags,” said Little, of Frederick, Md. “So I had to be careful about being able to bring her back for the jumps.”

Atkinson galloped Gustav through the finish flags 7 seconds faster, as the second rider on the course, for 9.2 time faults, a time that Billys would tie and only fourth-placed Chloe Smyth would exceed (by 3 seconds).

Had he finished 2 seconds faster, Atkinson would be the two-phase leader. “Two seconds—I couldn’t have saved two seconds out there?” said Atkinson with a smile.

Atkinson, who is also an FEI-licensed course designer, added, “The grounds crew guys had their hands full this morning, and they did the best they could. For the most part, the footing was good; there

were just a few places where I had to take a few seconds to be careful. Really, it was better than any of us expected when we woke up this morning.”

Atkinson said that he was surprised that the cross-country course was more influential in the CCI2* than in the CCI3*.

“A change in the footing, like we had today with the rain, can change the dynamic of the entire course,” said Atkinson. “We’re used to walking an Ian course and being a little bit impressed, but we didn’t feel this was the toughest two-star we’d ever seen. But maybe it was a little bit underestimated, and people didn’t attack it like it needed to be attacked, especially with the footing.”

Little is also the leader of the CCI1*, finishing just 1 second slow on RF Scandalous to keep her dressage lead (38.2), ahead of on Tamra Smith on Sunsprite Sirius (42.2) and Ashlynn Dorsey on RF Kinetic (43.8). Little is also fourth on RF Typecast (45.0).

Little said that she concentrated on keeping a steady pace while galloping between fences and that, as a result, she was 20 seconds slow early in the course. But she picked up the pace later on to finish just 1 second slow. “I thought it was a perfect day for her,” said Little.

She added, “The three water jumps were all challenging but inviting, and they asked three different questions. They were very educational for young horses like her.”

Show jumping gets underway at 10:30 on Sunday, with the CCI1* jumping first. The odds are strong that Little’s competitors will have to settle for ribbons behind her since show jumping is her strongest phase—since she’s also an international show jumping rider. She bought RF West Indie to be a show jumper and decided to switch her to eventing since her bloodlines suggested suitability and because she needed a few more event horses in her stable, which she said is 60 percent show jumpers and 40 percent eventers.

“She has the scope to be a grand prix jumper, but I hope she’ll be a four-star horse, so now we’ll never know if she could have been a grand prix horse,” said Little.

The Galway Downs CCI3* is a member event of the 2014 PRO Tour and will be live-streamed on Pro TV on Saturday and Sunday, Nov. 1-2. Go to <http://new.livestream.com/PROTV> to view it. Media players will be embedded on Galway Downs website. A Livestream App for TV, iPhone, iPad and Android can also be downloaded from the iTunes Store and Google Play. Follow the events on PRO TV to receive automatic updates on any schedule changes.

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General admission for the Galway Downs International Three-Day Event 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).