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Davidson and Martin Tie the Scores Up At Galway Downs International Three-Day Event

Temecula, Calif., Oct.31, 2014—They may have traveled the farthest to get here, but Boyd Martin and Buck Davidson are making the most of their trip west by tying for the lead after dressage in the CCI3* at the Galway Downs International Three-Day Event. Their score of 44.4, on Trading Aces and Copper Beech, gives them a slight cushion over Maya Black, who stands in third with a 47.6 on Doesn't Play Fair.

Martin, of Cochranville, Pa., joked, "I watched Buck's test and thought, 'Was I that bad?'" Davidson, of Riegelsville, Pa., just smiled.

Trading Aces went to the World Equestrian Games this summer (with Phillip Dutton, because Martin was injured) and has placed in CCI4*s but he's also struggled with his fitness. He retired early on course at the World Equestrian Games.

"He's been a bit hit and miss," admitted Martin. "I've definitely brought him out here to give him a shot. This could be a big turning point in his career.

"I don't think we could possibly get him fitter," Martin continued. "I've jogged him more than any horse ever in my life. I think it's more of a mental thing. He definitely struggles at times. After the WEG, I don't think he'll ever be considered for another U.S. team, but I love this horse. I've said to the syndicate members that I think we should just pick and choose where we run him."

Martin is hoping that Ian Stark's cross-country course will be just the right mix for his horse. "I think this a very tough course, but the terrain isn't as physically draining as Fair Hill," he said. "It's got all the questions, and there are a couple of four-star questions, in particular the double of corners [fences 15AB] and the bounce into water [fence 18AB]."

Although Davidson's horse won the Jersey Fresh CCI3* (N.J.) in May, Davidson's also not taking the course, or his horse, for granted. "The [double corners]—that for me is the competition. If you saw those at [the CCI4* at Rolex Kentucky, you'd stay awake all night," he said. "We can never underestimate the ground here either,

because it's so different for our horses. [Tomorrow] will be plenty hard enough for my horse."

Black and Doesn't Play Fair are one of several competitors who have re-routed to Galway after having trouble at the Fair Hill CCI3* in Maryland two weeks ago. Black is from Clinton, Wash., but has been training and competing on the East Coast since winning the CCI2* at Galway Downs a year ago. Her change of plan means that the horse's owners will be on site to watch their horse compete.

"They're excited," she said with a smile.

The CCI2* leader is another re-routed Fair Hill pair: Marilyn Little and RF West Indie lead the way (44.0), over Bea di Grazia on Lad's Night Out (46.7) and James Atkinson on Gustav (47.5). Little, of Frederick, Md., fell at Fair Hill and decided quickly to ship west. RF West Indie is still so fit and fresh, that Little joked, "I probably should have unloaded her in Arizona and trotted the rest of the way."

She's also not taking Stark's course for granted. "I think it looks like it's plenty of course," she said. "[There are] serious questions and plenty of galloping. I think the time will be hard to make. The horses that live out here have a real advantage because [they are used to] the footing."

Little also leads the CCI1* aboard RF Scandalous (37.8) over Tamra Smith on Sunsprite Syrius (42.2) and Ashlynn Dorsey on RF Kinetic (43.4).

"RF Scandalous is a new partnership, and she is careful," said Little. "We're on a learning curve, and we have to be careful not to get too caught up in the scores. She's a long-term horse."

The Training Level Three-Day Event competitors did their speed and endurance day on Friday afternoon, and there was a shake up at the top of division A, as Tamra Smith and Irish Blend moved in to the lead (34.3), followed closely by Lisa Levine on Made Ya Look IV (36.3) and Hilary Niemann on Undercover (38.1). In division B, not much changed at the top, as James Alliston retained his lead on Sunsprite Madeira (28.9) over Jessica Gradillas on Sam Adams (31.3) and Nicci Guzzetta on Queen of Spades (32.0).

Saturday is cross-country day for all three CCI divisions, with the CCI2* running from 9:20 to 10:45, the CCI3* running from 11:05 to 12:05, and the CCI1* running from 12:30 to 3:30. Saturday will conclude with show jumping for the Training Level Three-Day Event, starting at 4:10.

The CCI divisions wrap up the weekend on Sunday with the climactic show jumping phase, starting at 10:30.

The 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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The Gold Medal Sponsors are: California HorseTrader, Equinox Equestrian Center, MD BarnMaster, Ian Stark Equestrian Centre, John Deere (the official tractor supplier for Galway Downs), Professional's Choice and Sunsprite Warmbloods.

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San Dieguito Equine Group is the Patron Sponsor.

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. Haunted Horse After Party is \$35 per person, and Patron's Passes are available for all four days of competition.

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).