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

Guzetta and Smith Top Training Level Three-Day Event At the Galway Downs International

Temecula, Calif., Nov. 2, 2014—Nicci Guzetta, on Queen of Spades, and Tamra Smith, on Irish Blend, won divisions of the Training Level Three-Day Event at the Galway Downs International Three-Day Event.

Smith, of Murrieta, Calif., and Irish Blend added nothing to their dressage score of 38.3 to win division A, over Kristen Schalk on Comet's Flight (38.6) and Max Gerdes on Rhythm Royale (40.4).

Guzetta, of San Jose, Calif., stood third after two days, but a faultless show jumping round vaulted her to the top when leader James Alliston lowered one rail on Sunsprite Madeira and dropped to second (32.9). Charlee Marinovich claimed third on Dasset Theme BCF (333.8).

Guzetta, 17, completed high school at age 14 so she could go to work to pay for riding. She's now a manager in the warehouse of a company that collects cell phones to sell their parts to foreign countries. She purchased Queen Of Spades, an experienced 15-year-old Trakehner/Thoroughbred mare, in May. After that, Guzetta said that she and trainer Anne Byron made the Galway Downs Training Level Three-Day Event their goal.

"It was kind of a far-fetched goal, but we worked our butts off and made it happen," she said with a smile. "Winning this was a dream come true."

Guzetta said she learned a great deal about conditioning and about her horse's health preparing for the classic-format event, one of 10 held throughout the country this year. And she said that the clinics conducted at Galway Downs—on presenting your horse for the jog, on equipment and procedures in the vet box, and the steeplechase school—prepared her for the weekend's challenges. Galway Downs was her first classic-format three-day event.

"And I had so much fun on the steeplechase!" she said.

Smith, a seasoned international competitor and trainer, believes that the Training Level Three-Day Event is an integral element of

eventing in America. "I think it's a really important piece to keep in eventing," she said.

Smith added, "The classic format really teaches young horses and riders how to gallop. Every horse I've ever taken in one really learns how to gallop. I think it's a part of our sport that's missing from the upper levels. I think that having it come out of our sport has been a little bit of a detriment to our young horses and riders."

Owner Emily Sandler-Burtness bred Irish Blend, who's out of the Irish-bred mare Miss Congeniality and by the German stallion Rascalino. Smith and Irish Blend also won the Training Level Three-Day Event at Rebecca Farm (Mont.) in July. Smith said that she thinks the 6-year-old mare is now ready to move up to preliminary after experiencing two classic-format events.

"I really like the result of what I got from doing Rebecca and Galway Downs. She can be a bit spooky, and it's really made her such a better horse," said Smith.

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