

Coudray And King Street Rule At Galway

Joshua A. Walker

Tiana Coudray made the trip to Temecula, Calif., for the Galway Downs CIC***-W as a prep outing before she and King Street tackle the Rolex Kentucky CCI**** at the end of April. Although she hardly expected it, Coudray found herself leading the victory gallop draped with the customary green FEI World Cup sash and blue ribbon while King Street enjoyed a new matching cooler.

But the March 30-April 1 weekend wasn't the first unanticipated victory for the pair at this venue. They also elected to run the CIC** in 2005 primarily to qualify for that year's North American Young Riders Championships (Va.) and ended up with the win and a satisfying purse to help pay their way to the Virginia Horse Center in Lexington.

This year's claim will help buy her ticket to the other Lexington, in Kentucky. Plus, the healthy dose of World Cup points she collected will give her a push toward qualifying for the next FEI Eventing World Cup Final in 2008.

"It's been an amazing weekend," Coudray said beaming.

Their dressage test was a little less polished than expected since she's been focusing more on the upcoming four-star test. "I actually learned [the test at Galway] the morning of," she admitted.

So starting the weekend in fourth place was no disappointment for Coudray. Even though Gina Miles and McKinlaigh initially led the pack by a cushiony margin, an ill-timed migraine headache forced Miles to withdraw just before cross-country. But their dressage test made sound preparation for the Badminton CCI**** (England), and Miles was quite pleased with McKinlaigh's much-improved performance.

With McKinlaigh's score out of the mix, the door opened for Grant Hemingway and Nieco, who stood second before cross-country. But after 7 minutes and 20 seconds on course they found themselves sitting ninth with 16.4 time faults.

The newly vacant top spot beckoned

Coudray and Jolie Sexson (aboard Killian O'Connor) who were tied for fourth, and both answered with clear cross-country trips.

"The course was great, and there were definitely some tough questions out there," Coudray said. "He was a little strong at first."

But by the time they splashed through the Leap Frog Lake jumps at 10AB and 11, they had settled into a swift rhythm and crossed the finish line in 6:32.

Sexson and Killian O'Connor galloped through the course in 6:38. "It was tough. Definitely world-class caliber," Sexson said. But she



Tiana Coudray and King Street performed perfect jumping rounds to win the CIC***-W at Galway Downs.

was thrilled to be in the position they were in, especially since the 17-hand Irish Sport Horse is only 7.

Sexson and Coudray entered show jumping tied for blue, but only Coudray would keep the honors, as the only rider to leave every rail in

the cups. "The course was very hard. The fact that there were so many good jumping horses here and nobody else made it over clear was kind of a surprise," Coudray said.

But King Street felt ready that morning. "He ran so well yesterday and didn't exert more than he needed to so he had lots of jump today," Coudray said. "I managed to keep my brain functioning and thinking straight. He's such a good horse that when I can keep it all together he does his job pretty well."

Peter Green imported the now 10-year-old Irish Sport Horse from Ireland. Coudray didn't expect "Danny" to advance so quickly from novice to an NAYRC CCI* individual silver (2004) to a Galway CIC** blue (2005) to winning this year's CIC***-W so quickly.

"He just turned out to be so much more than we ever could have expected. We certainly weren't looking for a four-star horse when we bought him. He has really taught me everything," Coudray said.

Up until two years ago, she took intermittent lessons with Bea and Derek di Grazia but mostly relied on her own wit and countless clinics to bring her and Danny's talents along. She now trains on a more frequent basis with the di Grazias.

"We're going to be doing everything possible to hold it all together," Coudray said, looking forward to Rolex Kentucky. "I don't think I'm going to breathe a single deep breath until I get there! My goal is to just get the experience and be realistic enough to know that whether we get around or not, it's such a great opportunity just to go."

► The Next Level

Debbie Rosen and The Alchemyst are taking big steps in their career together and earned the CIC** blue ribbon to prove it. It was their first two-star since last fall and first outing under the direction of a new trainer.

"She's really taken this horse to the next level," Rosen said of trainer Andrea Pfeiffer. Rosen rode with her previous coach, Brian Sabo, for as long as she can remember. But when he retired last fall she was left in search of a new guide.

She started working with Pfeiffer the weekend of Galway and instantly saw new light. "She just rocked my world in the warm-up," Rosen said. "I think when you're working on your own and training you tend to be happier with what you have because compared to what you had it's really exceptional. But [Pfeiffer] just kicked it up a notch for me."

Rosen's 7-year-old Canadian Sport Horse is galloping up the ranks faster than she ever