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Beth Underhill wins two events at Summer Classic

By Bill Rea

Canada Day weekend offered two occasions to celebrate for Beth Underhill of Schomberg.

Friday saw her winning the $10,000 Open Welcome event, presented by Alberta Premium, at the Summer Classic at Caledon Equestrian Park in Palgrave, riding Count Me In. It was a bigger pay off Sunday, as the pair were victorious in the $25,000 Grand Prix, presented by Ram Equestrian.

Sunday's event was almost a matter of attrition, as only three of the 26 horse and rider combinations turned in clear rounds, making it to the jump-off. Four riders withdrew their mounts in the middle of the course, and three others were eliminated. Two riders actually fell off their horses on the demanding course designed by Kenny Krome of Maryland.

But Underhill stayed on with Count Me In, owned by Sandy Lupton of Oshawa.

She had a second entry, her own horse Kodaline. Things didn't go quite as well, as the horse knocked down two rails and picked up a time fault.

Underhill was joined in the jump-off by Courtney Vince of Burlington, aboard Valetto LX, but two rails came down on the course, setting them back in third place.

Underhill was first to go in the second round, and she and Count Me in made it over all the jumps in 44.62 seconds. That time was good enough for the win.

Sam Pegg of Cannington turned in a clear round on Shaia de Macheco, but it took them a little more than a second and a half longer than Underhill.

Underhill was quick to agree it was a tough course, with 16 jumps. It was quickly realized that time was going to be a factor, and the officials increased the time allowed on course from 90 to 93 seconds after the first three competitors had gone.

?Kenny built a very technical track,? Underhill said after the competition.

She also pointed out they used a number of the colourful jumps that had been used during last year's Pan American Games, and the horses weren't used to them.

?I thought it was a very varied course,? she remarked, observing both horse and rider came away knowing they had been working hard. ?I thought his course was very well thought out.?

She observed that going first in the jump-off is difficult, because the other riders know what they have to beat.

?You have to try and anticipate the horses coming behind you,? she explained.

Underhill had few complaints about her main mount Sunday.

?He's a fantastic horse, and wonderful owners,? she said.

She said this is the third season she's been competing with the nine-year-old Hanoverian, so he's not had a lot of experience at this level of competition. But she knows he works hard and tries his best.

Hugh Graham from Schomberg was ninth in the event on Knock Out 3E, owned by Kingridge Stables in King City.