

Google AdWords

Start with \$75 of free advertising on us.*

Find out more

Browse > Home / Atlanta, Contributors, Robbi Meisel / Darren Finkelman and Kimber Aren't Fooling Anyone at Atlanta Spring Classics

Darren Finkelman and Kimber Aren't Fooling Anyone at Atlanta Spring Classics

April 2, 2007



Conyers, GA.—April 1, 2007—It was no April Fool's joke for Middleburg, VA based rider Darren Finkelman that his first Grand Prix victory included beating out some of the sport's best known legends this afternoon. Finkelman and the Hidden Trail Farm owned Kimber, a 14 year-old Dutch gelding won the \$25,000 Cherry Blossom Grand Prix presented by the Classic Company.

Commenting that this had been a victory 40 plus years in the making the exuberant winner had to take a moment to absorb not only the great joy of a first Prix victory but the realization that he had just triumphed over some of the sport's most established athletes, including the legendary Joe Fargis, Peter Leone, and Canadian great Mac Cone. "It feels great!" a beaming Darren said, "It was a little nerve wrecking waiting, knowing that he [Joe Fargis] was going behind me with the great Edgar." While any pro will tell you the first win is always special, Finkelman admits this one is unforgettable.

Former Olympic Silver Medalist turned internationally recognized course designer Michel Vaillancourt gave the starting field of 25 an unassuming (or so it appeared) first round layout of 13 obstacles, asking 16 efforts of them in 84 seconds. The obvious hot spot was to be the triple combination at 12ABC, in particular the 4 stride to the C element—a nearly 5' wide oxer. This part of his test, by no coincidence found competitors having to make a quick but controlled right turn after surviving the back-to-back oxers that were fences #10 and #11.

"When it goes well, the course is always nice." Today's winner laughed and added, "I've already complimented Michel on his course!" Those who fell victim to the triple may not entirely agree as it narrowed the starters to a mere 7 who would return for the final jump off round. Finkelman and Kimber, who were fifth in the order of go, assured their spot with a clear time of 79.208 seconds.

While it's no surprise when Aiken, SC based pro Daniel Geitner has exceptional rides, this afternoon proved to be a pleasant albeit unexpected personal victory for his partner, 8 year-old Rhinelander mare Sympa, owned by Mrs. Charles Bostwick. Despite some being skeptical she [Sympa] might be ready to play with the big boys at this level, Geitner never wavered in his faith. "She's young and very opinionated." Daniel laughed, "We knew she was difficult when we got her but I wanted to take a chance on her." Purchased as a 4 year-old, Sympa provided Geitner with the opportunity to build the mare up at a pace they both were comfortable with, explaining she's not one to be forced into anything. "I just kind of guide and let her think she's doing it her own way. She's got the jump and is very careful, you just have to harness it all." His patience and faith paid off with the fastest clear round one time of 76.791.

Joining Kimber and Sympa for the exciting conclusion to week one action would be such notables as Edgar

Equine Agents

Premium Prospect
www.equineagents.com
Tel: 0042

Shop the entire line of THE TAILORED SPORTSMAN

EQUESTRIAN COLLECTIONS.COM
www.EquestrianCollections.com

ORVIS

Built for adventure
patagonia footwear

UNLIMITED Space
UNLIMITED Transfer
2500 POP Emails
FTP · CGI · SSL · PHP





Joining Kimber and Sympa for the exciting conclusion to week one action would be such notables as Edgar 12 with Joe Fargis, Candide and Peter Leone, Canadian greats Stuntman with Margie Gayford, as well as Melinda with Mac Cone as the pilot and Wembley with Marc Samuel in the irons. Making for an all-star line up that would raise the excitement level of both the spectators and event management. The deciding round of 7 fences, 8 massive efforts, proved to be the real challenge overall, especially a questionable option coming at the end of the 7AB combination where a sharp inside turn with barely 10' between the jump's right-hand standard and a bank of shrubbery could be more than tricky if not taken at a precise angle. A gamble only Mac Cone and Melinda took as the first pair to tackle the serpentine track, an unfortunate rail at the next obstacle made those who followed reevaluate the risks of such a daring move. Sympa was next to go and Geitner admitted right turns were not their strong suit, "You're best bet was to angle it away from the turn to give yourself room to negotiate the tightness. Had I qualified with one of my other mounts [Trading Places and Miraj] I probably would have gone that route too, but Sympa is green and big strided so tight rights are still to be learned." Both Geitner and Finkelman relied upon speed and abilities to drop a stride to compensate, a strategy that the remaining competitors also followed. The "opinionated mare" [Sympa] had a second clear round in 39.564 well below the allotted 45-second limit.

Taking a deep breath, a concentrated Darren and Kimber crossed the starting timer to begin a perfect ride, which would stop the clock at a quick and clean 39.462 seconds, stealing the lead away from Geitner. Upon exiting the arena Darren dismounted and began what felt like the longest wait of his life as 5 more attempted but failed to over take his lead. Making the win even more personal, Darren shared how much it meant to accomplish it specifically with Kimber, "We almost lost him a year ago to the neurological strand of equine herpes. I can't begin to imagine this moment without him." he said with apparent emotion in his voice, but quickly added with a broad smile and hearty laugh, "Of course we'll be back next week to take them on again! I wouldn't dream of leaving now."

Presenting awards to Darren and the owners of Hidden Trail Farm was Classic Company president Bob Bell who commented, "In a word, WOW! What a truly exciting afternoon of competition and a great way to wrap up the first weekend of the series." After congratulating the winner Bell added, "Just couldn't happen to a nicer guy. Darren certainly deserves this moment, he rode with the best and earned this victory." The official final placements found Geitner and Sympa coming second with a fault free finish of 39.564, Canada's Margie Gayford and Stuntman in third with a clear time of 42.530 following in fourth was Mac Cone and Melinda with a time of 36.584 and 4 faults and completing the top five was Peter Leone on Candide in 38.578 and 4 faults.

The Atlanta Spring Classics continue through April 7th with showing taking place Tuesday through Saturday this week. Classes begin daily at 8AM until approximately 4:30PM and the public is invited. Admission is free and Saturday afternoon will host another exciting \$25,000 Grand Prix jumper event. For more information or results on the Spring Classics visit www.classiccompany.com or call the show office at

 770-602-2510 

Flashpoint Media Services, based in Harrodsburg, KY, is a comprehensive public relations firm specializing in the equestrian sports. For additional information contact Robbi Meisel,  859-734 3713 , robbi@flashpointmediaservices.com or Cynthia Grisolia,  347-423 7322 , cindy@flashpointmediaservices.com.

2500 POP Emails
FTP · CGI · SSL · PHP
No Setup Fees!

\$6.95/month

AdChoices 

Horse and Farm Insurance

Equine Mortality,
Liability & Farm Over
35 Years Insurance
Experience!
www.starhinsurance.com

Top HORSES for sale

Jumpers & Hunters.
Also Grand Prix. Nice
prices - good quality!
www.skovrider.com