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EDITOR: DALE OVIATT 235-7578 FAX: 235-7313

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ROUGH RIDE

Mark Armstrong of Great Britain hangs on for dear life as his horse Rex falls during Saturday's Canada Post Cup. Both horse and rider were OK.



Photos: Dean Bicknell, Calgary Herald

ATCO POWER QUEEN ELIZABETH II CUP

Madden's long-awaited win

U.S. veteran
captures first
Grand Prix

BY RITA MINO
FOR THE CALGARY HERALD

She's been a frequent visitor to the winner's circle throughout her many years visiting Spruce Meadows. Yet, when it comes to the big events, Bezie Madden still considers herself a relative neophyte.

"I've been second in a bunch of them," laughed the 49-year-old. "This is the first time I've won a Grand Prix or opposed to a derby."

Madden made good on one of the most prestigious competitions at Spruce Meadows, winning the ATCO Power Queen Elizabeth II Cup on Saturday afternoon and the \$66,000 prize money attached to the top spot.

The Cazenovia, N.Y., rider teamed up with her Olympic horse, Authentic, and the tandem roomed to the head of a star-studded scoreboard.

Madden and Authentic went clear in the arduous first round in the second round, four obstacles shorter and with 30 fewer seconds allowed, they were clean again, joining three other quality horse-rider combinations — Great Britain's Nick Skelton and Arko III, McLean Ward of Brewer, N.Y., and his fine horse Sapphire, and Olympic champion Rodrigo Pessoa and Balthazar Du Rouais — in a jumpoff.

Madden and her 10-year-old Dutch-bred mount blazed through the abbreviated course in a time of 50.5 seconds, polishing Authentic's growing reputation as a money horse.

"That's what we're striving to make him," she acknowledged. "He's only 10; last year, he was nine and he did some big things as a nine-year-old. We still have to do some things where we back down and start at a lower class earlier in the week because he is so young."

"This year, we're just trying to aim him for big things. We're trying to make sure his confidence is really good. He gets excited when he comes down



Bezie Madden of Cazenovia, N.Y., and Authentic handle a fence en route to winning the ATCO Power Queen Elizabeth II Cup on Saturday at Spruce Meadows.

collens class for the crowd and for us, too.

Her (Authentic) tried to so hard. He was a little rambunctious in the first round, but by the second round and the jumpoff, he was settled down. He always tries his best out."

The last person with a chance to overtake Madden was the brilliant Brazilian Pessoa, whose horse knocked down the second part of the penultimate jump, all the while finishing nearly two seconds faster than the American at 34.7. He finished in fourth.

The 47-year-old Skelton won \$40,000 for second spot, putting a nice caper on what has been a successful summer at Spruce Meadows.

The 29-year-old Ward, too, has enjoyed a profitable couple of months. But as the jumpoff shaped up on Saturday, he realistically didn't believe he'd finish in front of the pack.

"As great as Sapphire is, speed is not her thing," he noted about his silver medal-winning Olympic horse, with whom he'll also head to Europe for a tour. "My plan then was to lay down an efficient, neat, quick round and just hope for some mistakes. But obviously, I knew in the back of my mind one of these three wasn't going to make a mistake. I couldn't have gone a lot faster. Balthazar, Arko, Authentic — it doesn't get any faster than that."

Third place however was good enough for \$25,000. The lone Canadian in the derbies who advanced to the second round was Ian Millar aboard In Style. With four faults, they finished sixth.

The North American closes out today with two international events, the Sun Life Financial and the Chrysler Classic derby. Madden will go with another old reliable, Judgement, in the derby.

"I thought it was a good course," Madden mused. "To have four double clears going into the jumpoff and to have it be a fast jumpoff, it was an ex-

"It was quite intimidating today, to be honest. A quantum leap up in class... But boy, it was fun."

DARRIN FINKELMAN

A ride he might never forget

Darren Finkelman savours his chance to ride with the stars



GEORGE JOHNSON

Waiting in the warm-up ring for the second round of competition, if someone had conducted a sealed-envelope Least Likely to Succeed poll among the 11 left standing, the balloting would've been unanimous.

Even Darren Finkelman would've voted for Darren Finkelman.

Rodrigo Pessoa, Bezie Madden, Nick Skelton, Rich Fellers, Norman Dello Joio, Ian Millar. All household names among the horse set. And then there was, well, Darren Finkelman. "Gail Greenough looked at the lineup and said, 'It's a Who's Who,'" giggled the Middleburg, Va., rider. "And I said, 'Not really. Actually, it's a Who's Who, and... who?'"

Information on Finkelman is, uh, sketchy. He's 45. Started riding at age nine at a summer camp. Got his own horse four years later. Spent a few years in Sweden, competing in dressage.

His Major Results listing in the comprehensive Spruce Meadows media binder — heifer

than the 12 volumes of the U.S. penal code — is all of one line: third place at Beeson Hills speed class on Bailey's in 2003.

The résumé for Olympic gold-medallist Pessoa, the dashing, debonair Brazilian, in contrast, devours a full page and a half of type.

Saturday's ninth-place showing in the \$200,000 Queen Elizabeth II Cup was unquestionably the highlight of Finkelman's riding career. He only jumped his first 1.66-metre course a couple of weeks ago here.

"It was quite intimidating today, to be honest. A quantum leap up in class. For me and my horse. The atmosphere. The size and technicality of the jumps. But boy, it was fun."

He's only been coming here a couple of years, but so popular has Darren Finkelman become around the grounds at Spruce Meadows that all the girls working in the Tournament Office came out to cheer his place in the awards ceremony line.

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LOW RIDER



Santiago Lambro of Mexico takes a streamlined approach to a jump with his horse Santa Rosa Campino during the ATCO Power Queen Elizabeth II Cup on Saturday.