

# SPORTS & LEISURE

## Di Genova strikes gold in Virginia

Jessica Di Genova and her horse dressaged, trotted and jumped for success recently in Virginia.

Di Genova, 17, a Norval resident, earned individual gold at the CN North American Young Riders' Championship in Lexington, also helping her Ontario squad to team bronze.

Riding Upolu, her 17-year-old grey Dutch Warmblood mare, Di Genova led the eventing competition from start to finish in the two-star Championship division.

She incurred 46.40 penalty points in the opening phase of dressage, then added only four time penalties to her score to maintain her lead following the cross-country phase.

"It was the best dressage test that I have ever had in the four years I have been competing her. We were the only pair to score in the 40s," said Di Genova, who won individual and team bronze medals at the event in 2006.

"I had a day off and felt good for cross-country. The course rode really well, it was a true championship day and it had questions that tested the riders' abilities as well as the horses. I found it required a forward, aggressive ride to get around clean. I did have a few time faults, but that occurs frequently with my mare, so it was nice that I had a good lead after dressage to be able to afford those penalties."

At the end of the cross-country phase, Di Genova maintained her place at the top of the leader board with a score of 50.40. She and Upolu posted one of only three clear rounds in the third and final phase of show jumping to add nothing to her score and earn her individual gold.

Di Genova's closest pursuer, Nate Chambers of the U.S., finished second with 62.20 points.

"I like to be under pressure to do well and meet my expectations. Going into the stadium jumping, my horse felt tired and I felt flustered for some reason, but I galloped into the ring and we managed to pull off a double clear round," said Di Genova, who retired Upolu from competition following her gold medal win. "My horse was so spectacular, she was so willing. I could not have asked for more from her."

Di Genova is coached by U.S. equestrian team member Darren Chiacchia, having trained with him for the past two years.

Chiacchia, who was fourth in individual competition at the recently concluded Pan American Games, coaches a dozen young riders on a regular basis and helps several others on occasion.

"Darren takes it so seriously and he says all the right things," Di Genova said. "I need a coach that gives me confidence, and he is just the type of coach I need. Darren helped me a lot, and I owe him so much for helping me to get this far. I thank him and my parents for my success."

A former Christ the King High School student in Georgetown, Di Genova will attend MacLachlan College in Oakville this year prior to heading off to university.

—With files from Eamonn Maher, staff writer



**JESSICA  
DI GENOVA**



Jessica Di Genova, of Georgetown, guides her mare, Upolu, over a jump en route to winning gold at the CN North American Young Riders' Championship in Lexington, Virginia. Photo courtesy Equine Canada

## Classic now under way Two equestrian events planned for Halton Place

Organizers are expecting approximately 250 horses to take part in the next two weekends of show jumping competitions during the Canadian Country Classic held just southwest of Georgetown on the Halton Place property.

The event began Wednesday with some preliminary-level classes and the elite riders are slated to become acquainted with the jumping ring today (Friday) at 4 p.m. with the Open Welcome Stakes.

Georgetown native Beth Underhill, a veteran of Olympic, Pan American and World Equestrian Games, is one of the headliners of this weekend's highlight competition, a \$20,000 Grand Prix on Saturday beginning at 2 p.m.

The Classic's opening week, however, is geared primarily to "Next Generation" riders and many of the up-and-coming Canadian prospects will take part in Sunday's \$5,000 I Love Jumping event on Sunday at 2 p.m.

"This entire first week is focused on juniors and established riders with younger horses that they're developing," said Classic spokesperson Jayne Huddleston.

The show rings won't feature the only activities at Halton Place this weekend as a number of events are scheduled, including an open beach volleyball tournament and fashion show luncheon on Saturday, both fund-raisers for the Sick Kids Hospital Foundation. A classic car show will also take place on Saturday.

For week two, several more world-class competitors, such as Jonathan and Amy Millar, are expected to enter the \$75,000 FEI World Cup Qualifier on Sunday, Sept. 2.

Another high-profile event to be held Aug. 31 and Sept. 1 is the Eastern Canadian Qualifier for the FEI Children's International Jumping Final, which is open to riders ages 12-14. The winner of that qualifier will join the Western Canadian representative for the world championships Dec. 3-8 in Jalapa, Mexico.

For more information and detailed schedules, visit the website [www.canadiancountryclassic.com](http://www.canadiancountryclassic.com).

## Jr. A Raiders back on ice

Some roster decisions will be made for the Georgetown Raiders' management staff this weekend as the OHA Provincial Jr. A Hockey League club has three exhibition games in three days, beginning tonight (Friday) in Orangeville.

Those two teams will meet up again Saturday at the Mold-Masters SportsPlex starting at 7 p.m.

Pre-season action continues for the

Raiders Sunday afternoon in North York and then the Rangers will be in Georgetown Thursday for a rematch, with the puck dropping at 7 p.m.

The Raiders held their red and white intrasquad game on Wednesday and acquired 18-year-old blueliner Chris Borges from the Brampton Capitals, a 6-foot-1, 185-pounder who had six goals and 10 assists in 46 games last year.

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