

Over 250 riders compete at Halton place

Canadian Country Classic expected to attract 5,000

By Matthew Reid

For the second consecutive year, the World Cup Qualifier in show jumping has made its way through the winding roads of Halton Hills. The Canadian Country Classic, being held at Halton Place, wrapped up last weekend, on 15 Side Road, southeast of Acton.

The event hosted approximately 250 horses and riders over the past two weeks. Halton Place owner and operator Timur Leckebusch has run the famed show jumping event several times over the last decade, but this is only the second time the World Cup Qualifier has taken place at this venue which was chosen because of its picturesque landscaping and proximity to urban areas. Where the Royal Winter Fair brings the country to the city, The Canadian Country Classic keeps the country where it has always been.

"In Southern Ontario, it's probably the closest to urban areas for spectators to get to of any of the big ones, except the Royal Winter Fair," says Canadian Country Classic spokesperson Jayne Huddleston. The event, according to Huddleston, is important to Halton not just because of

the attention it gives to the agricultural community, but also because of the impact an event of this size has on the economy.

"People come into the community and use the hotels, the restaurants, all the services or shops," says Huddleston. "Anyone else that is selling anything has an increase in traffic through the community."

It also creates awareness of the event and for the agricultural community as a whole. Because the event is open to any rider who registers, there are many riders from around Halton Hills who are jumping into the action.

The event expects to have between 4,000 to 5,000 visitors over its two weeks. It is the large increase in traffic and congestion that has caused irritation amongst some of Halton Place's neighbours.

Pick-up trucks hauling



HALTON PLACE: Resembling a horse farm in Kentucky or the Carolinas in the U.S., Halton place is situated on the south side of 15 Side Road, east of Regional Road 25.

large horse trailers down 15 Side Road causes a lot of noise and some unhappy Halton Place neighbours. Mixed with the sound of spectators and the echo of the announcers, some neighbours complained about the noise events would cause.

"A noise technician has been hired to monitor the noise levels and the neighbours were asked to call anytime they thought it was too loud," explains Huddleston. "And the traffic is being counted at the corner of 4th Line and 15 Side Road."

Traffic was counted on non-tournament days as well as during the event.

\$75,000 prize

The grand finale of the tournament was the Swisscan World Cup Qualifier and the top prize of \$75,000. In one of the few sports that women run equally against the men, the women out jumped the men to take the prize money. Of the 29 starters for this competition, only three had no faults. Two of the three were women.

Amy Miller, 30 of Perth, Ontario, won the day with a blistering speed of 43.73 seconds, followed in a close second by Lauren Hunkin, 28, also from Perth with 44.27.

The World Cup Qualifier is a show jumping event produced by the International Equestrian Federation (Federation Equestre Internationale or FEI). Competitors in the event weed out riders in the 2008 World Cup Championship in Gothenburg, Sweden.

The qualifying round held at Halton Place was the third of five qualifiers in the Canadian League this season. The last round before heading to the finals will take place at the Royal Winter Fair at Ricoh Coliseum this November.

Child's play

Show jumping appears to be nothing but child's play for young Jake Krembil, fresh out of grade 8, and from Schomberg, Ontario. Krembil captured the top spot in the Eastern Canadian Qualifier for the International Equestrian Federation. This event is the most coveted show jumping



WARM UPS: Riders warm up in the side ring before heading to compete on the other side of the main show ring. -Matthew Reid Photo

honour for children aged 12 to 14.

After the qualifying is completed across the globe, young Krembil will have to be in the approximately top 16 riders in the world in order to go onto the Children's International Jumping Final in Jalapa, Mexico, which runs December 3-8.

The FEI provides the financial support to send two riders from each qualifying nation to the hosting country. A maximum of 32 children will compete in the final with horses supplied by the host nation.

Last year's FEI Children's International Jumping Final, was held at Spruce Meadows in Alberta. It was the first time a single country has taken all three medals. This includes Krembil.

Taylor Bland and Ben Asselin, both from Calgary earned gold and silver medals, while Krembil brought home the bronze. This was

the first time a Canadian has won gold.

BMX event

The BMX event scheduled to take place on a homemade dirt track constructed on the far left of the property, was cancelled because of objections of that BMX riding was not an agricultural activity. Others contend the bikes are not motorized, and most children who live in rural areas ride their bikes on dirt tracks and trails they make themselves. The decision to cancel the event is still being challenged.

Other events that took place over the last two weeks included an open volleyball tournament and a fashion show, with all proceeds going to the Hospital For Sick Children. There was also numerous shopping opportunities and a classic car show, appropriately titled, "Where Horse Power Meets Horse Power."



COUNTRY CLASSIC: Riders compete in the International Equestrian Federation Canadian Country Classic at Halton Place on 15 Side Road. -Matthew Reid Photo