

Team Welsh Wins Battle of the Breeds

By Lei Broadstone



Photo Credit: Tammy Cooper

Hobby (Young's High Interest x Young's Who's Choice x Pendock Perseus) - Compulsory and Cones. Celia Allpress with her grey B mare Vista Avalon (Rosedale Flamenco x Vista Stardust who also goes back to Pendock Puccini) - Barrels, Trail & Jumping. Lei Broadstone with my bay D gelding Gallod Syr Gwynfor (Gallod Bang on Time x Gallod Welsh Maid) - Barrels, Trail & Jumping.



Photo Credit: Sport Pony Magazine

For those of you that are curious about the competition - I'll try to explain it. It takes place at Spruce Meadows, THE #1 Show Jumping venue in the WORLD! And until you've been there you can't understand how fabulous and impressive it is to have to opportunity to show off our versatile Welsh in such company! The battle of the Breeds competition takes place during "The Masters" where they have various jumper competitions for the "big guys" from around the world - you know, Rodrigo Pessoa, Ian Millar, Bezie Madden, Michael Whitaker, and on and on... In addition they have demos of other horse related things like the Celle Stallions from Germany and "Breeds of the world" where various breeds show off for the public's enjoyment, and of course a huge Equifair where you can spend lots of money!

But back to the "Telus Battle of the Breeds"... It is made up of five events where each team has two entries whose scores are tallied to come up with the team's final score for each event. This year there were a record 13 breeds participating; Arab, Appaloosa, Thoroughbred, Trakehner, Paint, Quarter Horse, Canadian Horse, Canadian Warmblood, Shetland, Mule, Saddlebred, Morgan and Welsh. Appaloosa has won it for the last 5 years or so and many of the other breeds are perennial favorites of the crowd.

On Thursday the first day of competition, it was a beautiful sunny day. We began with the Compulsory pattern. Much like a dressage test it can be either ridden or driven. Both our team members chose to drive and our team placed 3rd with some very nice scores from both Lee and Tammie. After that came the Precision Driving which is a cones course with a water crossing and a few other fun things such as a knock down with your whip and a bridge, etc. The two ponies came through with blazing speed and accuracy to again put us in the third spot for that event. Each team receives points for their placing order in



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each event so after the first two events our team was tied for first with Team Saddlebred and Team Morgan. Friday is Barrels day. The only event not held in one of Spruce Meadow's lovely grass arenas. This turned out to be a good thing as the rain had started to fall that morning and even the deep, well drained sand arena was starting to puddle. The Barrels pattern is a little different than your standard cloverleaf 3 barrel version where you run as quickly as possible around the pattern. This version consists of 4 barrels which has you rounding the last barrel and heading AWAY from "home". The teams run each of their competitors around the pattern and then the top 6 teams with the lowest combined times, get to come back and run the pattern again in reverse order of time, for the final placings. Needless to say the stock breeds including the QH, Paint and Appy, were at the top with the quickest times. Team TB was right in there in second and team Welsh was 5th! Celia went out the second time around and turned in the third best time of the whole competition (the two top were QH) to move our team up to 4th! The points for the fourth placing were added to what we had already accumulated from the previous competition and kept us in 1st place, this time by ourselves!!

Saturday, the last day of competition, was going to prove to be challenging in more ways than one as rain had fallen ALL night and was still coming down in torrents at competition time. Imagine continuous rain, wind and about 45 - 50 degrees (5-7C) then imagine you have to do a Trail course where your shivering could dislodge an obstacle and at the least, slow down your time. In the trail class you have a number of obstacles you can choose to complete in a set amount of time. Each has a point value and you can choose which obstacles to attempt and what order to do them in to accrue points. At the end of your time you then have the option to try the "bonus" obstacle within 30 seconds for an additional 100 points - if it isn't completed you lose 100 points. Our team had two respectable runs - one attempting the bonus and completing it and the other opting for the safe route and not trying for the extra points. We finished 6th - just in the ribbons and only 10 points behind 5th place.



Photo Credit: Sport Pony Magazine

After this competition we dropped to 2nd over all when the QHs won. All we needed to do now was to beat them in Jeopardy jumping and we would win the Championship!

The rain had not been merciful in the least and continued into the afternoon. Competitions in the big "International Ring" had continued as well, as the \$75,000. BP cup was completed. This was the first round before the \$300,000. 2nd round Nation's Cup that was to take place in the afternoon. But for the first time in Spruce Meadow's 30 year history, a competition could not be completed because it was decided the footing and conditions were just too dangerous for the horses.



Photo Credit: Sport Pony Magazine

Over in the "Meadows on the Green" arena where the BOB was taking place, the jumps were being set and everything was still a "Go". "Jeopardy Jumping" is run like a Gambler's choice class where all the fences are pointed and the rider chooses their own route to garner as many points in the allotted time. Again, after each round is completed, the rider has the option to take the 100 point jump for extra credit or loose the points if they are unsuccessful. Even though the ring was covered with an inch or two of water and the competitors and their horses were soaked literally to the bone, everyone was anxious to continue. Luckily there were no accidents from

galloping and jumping in what had become a swamp. Celia was the first rider to go for our team and turned in a respectable 350 points. She chose to play it safe and not attempt the bonus jump in those conditions. Fory and I were ready and feeling good in spite of the numbness that had set in on my legs and hands, I couldn't even feel my feet. The course looked fun and I knew we could jump any of the fences. Off we went at a nice forward clip and I was just trying to squint through the rain and steer him. Footing didn't seem to bother him as we

made some "snug" turns trying to get as many jumps in as possible. We were able to complete all but two of the small 10 point jumps before our time ran out. He was jumping so well that of course I opted to try the 100 point bonus. He just flew over it! "What rain, what wind, slick footing? I'm Welsh!" seemed to be his motto for the day. Not only had that score put us into 2nd in Jeopardy jumping, behind the TBs, but Fory had the best jumping score of all the 26 competitors with 470! That placing secured our team the Championship!



Photo Credit: Sport Pony Magazine

On a "high" from our victory, the rain and miserable conditions were all but forgotten until we went back to our hotel and managed to wrestle off our boots. I had to wring my socks out my feet were so wet! The breeches I was wearing may never be white again from mud and saddle dye that rubbed off. One of the perks of winning the BOB Championship is that the winning team gets to appear on Sunday in the 60,000. + seat International Ring to receive their awards! Luckily the weather gods were smiling and there was no rain this day. With bands playing, amid (5'+ high) jumps set and the "big guys" walking their course for the afternoon's \$1,000,000. (yes, MILLION) CN International event, we proudly rode & drove our ponies to the center of the arena. It's pretty overwhelming to see your face (with a HUGE smile) on the big live picture board overhead. We each received a cooler with our championship imprinted on the side, a plaque, and a red Spruce Meadows ribbon but most important - the bragging rights as the most versatile breed!!!

For more info on Spruce Meadows, you can see the final scores on their web site sprucemeadows.com . Look under the Master's tournament. You can also see photos of a couple of the events (before the photographer got too soggy to continue), at <http://www.albertaequine.com/gallery/index.asp>