

December 6, 2008

# Pavarotti and Todd Minikus Lead the Way in Rolex/USEF National Show Jumping Championship

## 7/10ths of a second is the slim margin over second place Dobbs and Marengo in \$40,000 Holiday and Horses Opener

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*Todd Minikus and Pavarotti*

Wellington, FL – December 5, 2008 - - Forty-four starters went to the post for the 7 p.m. Friday night feature of the Holiday and Horses event, underway this week at the Palm Beach International Equestrian Center in Wellington, Florida, and when the issue was finally decided some two hours later, it was Todd Minikus emerging victorious with Pavarotti.

Tonight's main event was the \$40,000 Holiday and Horses Opener, the first phase of the 2008 Rolex/USEF National Show Jumping Championship. Of the 44 that started tonight's class, only the twenty-nine American riders are vying for the title of National Champion.

Anthony D' Ambrosio of Red Hook, NY, is designing the courses for this week's action, and tonight his track was set for a FEI Table C, Faults Converted into Seconds format. D' Ambrosio came up with 12 numbered obstacles with 15 jumping efforts, including a double and triple

combination. The triple, vertical, oxer, vertical came early at 4 a-b-c, and the double of oxers came later at 8 a-b.

There were a number of inside options, and as D' Ambrosio said following tonight's contest, "I liked how the course worked out tonight. The riders had to do each inside option to get a ribbon tonight. You couldn't go around and get a prize."

And as it turned out, they not only had to do the inside options, they had to do them well.

Although we didn't know it at the time, this class was over early. Tonight's top two finishers rode out of the third and fourth spots in order.

Todd Minikus set the pace with Pavarotti (left), Hillary Dobbs followed hot on his heels with Marengo, and then the two watched as rider after rider failed to erase their two top times from the top of the leaderboard.

Pavarotti flew home in 69.11 seconds with nary a fault and Marengo and Dobbs (right), also faultless, were just 7/10ths of a second slower in 69.82 seconds.

Pablo Barrios placed two in tonight's top six, taking third place with Lagran in 70.21 seconds, and fifth place on Sinatra, the last to go, in 72.39 seconds.

Margie Engle and Hidden Creek's Pamina L made a great run in tonight's dash for cash, breaking the beams in 70.57 seconds, 3/10ths behind Barrios, for a fourth place finish.

Rounding out the top six was Kirsten Coe and Starlight, cruising home in a nifty 72.42 seconds.

The class was extremely competitive.

Only four seconds separated the top eleven competitors, and fifth through tenth place were only 5/10ths of a second apart.

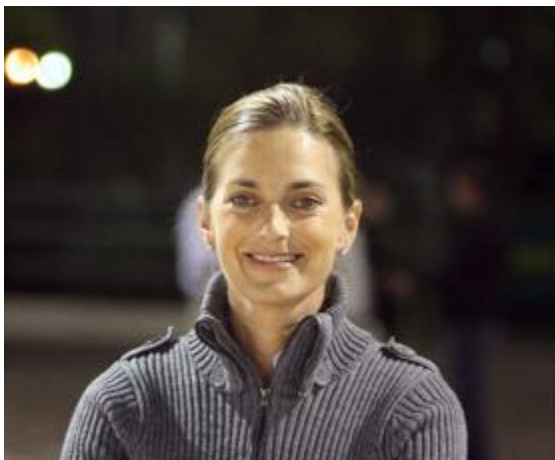
Charlie Jayne and Thomas Edison were the only pair that was able to get by the pace set by the two leaders, but it came at the expense of a rail down at the final fence on the course. Jayne ripped around the track in 68.98 seconds, but the 4 second addition for the knockdown bumped his final time up to 72.98 and tonight's 10th place finish.

"I was disappointed that I had to go early especially with Marengo and Hillary coming right behind me, and with 44 entries - going third - that usually doesn't hold up," smiled Minikus following his victory gallop. "There were probably a dozen horses in the class that could have been the winner, including last year's winners Kent and Up Chiqui."

Was he going as fast as he could go? "No, not really, except to the last fence," he chuckled. "I made very tight turns, but they weren't forward riding tight turns. I could have been faster."

Minikus didn't get to see much of the class compete following his pacesetting ride, at least not until it came down to crunch time. "I still had Olinda yet to ride, so I didn't get to see a lot of them go until the end. Plus my son Colt was here for his first night at a horse show ever, so I had to hold him for a while too while Amada was busy keeping me organized," he laughed. "Towards the end there, Charlie Jayne was on the money, but had the last jump down and Margie, if she had made just one inside turn, she would have had me," he said, "but that's racing luck. Sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't."

"I really didn't even think about the national championship," Minikus stated bluntly. "I just knew tonight was a \$40,000 class, and Sunday is a \$60,000 class with some World Cup points. To be honest with you, I wasn't that enthusiastic about showing at all. It's been a long season and I've had more than enough showing for the year. It's been a tremendous year, but it's been a long season. It will be nice, when this week's over, to have a break



and maybe do some other things."

Asked why, if the season was so long, and he wasn't enthusiastic about showing, he showed anyway, Minikus revealed, "Because Amanda was complaining we didn't have enough money for diapers and she told me I had to show. We

*Amanda Minikus, left and Colt Minikus, right*

haven't sold a lot of horses lately, and she bought this new crib for the baby, so now I have to win Sunday just to pay for the crib," he laughed. "The pressure's on."

Minikus said that the highlight of this year on Pavarotti was his double clear effort to help secure a United States victory in the Nations Cup at the Spruce Meadows Master. The season's lowlight he detailed was, "a beat down by Hillary Dobbs at the Hampton Classic. I was leading rider right up until the last class, but then I fell off and she zinged me for the title."

Dobbs (left), tonight's runner up, countered with a smile, "Todd won fifteen grand prix this year. Every once in a while, he throws me a bone, but tonight wasn't one of those nights."

"I was really lucky," Dobbs stated. "It is always hard going early. The first two horses were big horses with big strides, and mine is quicker. Todd did all the inside turns, I was debating which ones to do, so I made myself do them all for practice. My horse was amazing. I really did some dicey angles tonight. He's always a brave horse and he was backed off just enough so he was super careful."

"From the triple to the triple bar, I had such a sharp angle I had to do six after the triple bar and Todd did five," said Dobbs. "There were two or three places where I could have left out, but didn't."

"Anthony did a nice job of giving you inside or around options, but if you did the inside option for the most part you had to do the add option, which I did on the first line," said Minikus of the course. "The second line I did the leave out option. Pavarotti has that ability, although he is very short, he has the capability of a very long stride. As far as a championship course it was good, it maybe could have been 1.50m not 1.45m, and Table A would have been better than Table C."

Dobbs, who just arrived from Harvard for tonight's competition said, "I don't get tired of this. I just want to be at the horse shows and get better. It is also a nice break from school, especially during midterms."

Asked if he thought he had an advantage riding on his "home field," Minikus laughed and said, "What home field? There's no home field, everybody lives in Wellington now."

The final leg of the Rolex/USEF National Show Jumping Championship gets underway Sunday afternoon with the \$60,000 Holiday and Horses World Cup Qualifier at 2 p.m.