

Pavarotti Sings in NAL Open Jumper Speed Final

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Pavarotti outshone an illustrious field to win the \$25,000 NAL Open Jumper Speed Finals at the 62nd PA National Horse Show. Seventh on course, Todd Minikus had the advantage of watching other riders and he used it. He and Pavarotti turned in the second clean round a whopping 7 seconds faster than Overlook Farms' Carnivale.

"I really didn't think my time would hold," said Minikus afterwards. "I really thought it might get us third or fourth. The course was good; for raw speed, it wasn't big, but you had to extend your horse and bring them back several times and that takes a toll on the horses and riders. I actually didn't think we executed some of the rollbacks very well"

Guilherme Jorge's course featured an opening jump with a not-too-sharp left turn followed a strong left bend and a hairpin right to the fourth fence, a combination. Out of the combination was a gallop, bending left again to a vertical and left hand hairpin to a narrow jump. Horses galloped on to the right for combination of a 4'9" high by 4'7" wide oxer and 4'9" vertical less than a stride away. Several horses made turns but arrived in front of the fences unprepared to jump and, so they didn't. A refusal adds time to your score but two, eliminate you.

Pavarotti handled it quite well enough considering the night before, he lost by a single stride to finish second. It was clearly satisfying, to Minikus, to come back on top. Pavarotti, a chestnut gelding is called "Super Runt," because he is diminutive a bit more than 15 hands. "But," said Minikus, "he doesn't notice, he knows he's special. I've had him about a year and he did well on the European Circuit this summer. He came back nicely after a fall at the Pan Am Games to win in Sao Paulo a week or so later."

Second place went to Leslie Howard aboard S'Bliedt Group's Youp who despite an electrifying round was nearly a full second slower than Pavarotti. Bezie Madden with Onlight was third, three-tenths of a second off Youp's pace. Overlook Farm Inc.'s Carnivale and Kimberly Prince finished fourth.

Of the 24 contestants, only six went clear. The course definitely demanded riders control their mounts. Tonight, the \$65,000 Budweiser Prix de Penn National headlines the finale of the 10-day equine extravaganza. Some of the same horses and all of the riders will have a go at this Grand Prix. The evening session begins at 7 pm, tickets are available for unreserved seating.