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Selingers and Anderson Raise Money for Charity at Derby Day in Calgary

Giving riders a true derby experience at all levels of the sport

Nicki Wilcox for PhelpsSports.com

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Frank Selinger and John Anderson

Calgary, AB – July 15, 2010 – After the close of the Spruce Summer Series, show jumping neighbors St. Georges' Stables and Rocky Mountain Show Jumping teamed up to put together a huge Derby and charity event all their own. With the event, the Selingers and John Anderson were striving for a day a fun to raise money for the Alberta Children's Hospital and provide a challenging Derby experience for riders of all levels.

Anderson's Rocky Mountain Show Jumping hosts many weeks of show jumping competitions throughout the year. However, during RMSJ's Mid Summer Classic III, one day of the competition moved from Anderson Ranch (located two kilometers south of Spruce Meadows) to the neighboring St. George's Stables for a Derby truly worth writing about.

There was prize money in all levels along with podium awards ceremonies and plenty of free food.

"I love derbies myself, period. I love riding derbies. Derbies are great," said Anderson. "It's the week after the North American and The Mercedes-Benz Classic has finished and derbies are on people's minds."



John Anderson and Gesine 36 at Spruce Meadows

Anderson is no strange face to the Mercedes-Benz Derby at Spruce. He won the Derby in 2008 and was fourth last year. Anderson said the creation of a Derby Day with St. George's Stables was a way for RMSJ to bring the Derby to the younger generations or simply the riders who may never have the opportunity to jump around the fence heights of the International Ring.

"Frank's (Selinger) place is a natural fit," said Anderson. "It's another venue, they've got all the natural obstacles, its right next door...let's play."

Play they did, there were 49 entries in the \$3,000 1.10m derby, 18 in the \$5,000 1.15m, 32 in the \$7,000 1.20m, 17 in the \$8,000 1.30m, and a grand total of 58 in the \$2,000 1.0m derby. After few days of rain, the sun finally came out for a great day of sport at St. George's Stables. There were a total of five clear rounds over all the derby courses that took place.

"We want everybody to understand that it is a big deal to jump around 25 obstacles going up and down for three minutes. It's a huge accomplishment," said Selena Selinger. "We want everyone to have fun in great comradery and spirit."



beautiful setting for the Derby Day.....



.....and a nice turnout for charity

Selena's husband, Frank Selinger, is involved in the importing and exporting of Warmbloods as well as breeding Canadian Warmbloods and Holsteiners along with his father, Joe Selinger. In 1975, he won a Bronze Medal at the Pan American games and he has ridden on four Nations Cup teams. Over the last two years, he has also become a jump builder extraordinaire in efforts to bring new jumps and the challenge of new jumps and naturals in the format of a derby to all riders - not just riders of international level.

"What I like about seeing people do it (ride derbies), is they walk the course and pick up five trauma fences, say 'oh god I won't make it,' and they survive three of them, two of them bite them and they are still happy," said Frank. "In regular show jumping your horse jumps one inch too low one time, you go home with a frown. This you know virtually every jump was an accomplishment."

The first St. George's Derby Day took place last year in coordination with RMSJ in celebration of St. George's Stables' 50th Anniversary. St. George's Stables was born in 1959 when Joe Selinger purchased 25 acres of land two years after immigrating to Canada from Germany. When he immigrated to Canada he had a dream to import top quality jumping horses as well as to breed them. In 1968, Joe was entrusted by Ron Southern to import a Warmblood for his daughter, Nancy, to compete with. In 1975, he was inducted into the Spruce Meadows Hall of Fame when he was presented with an Honorary Life Membership.



Black Swan SM - Sydney Heathcott



Melissa Macdonald with Fate

"If it wasn't for Joe Selinger there would be no Spruce Meadows," said Anderson. "He got everybody started in the game."

The Grand Prix field at St. George's was originally designed by Pamela Carruthers around the time that Spruce Meadows came to be, 35 years ago. She also gave her insight to the Southernns (who were also clients of St. George's at the time), for the rings at Spruce Meadows. The St. George's Ring is similar to the All-Canada ring at Spruce in that it is not flat, but undulating with definite slope to it. And for that reason, the All-Canada Ring is arguably one of the most difficult rings to ride in North America.

Last week, many of today's competitors were watching some of show jumping's best in the \$175,000 Mercedes Benz Derby at Spruce. The St. George's Derby Day gave those riders this week the opportunity to feel the challenge of riding new jumps and naturals in a derby format. Not an experience that is widely available throughout North America.



Morgan Thurlow and Plus Que Parfait , left and Andre More and Julio, right



the small liverpool

"At the beginning they are (the crowds) all waiting for clear rounds, clear rounds. Then they realize the degree of difficulty and get enthused when somebody has four or eight faults," said Frank. "Then you've actually educated the crowds as to how difficult it actually is and that is always kind of a fun thing."

Today riders rode up to banks, liver pools, dry ditches, a hump, a graub and plenty of other challenging obstacles. Not to mention, there were plenty of new jumps including the "barn jump." For this obstacle riders actually had to jump over hay bales but also through a gigantic barn, built this year for the occasion thanks to the Moore family. Before the show Frank did say he did not predict the barn jump to be difficult unless the riders got themselves 'psyched' out and then relayed that energy to their horses.

Sure enough, the barn jump caused no refusals and hardly any rails throughout the day. But the jump itself was sure something to look at. Big, bright, red with round straw bales all around and a simple white a red striped rail set over straw bales as the obstacle. The jump was even jumped out of the Grand Prix ring into the lower pasture and then riders had to jump back into the ring over a black and white skinny.



barn jump



Riders given chance to hand walk their horses on the course before their course walk

"This affords everybody the experience of doing something different and challenging themselves and that to me is also fun to do. It is challenging to set courses that are challenging but fair," said Frank. "It is just nice to see everyone participate. Not everyone is going to go to the Olympics."

If a gigantic barn jump is not enough, today's event was also a charity event for the Alberta Children's Hospital. Frank said he found there are a lot less charity horse show than there used to be. Last year, the St. George's Derby Day raised \$20,000 through the silent auction, purchase of raffle tickets, and donations from the pancake breakfast. This year, they are hoping to top that. However, an exact number will not be obtained until the end of the silent auction which will close Friday night at a big dinner and dance being held on Anderson Ranch. At the close of the night there will also be fireworks, compliments of John Anderson.

"It's terrible to have any sick children," said Selena. "It just feels right to give to help kids out."



Fresca and Victoria Stewart



Jewel with Carter Duke



Unexpected and Renee Walker



Tess Richi and Rockwell

For Frank and Selena, raising money for the Children's Hospital has been on their minds for seven years now. In 2003, the Selingers lost their son, Josef, to a very rare strain of e coli. He was only two years of age at the time.

Is the Derby Day going to take place every year? Frank laughed and said he was never very good at predicting the future. "It's a lot of effort and it just seems like it is over so fast," laughed Selena. "It's like a wedding."

Anderson actually wanted St. George's last year to do a second derby during his August horse shows but the Selingers do want to make sure their show keeps a special feel to it. But there is no doubt that the Selingers and Anderson all know there is definitely a demand and want for a derby competition. All one has to do is listen to the riders.

Karter Duke, Tayah Sobie and Victoria Stewart all said they were definitely nervous for the difficult derby task at hand. Duke and Sobie were the only clear rounds in the 1.10m derby. Duke finished in first on Jewel, Sobie second on Buster Brown and Stewart was third on Fresca with only a single time fault over her round.



On the podiums during Derby Day

"It was fun," said Duke. "The difficulty made me want to ride better and stronger."

"It was fun to have the challenge and the longer course too," said 12-year-old Sobie.

"I liked doing the table tops, the hills and the barn," said Stewart. "I had never done the Devil's Dyke before."

In the 1.15m Derby, Melissa Macdonald was the only clear round on Fate for the Championship cooler. Meagan Blythe and Storm were second with four faults over the course and Tess Ritchie and Rockwell ended up with third place prize money.

"It was really long but there were lots of fun obstacles. It's different from regular show jumping jumps," said Macdonald. "I really like it."

"It's a little bit intimidating to make you nervous but it is really good practice," said Blythe. "And we need more of it. There's really nothing around until you get up to big levels."

"I thought it was really cool. I really liked how you jumped out of the ring and back in," said Ritchie about the barn jump. "It really tests your riding and makes you a better rider."

The only jump off of the day took place in the 1.20m derby, although the option was not given to the ladies with clear rounds in the 1.10m and the 1.0m derbies because it was judged as a speed round. However, the two four falters jumped off in the 1.20m. Andrew Moore was first to jump off on Julio. His clean jump off ride gave him the win after Morgan Thurlow had a rail in the combination for a second place finish. Rene Walker and Unexpected finished up third.

"I look at Spruce Meadows when they do the derbies there," said Thurlow. "It's fun to be able to do one on a smaller scale."

"I thought the course was lovely," said Walker. "Most of the horses I thought actually liked the course."

Victory in the 1.30M went to the one time fault of Nicole Gergley and Vianda, second to a four-fault round under Marshall Whyte and Peninsula Croissete and third went to another four-fault round under Tammie Phillips and Lerche.



Pandora's Charm and Kelley Thurlow



Melissa Macdonald and Fate

The final class of the Derby Day was not the largest fence height, but the smallest. There were two clear rounds out of 58 trips in the 1.0m derby. The faster of the two rounds was ridden by Maria McHenry on Understated. She was ecstatic with a victory in her first derby ever. Second place finish went to Kelley Thurlow and Pandora's Charm, the third spot was landed by Sydney Heathcott on Black Swan SM.

"I'm really happy with it," giggled McHenry. "It's exciting and I was really nervous."

The grin on McHenry's face looked like it could last for a lifetime. The emergence of the St. George's Derby Day through the show jumping community of St. George's and Rocky Mountain Show Jumping is no doubt an honorable mention. However, the Selingers and Anderson know the day would not have been possible without each other and the many of volunteers and sponsors. They are very grateful for the show jumping community they have in Alberta. What these two facilities have done in the name of sport and for charity is truly fantastic.

PHOTOS BY: Nicki Wilcox and Holly Burns