

The Road to the Olympics—Part IV

The 2000 Olympics Saw Record–Breaking Crowds, Outstanding Performances, Heartbreaks and Dreams Fulfilled

BY ROBIN STANBACK

Superlatives abounded, but then it was the Olympics, so they were expected. Record-breaking crowds filled the stands to overflowing for the equestrian events. Tickets were sold out months in advance and the competitors provided everything and more that even the most ardent fans could wish to see. David O'Connor proved that a personal and Olympic record of 29 points in dressage was attainable. Double individual gold medalist Mark Todd and Blyth Tait, the reigning World and Olympic medalist, proved that experience alone cannot guarantee success as their chances for a team medal vanished when multiple lameness problems caused the elimination of the New Zealand team. The hosts proved that the unimaginable—three consecutive Olympic team gold medals—was possible.

The equestrian section of the 2000 Summer Olympic Games opened with the team three-day-event competition. The pressure was on the home team to deliver an unprecedented third team gold in front of their countrymen. Team members Andrew Hoy, Matt Ryan, Stuart Tinney and Phillip Dutton stepped up to the mark. Their combined scores of 112.60 saw three of their riders in the top ten in the dressage phase putting them solidly in the lead on the first day. They followed with near-faultless cross country runs that kept them 12.8 points ahead of Great Britain's team to enter the final show jumping phase. The pressure, slightly lowered with the elimination of the great British rider Ian Stark who crashed on the cross country course, was heightened again when Ryan, the first of the Australian team to compete in this phase, accumulated 12 penalty points. The British team followed suit, however, and the pressure was off as Hoy finished with the gold medal safely in hand. The Australians' final combined score of 146.80 put them ahead of the British silver medal winning team by 14.2 penalty points. The United States team finished in third place with 175.80.

The United States team had a number of exceptional performances but enough bad luck to keep them out of close range to the Australians after the cross country phase. Riding Prince Panache, Karen O'Connor was among only six riders to earn dressage scores in the 30s. Her score of 32.6 put her in third place overall and helped to secure a third place standing for her team. Ms. O'Connor had another sterling ride on the cross country course along with her husband and teammate David O'Connor riding Giltedge. Both riders incurred only minor time faults. The two other American riders were not as fortunate. Nina Fout and her partner 3

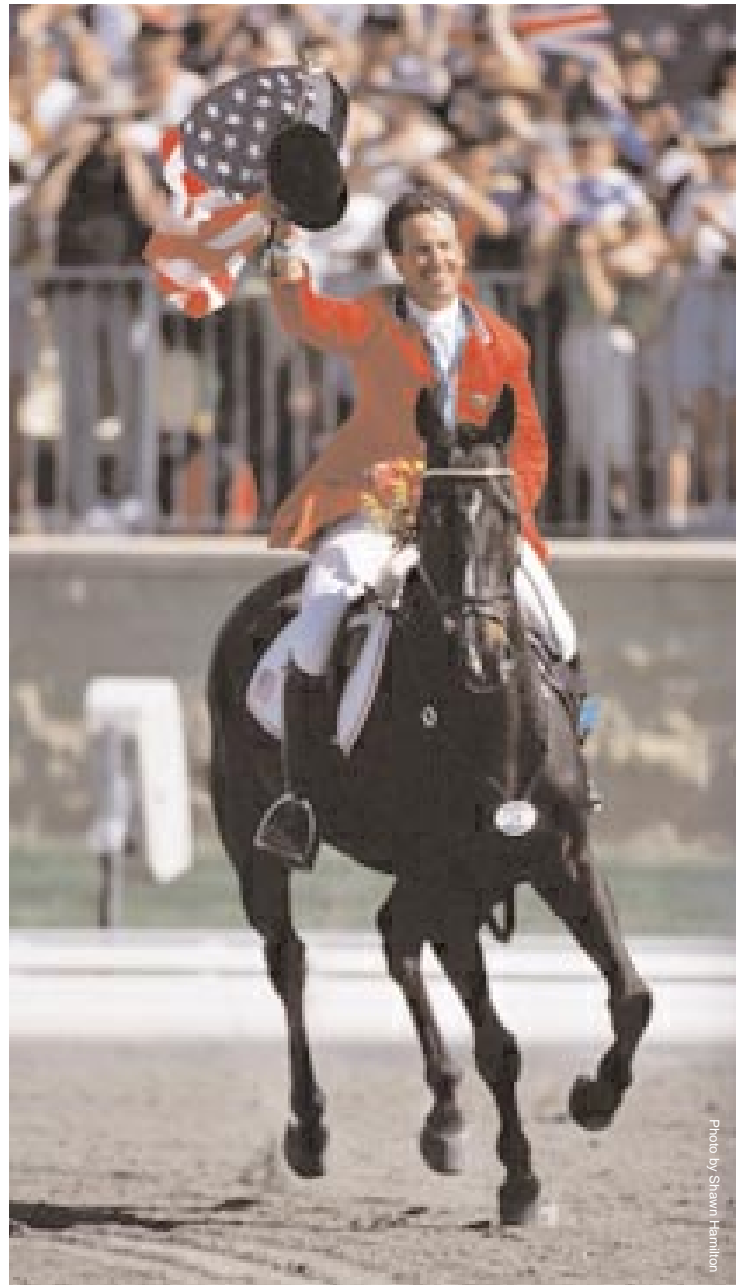


Photo by Shawn Hamilton

Magic Beans incurred 50 time penalties after encountering problems on the course. Linden Wiesman and Anderoo had to retire from the course after their second fall. This put the U.S. team in fourth place going into the show jumping phase behind New Zealand's team of superlative horsemen. The Kiwis' luck, however, did not hold as their team was eliminated for lameness problems before they could enter the third day of competition. In this phase David O'Connor shined, turning in one of the very few faultless performances of the day. Ms. O'Connor's mount dropped two rails that left her with a total score for the three days of 43. Nina Fout incurred five penalty points on 3 Magic Beans to bring her total to 86.

The excitement of the team competition was barely over before the individual competition began. Speculation was rife that New Zealander Mark Todd and his horse Eyespy II would be difficult to beat as Todd wished to retire at the top of the game. Fellow countryman Blyth Tait, as the defending gold medalist, was also highly regarded. Australian Andrew Hoy, fresh from his gold medal in the team event, had more than his fair share of backers on his individual competition mount Swizzle In. But it was American David O'Connor riding his Olympic veteran Custom Made, the elegant 15-year-old Irish-bred sport horse owned by Joseph Zada, that stole the show. "Taylor" as he is affectionately known and his rider glided to an Olympic record of just 29 penalty points in the dressage phase placing them at the top of an extremely competitive field after the first day. It was a particularly sweet score for Mr. O'Connor as it was also a personal best.

The cross country phase was a day marred by five disastrous falls and the life-ending injury of Bermudian Mary Jane Tumbridge's mount, the 1999 Pan Am Games gold medalist Bermuda's Gold. The mare fractured a cannon bone and was humanely destroyed. Another disappointment for the day came when Tait removed Welton Envoy from the competition after the horse experienced difficulty on the course and ran out at a narrow rail.

The course was good to the U.S. riders as Robert Costello and Chevalier finished in sixth place for the day with no penalties. Julie Black on Hyde Park Corner incurred only two time faults to finish in 12th place. Custom Made and O'Connor flew over the course turning in a flawless performance and maintaining his lead over Greek rider Heidi Antikatzidis on Michaelmas.

Twenty-three horses entered the show jumping phase to challenge a course designed by Leopoldo Placios. Ms. Black had a few tense moments in the judging box when Hyde Park Corner was sent back to the holding area so that the judges could watch him move one more time before determining his ability to continue. He passed his second jog and turned in a clean round to move up to ninth place. Mr. Costello was not as fortunate in the stadium. Chevalier

caught two rails and finished a second slow to drop him back to eighth place. The pressure on the top horses intensified when Mr. Hoy turned in a clear round to the very enthusiastic chanting of the crowd. His total for the three days was 39.8. Mr. Todd dropped no rails but was three seconds slow, a bitter disappointment for the man named the International Equestrian Federation's eventing rider of the century. His total score for the competition was 42. Ms. Antikatzidis dropped from second to sixth place finishing with a 50.40 after she and Michaelmas dropped two rails and incurred time penalties. Custom Made and David O'Connor entered the stadium with more than a rail in hand. It allowed them to drop one rail and make a minor detour that cost some time while still holding onto the individual gold medal. The final score for the two was a low 34. O'Connor joins Tad Coffin as only the second American to win this competition.


At press time the show jumping and dressage competitions were yet to be contended. Brazilian Rodrigo Pessoa, a three-time World Cup winner and current World Champion Show Jumper, with his mount Baloubet Du Rouet are heavily favored to win this event though neither has ever competed in an Olympic event. Atlanta silver medalists Willi Melliger and Calvaro of Switzerland are expected to be heavy competition for the Brazilian duo.

The dressage competition is expected to feature top performances from Gigolo and Isabell Werth of Germany. Ms. Werth is a three-time Olympic gold medallist and a two-time World Champion. She should expect contention from five-time World Cup winner Anky van Grunsven of the Netherlands riding Bonfire.

The Sydney Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games (SOCOG) provided everything possible for the horses and their riders. Horsley Park, located 42 kilometers from Sydney on 90 hectares of native brushland, provided a state-of-the-art venue for the equestrian games. Designed by Equus 2000, internationally acclaimed course designer Michael Etherington-Smith, and sand arena specialist Hermann Duckek, the \$43 million complex provided stabling for the over 300 horses that arrived to compete in the games as well as housing for their handlers. The facility included 16 indoor and outdoor arenas, a fully equipped veterinary clinic and a farrier shop. Barns were equipped with numerous wash racks and scales to monitor the weight of the horses.

Careful quarantine restrictions for horses and feedstuffs entering the facility assured the safety of native Australian horses as well as that of the competitors. For the second time, Kentucky Equine Research (KER), an international equine nutrition and physiology research firm, served as a consultant to the companies supplying the feeds, hay and bedding for the horses as well as to the individual equestrian teams. KER served in this role at the

Atlanta Summer Games in 1996 and as the official feed supplier. For the 2000 Games KER served as a consultant to Salmon River, the company awarded the contract to supply the feedstuffs for the horses. KER Australasia, the company's Australia base, helped coordinate the efforts there while KER's nutritionists and staff members also worked to provide the teams with transition feeding programs to help them become accustomed to the feeds that would be available to them in Australia. KER President Dr. Joe Pagan

and members of his staff were on hand from the moment the horses began to arrive in Australia for quarantine. He stated, "We could not be happier with the way the feeding program worked in Sydney. Both Salmon River and the SOCOG did an excellent job in seeing that the Olympic horses were provided with the quality and variety of feeds and products they required. KER looks forward to supplying the feed at the 2004 Olympics in Athens." 

Australian Ricky Macmillan Tackles Multiple Challenges to Ride for the Australian Olympic Dressage Team

BY MEGAN LUCKHURST, KENTUCKY EQUINE RESEARCH, INC., AUSTRALASIA

Some would say that combining the work entailed by a busy dental surgery and the effort it takes to be a part of an elite dressage team would be both a rare combination and a considerable commitment, but for Ricky Macmillan it is a way of life. She has managed to successfully combine a dedication to her patients and to her riding. This dedication has made her and her European-bred horse Crisp popular members of Australia's burgeoning equestrian community of superstars.

Ms. Macmillan began her riding career at the age of two, when she was put on horseback and ventured off to the local Pony Club. She went through the ranks of the Pony Club and spent the majority of the show season on the road training and competing her horses. It was from this beginning that she launched a successful equine career.

While following a strict equestrian training routine that saw her advancing through the ranks of Australian dressage riders, she managed to spend five years at the University of Queensland. She graduated as a dental surgeon and obtained a position with a practice in Queensland. Her experience juggling a busy educational career and her equestrian passion helped to prepare her for an even busier future. Ms. Macmillan manages to fly to Europe at least four times a year for four-week periods to train with her Crisp. When in Australia she works full-time in the dental practice and trains her other horses.

She began crossing the world in 1990, committing herself to a plan she formulated to help gain the competition experience and discipline provided in Europe that would enable her to compete at a world class level. She purchased Crisp as a three-year-old in 1991. She laughed, "He is a superb athlete

and a beautiful horse. Crisp has a way of charming people and horses. It usually takes him no longer than a few minutes to get a strange horse to start passing him hay through the stable door."

In 1991, Ms. Macmillan was introduced to master trainer Rudolf Zeilinger who became Crisp's trainer. From 1992 until April 1997 Crisp was successfully trained and competed



by Mr. Zeilinger. In 1995, at the age of seven, Crisp qualified for the German Championships where he placed in his first Grand Prix.

Ms. Macmillan's campaign with Crisp began in 1997, when she spent a year without a trainer in order to save money. She had to learn not only the training techniques that would keep Crisp moving forward in his abilities but also how to get the vital inside information on which shows to attend, how to get to the shows and the

myriad of other details she had relied upon her trainer to provide. Ms. Macmillan took this challenge in stride and, as a result, in her first two starts in France and Denmark, Ms. Macmillan and Crisp earned the necessary qualifying scores required for the World Championships in Rome.

Crisp and Ms. Macmillan were in contention for the World Equestrian Games in Rome in 1998 when they were named to the EFA Elite Squad. They were subsequently selected to the Australian Dressage Team and achieved the second highest team score.

Ms. Macmillan's other career highlights include; 1st 1999 Nunspeet Grand Prix Ker; 3rd 1999 Kaposvar CDI-W Grand Prix; 1999 Australian Team Aachen - 29th; placing at the CDI-W at Amsterdam, Geneva and Necklin in the 1999-2000 season; 1999 Munich CDI Grand Prix - 8th ; 9th in the Grand Prix and 10th overall at the 2000 World Cup final in Denbosch.

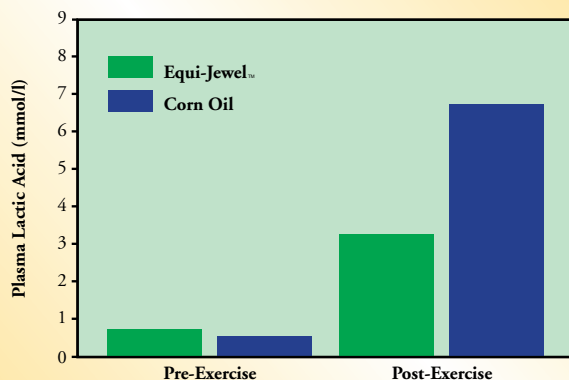
Crisp's nutritional regime is supervised by Dr. Peter Huntington, Kentucky Equine Research's Director of Nutrition for Australasia. Dr. Huntington has designed a program for the horse that includes a mix of pelleted grains and high quality roughage. A range of Equivit products including Equivit Perform, Equivit Restore, Equivit Biobloom and Equivit Preserve are included in Crisp's ration.

Ms. Macmillan's aim is to improve her performance by riding more subtly and harmoniously with her horse. She has shown extraordinary dedication, talent and energy that enables her to achieve outstanding results. Kentucky Equine Research is proud to be a sponsor of Ms. Macmillan and Crisp and congratulates them for being named to the Australian Olympic Dressage team and for placing (?) in the 2000 Olympic Games.

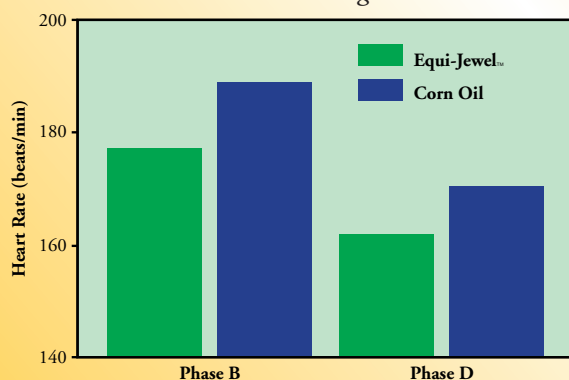
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¹"An Evaluation of Corn Oil, Rice Bran and Refined Dry Fat as Energy Sources for Exercised Thoroughbreds."
16th Equine Nutrition and Physiology Society Proceedings (pg 130-134).

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