

**Sponsored Riders
Sweep Awards at the
2005 Rolex Kentucky
Three-Day Event**



Becky Young

Flags were flying, the crowd was cheering, and smiles were sunshine-bright as riders sponsored by Kentucky Equine Research and KER Team Member Pennfield Feeds claimed five of the top seven places at the 2005 Rolex Kentucky Three-Day Event.

The Rolex, as the event is commonly known, is one of only three events held anywhere in the world at the four-star, or highest, level. Years of training and conditioning lead up to the competition, which is an unparalleled display of strength, agility, and endurance for the horse-and-rider teams that complete all three days of competition.

Kentucky Equine Research and Pennfield Feeds provide management consultation, feed products, and nutritional supplements to several top competitors in the eventing field. Sponsored riders Kim Severson, Phillip Dutton, and Karen O'Connor came to Kentucky poised to prove the advantage of research-based nutrition for elite equine athletes.

In dressage, the first phase of the event, each rider was asked to follow a precise pattern demonstrating that the horse is supple, obedient, and responsive to the rider's signals. The test is scored on a series of circles, diagonal movements, and repeated adjustments to the horse's stride length at the walk, trot, and canter. When the dressage results were tallied, Kim Severson of Keene, Virginia emerged as the leader. Riding Winsome Adante, a 12-year-old Thoroughbred gelding owned by Plain Dealing Farm, Kim was on track to win a third Rolex trophy in four years. Phillip Dutton, who rode three horses in the event, was tied for eighth place with both The Foreman and Nova Top and stood in eleventh position with Hannigan. Karen O'Connor's tenth-place dressage score aboard Upstage put her well up in the ranking as the riders prepared for the second phase of competition.

With less than 20 points separating the top 15 riders after dressage, the standings had every chance of changing during the difficult speed and endurance test. In this phase, horses first completed a "roads and tracks" warm-up of 3960 meters in less than 20 minutes, followed by a four-minute flat-out gallop over a steeplechase course with timber and brush obstacles. Another 5600 meters of roads and tracks followed the steeplechase, allowing the horse to keep moving at a moderate pace while catching his breath. The highlight of the day, at least from a spectator's viewpoint, was the cross-country test, a 6400-meter track where the horse was faced with a series of more than 40 imposing obstacles. Water jumps, ditches, banks, turns, and a range of visually puzzling fences must be safely negotiated at high speed. Although the rider is allowed to inspect the course on foot before riding it, the horse must size up each obstacle as he approaches it on the course, trusting his rider's cues as to position and speed for the perfect takeoff and landing. In this precise adjustment of the horse's cross-country stride, the purpose of dressage training is made clear: a horse that is light and obedient usually jumps well, while a resistant



mount frequently can't be guided with split-second accuracy through the complicated hazards.

Several days of rain had created deep footing in some areas of the cross-country course, and a number of riders withdrew their horses or were eliminated before completing the course. Severson, Dutton, and O'Connor proved equal to the task as they piloted their mounts with skill and confidence. With no jumping penalties and only a few time faults, the trio of riders finished the speed and endurance phase in excellent style. Severson and Winsome Adante stayed in first place, Dutton's three mounts were in a tie for third and also held fifth position, and O'Connor had moved up to the eighth spot as the second day came to a close.

After covering more than ten miles on Saturday, the horses in a three-day event must pass a thorough inspection by a veterinary panel to ensure they are sound and fit to perform the show jumping test that concludes the competition. Training, conditioning, and a sound nutritional plan saw KER's sponsored horses pass the examination, and all appeared energetic and



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Kim Severson smiles as she guides Winsome Adante through the stadium jumping course to another Rolex victory.

eager to continue as they entered the jumping ring. Spectators kept a respectful silence as each rider, mindful of the ticking clock, negotiated a twisting course of high walls, stretches of water, and colorful rail fences. Riding the day's final round, Severson thrilled the crowd by putting in a flawless trip. She was rewarded by thunderous applause as she cleared the last obstacle to finish as Rolex champion for the third time. Dutton claimed second with The Foreman and brought Nova Top and Hannigan in for a fourth-place tie. Leslie Law, a British rider, took third-place honors with Coup de Coeur, and Jan Thompson, a Pennfield Feeds customer, piloted Task Force to a sixth-place finish. Karen O'Connor, veteran of several Rolex competitions, ended the day in seventh position. Kentucky Equine Research congratulates all these dedicated riders, and wishes them and their talented horses continued success in the future. ☺☺



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Phillip Dutton and Hannigan set out on the roads and tracks portion of the speed and endurance test.