



Harrie Smolders Wraps up the International Division with a Win in the \$75,000 Ricoh Big Ben Challenge at the 89th Royal Horse Show

Canadian Champion Yann Candele takes Leading Canadian Rider and his horse Game Ready is named the Top Canadian Horse, while America's McLain Ward takes the Leading International Rider award.

The Royal Horse Show concludes tomorrow following a performance including two new Hunter Derby Championships and the 125th Anniversary of the Toronto Mounted Police Unit.

November 12th, 2011

Toronto, Canada – Last night's runner-up was the victor tonight, when Harrie Smolders of the Netherlands won the \$75,000 Ricoh Big Ben Challenge with Regina Z to conclude the International Jumping division at the 89th Royal Horse Show.

Of the 19 original entries in the class, just five qualified to start in the shorter, taller, jump-off course designed by this year's International course designer Alan Wade of Ireland. Smolders had the unenviable position of being first in the ring in the jump-off to contest the jumps set between 1.40m-1.60m in height.

Not only did Smolders have the only clean round in the jump-off, he also had a blazing time of 35.20 seconds, which would prove unbeatable by those to follow.

America's Lauren Hough finished second with four faults and a time of 35.28 seconds, followed by Ireland's Conor Swail and Dermott Lennon in third and fourth respectively. Second, third and fourth were decided by times within one second of each other.

"The times were all close in the jump off," said Smolders, "and I put quite a bit of pressure on them to beat my time and that's where I think they made mistakes. The skinny high vertical off the very tight turn - you can lose a lot of speed and you have to balance the horses. But my horse is quite handy and very careful at the jumps. On the turning, that's where she wins it." he concluded.

Two-time Olympic Gold medalist McLain Ward of Brewster, New York, took the Leading International Rider title following a rather unfortunate rail in the first round of tonight's class which left him out of the jump-off.

"We were a little unlucky tonight," lamented Ward after the class. "My horse jumped well but I had a rail in the first round and that's just sport. He jumped great all week and I'm very happy with him. Being named the Leading International Rider this week really shows how consistent we were as it was actually quite a good battle this week."

This year's Leading Canadian Rider title went to back-to-back Canadian Show Jumping Champion Yann Candele. His horse Game Ready, owned by Susan Grange of Caledon, Ontario, was named the top Canadian Horse.

"I'm very pleased to be the Leading Canadian Rider - it's the first time in all these years that I come out on top," said Candele. "Every year it's a fierce competition through the Canadian and International divisions, so it's always a pleasure to come out on top."

Candele, who is close friends with Eric Lamaze, made a point of mentioning what the loss of Hickstead meant to not only friends of Lamaze, but the entire equestrian community. Candele was pleased to hear of the Royal's re-naming of the FEI World Cup to the FEI Hickstead World Cup Grand Prix starting in 2012.

"It was a sad, sad week, with Hickstead, who was in my opinion one of the best of all time. Everyone is touched when you lose a horse of such caliber. To name one of the most prestigious Grand Prix here under his name is the right thing to do, and I think everyone will take great pride in that and try to win it in years to come."

Part of this evening's celebrations included the presentation of the "Cup" classes - the Governor General's Cup and the Lieutenant Governor's Cup - which are open to Canadian bred three-year olds who were foaled in Canada and suitable to become a Sport Horse and excel in the hunter, jumper, dressage or eventing disciplines.

The Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, the Honourable David C. Onley was in attendance this evening making the presentations.

Although the International Division has now concluded, Sunday's Royal Horse Show is FREE with general admission to the Fair. On the timetable are two new additions to the Royal family: the Hogan's Inn Hunter Derby and the Knightwood Hunter Derby, both year-end Championships. Also included in the afternoon matinee will be a special ceremony marking the 125th Anniversary of the Toronto Mounted Police Unit.

About the Royal Horse Show and Royal Agricultural Winter Fair ~ *A family tradition since 1922, the Royal Horse Show brings world-class horses and riders from Canada, the U.S. and overseas, including Olympic and World champions, to Toronto each November to compete for more than \$780,000 in prize money and prestigious Titles. Over 1,000*

horses of all shapes and sizes participate in show jumping, dressage, indoor eventing, driving, coaching and so much more, over the ten-days of competition. Special features such as the Spirit of the Horse Ring, EquiMania!, the Farmer's Market, Trade-Fair Shopping, educational and agricultural events & competition round out this family tradition. Since its debut, the Royal has been a highlight of the Toronto fall social calendar, visited by Royalty, politicians, farmers and horse-enthusiasts for generations. For more information, "The Royal Online" LIVE webcasting, complete schedule, results and to purchase tickets, please visit www.royalfair.org

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\$75,000 Ricoh Big Ben International Challenge
RIDER / NATION / HORSE / JUMP OFF FAULTS / TIME

1. Harrie Smolders / NED / Regina Z / 0 : 35.20
2. Lauren Hough / USA / Quick Study / 4 : 35.28
3. Conor Swail / IRE / Lansdowne / 4 : 35.36
4. Dermott Lennon / IRE / Hallmark Elite / 4 : 35.65
5. Mario Deslauriers / USA / Urico / 8 : 36.79

Attached Photo:

Harrie Smolders of the Netherlands closed the International Division at the Royal with a win in the prestigious \$75,000 Ricoh Big Ben Challenge. © Ben Radvanyi.

All photos available in high resolution. Kindly advise of links to web postings.

