



Inside Badminton

by Sally O'Connor

On May 11th, David O'Connor achieved a lifetime goal when he won the greatest event in the world, the Badminton Horse Trials. His mother, Sally, gives us her own perspective of the 1997 Mitsubishi Motors Badminton Horse Trials.



Photo: Tim Delgado

Princess Michael of Kent presents David with the Mitsubishi Motors Trophy and a first prize of £25,000.

I have been lucky enough to get to Badminton regularly over the past twenty years or so. But it is always new and exciting.

On Wednesday, I drove west from London to the Cotswolds with Eric Swinebroad a veterinarian who went to high school with David and who was going to be on the veterinary staff for Badminton for the first time.

We drove into the grounds in the early afternoon and drove by the dressage warm up rings behind the grandstands, just in time to see all the U.S. riders at practice. The horses looked fit and well. Eagle Lion and Bruce were having a bit of an argument, Out and About looked full of himself as did Biko. Custom Made was looking surprisingly relaxed, David commented that the horse had arrived on the grounds and looked around as if he knew exactly what he was meant to do. Molokai looked to be back in form after a year out of top competition.

We set about getting the vital orange armbands that would allow us entry to the stables, and car passes that gave us entry everywhere.



Photo: Tim Delgado

Vet inspection in front of the Duke of Beaufort's home.



Photo: Tim Delgado

Karen and Biko jog up for the inspection committee.

Eric made an appointment to meet with the head of the veterinary committee.

We asked about the course and there were varying replies. "Well it's Badminton for sure." "It's a little softer this year." "I think there will be quite a few to make the time." "It will be difficult to make the time." "There are lots of galloping stretches and then groups of jumps." "The water is a lot easier this year." Obviously we'd make up our own minds after we walked it.

It was wet and really cold, in fact in parts of England it had been snowing all day. The wind was bitter. In spite of this a large crowd gathered in front of the courtyard of the Duke of Beaufort's massive house for the first veterinary inspection.

Entrants trot up in alphabetical order of their nationality, with the British horses presented last. This year there was a great deal of controversy over the decision to limit foreign riders to one horse a piece and to only five representatives per foreign country.

"This is no longer solely an English competition, this is an FEI Championship, and the top riders who have two qualified horses should be allowed to ride two. The Brits can enter two horses and that really gives an unfair advantage in the quest for world rankings." Blyth Tait of New Zealand had commented on the selection process to the *London Times* and was quoted as saying "that the public want to see the stars, not Samantha Clippety Clop from down the road". There was much discussion going on all day.

The first Finnish horse ever to be entered failed to pass the first inspection; one always feels so sorry for anyone spun before they even start. The U.S. horses all looked "lean and mean". They had recovered from a horrendous trip over when the cargo flight from New York had been cancelled and they had to



Photo: Tim Delgado

A good dressage score set David and Custom Made tied for third with Linda Algotsson of Sweden.



Photo: Michael C. Dean

Custom Made accurately through the Galant Hollow.

be shipped to Gladstone to await another space. The driver of the hired van drove appallingly and the horses were really thrown about. "Taylor" (Custom Made) had a badly swollen leg, and was very reluctant to get into the van on arrival in England—he can be a very nervous horse! A week of rest and treatment had helped him recover.

All the U.S. horses passed inspection. Biko was unusually wired. As

Karen stood him in front of the Ground Jury he stood on his hind legs, not once but twice, towering over Karen! At 17.3 hh Biko is tall at the best of times, on his hind legs he is huge. Karen admitted to being a little nervous under his front feet. He trotted up to the end of the lane, turned around and raced back with Karen trying to keep up with him.

Kerry Millikin and Out and About went early Thursday morning in a



chill wind and drizzle that affected "Outie's" concentration. They had a test marred by tenseness and a disappointing score of 63.8. The new FEI test has proved to be difficult for the horses with the introduction of some more advanced movements such as a counter change of hand in half pass and flying changes in the canter. You got to see every variation of flying changes possible, with only a few riders producing balanced straight united changes.

David and Taylor went in the afternoon and did a steady elastic test, missing the second change. The score of 48.6 was good enough to put them into a tie for first place with Linda Algotsson from Sweden riding her first ever Badminton test. Dorothy and Mo had a score of 61.8.

Between U.S. rides we walked the first part of the cross-country. There were some new and interesting fences especially over the drainage ditch on the back portion of the course that required serpentine back and forth over the ditch and being able to hold a very straight line to make the corner options.

Thursday is the traditional cocktail party at the house. Tickets were so tight this year most of our group passed on this and Maria Somers hosted a dinner for 45 people at her "expandable" house in nearby Minchinhampton. Those of us lucky enough to be staying there pitched in with the preparations. I sat in the kitchen in my bathrobe with a towel on my wet hair chopping up fruit for three big bowls of fruit salad then separating three dozen eggs for hollandaise sauce! The U.S. is lucky to have such a support group in the U.K.

On Friday we walked the rest of the course in the morning. Even the miserable weather could not deter the eventing public, the car parks filled early and the trade stands were doing a roaring trade even during the two



Molokai was back to top form on the cross-country.

dressage days. One can run into people from all over at Badminton. Everyone is wearing "wellies" and "green Barbour" jackets and all look alike, but you run into acquaintances all over. I saw friends from Hawaii, Idaho, France, New Zealand and all over the States.

Biko went into the ring just before the lunch break and was still a little uptight scoring 56.8 putting him into 17th place after the dressage phase, and Eagle Lion was still very uptight finishing with a score of 64.2.



Biko scored 56.8

The very last horse in the ring, Stanwick Ghost ridden by Ian Stark, put in a lovely forward test to take the lead with a score of 46.2. Robert Lemieux of Canada with Just an Ace squeaked into second with 47.6 and David and Linda Algotsson were tied for third at 48.6. The top ten scores were within six points of each other. So it was anybody's game.

The riders changed their dressage saddles to jumping saddles and had a quick jump school after dressage. Then we all had an early dinner at a local pub.

More rain and wind did nothing to dampen the crowd's enthusiasm on



A clear show jumping round guaranteed success.

cross-country day. Cars, buses, trucks and even airplanes disgorged their passengers all morning. After attending Badminton for years you learn to get there early and stay late to avoid the traffic in the country lanes. We were all on site by 9:00 a.m.

Eric went off to get his assignment which was to be at the end of Phase D to look after horses as they finished the course. In the stables the team went about preparing for the day. Equipment was ferried to the ten minute box, the kit for the steeplechase was loaded in the car, riders discussed what studs to use.

Kerry and Outie set off on A, flew around the steeplechase and came back into the box at the end of C looking fresh and well. The course had been riding well as we could see on the TV monitors and certainly Outie made it look relatively simple as he galloped around finishing well within the time.

David started out on Phase A at 12:14, followed by Dorothy on Mo at 12:18. We saw David off and then got in the car to make what has to be the one of the most frustrating drives in the world. The road to steeplechase takes you along one of the main entries for spectators, so you are trying to drive against the flow of hundreds of people with dogs,



The master at work! Bruce Davidson's round on Eagle Lion was of exhibition quality—foot perfect every stride.



Kerry Millikin and Out and About just ate up the course.

pushchairs, wheelchairs, kids, or people just meeting each other and standing for a visit in the middle of the road. Do they move for cars? Not easily! "Come on...come ON, get out of the way. Don't they know we're in a hurry?" Every year is the same; it never gets better; no-one thinks to provide an easier route; and every year you think you will never make it before your rider arrives at the start, but you do, in fact you usually have to wait for five or ten minutes.

David and Dorothy arrived at the start of steeplechase at about the same time. "What is this Dorothy? Tandem eventing?"

David and Taylor set out. I clicked on my stop watch to check the time. I had not seen Taylor on a chase before, he has such an easy stride he flows over the ground effortlessly, he's a real galloping machine. Some Irish friends were up at the start. "I think you Americans stole that horse from us," they commented. Custom Made had been for sale for some

months when Joe Zada and David found him. He had a reputation for running off with his riders. "They had their chance," said David later when I reported the conversation.

We ran over to the end of the chase course, clicked him through the finish flags—4'15". Fifteen seconds under the time and checked to see all four shoes were still on as David pulled up. All was well. David took a quick drink and set off on Phase C. We watched Dorothy go round within the time also, piled back into the car and fought our way back through the still growing crowd to the ten minute box to wait for David at the end of C.

We had the equipment under a big tree, but it was still wet, windy and cold. Eventually David and Taylor arrived at the finish of C, Dorothy and Mo right behind them again still doing "tandem eventing" the new sport.

Cathy Kohn was there to check Taylor's vital signs. I was assigned as horse holder while Alice and Christy, the grooms, changed the studs, changed the bit and started to dry off the tack as much as possible. As soon as the studs were in we did everything while keeping Taylor on the move. He looked fresh and happy, in fact he

was so relaxed all he wanted to do was eat grass. In all we had about 12 minutes to get things done. I held the reins out of the way while the girls greased Taylor's legs. "Two minutes number 46!" came the warning. The rain seemed to redouble. "It's

Wilbur weather," I told David, he grinned. Wilton Fair had gone round Badminton in a hailstorm, had won Kentucky in hail and won Fair Hill in a deluge. Maybe the foul weather was a good omen.

I cannot watch the cross-country, I spend my time just pacing in the ten minute box. Each time I have watched something has gone wrong, so now I just pace and listen to the announcers.

David said later that his worst



Fans could watch all the action on giant screen televisions.

worry was being blown off his line the wind was so strong. Taylor seems to go from strength to strength on course getting stronger the farther he runs. David took no chances, the horse has such a gallop he can afford to take some of the long routes and still make time. The crowds at the water jump just behind the ten minute box let out a great roar as Taylor swept through the complex. Over halfway and still going strong. They got through the Quarry safely and had just five fences to go. We went down to the finish line. I had a stop watch running—it was going to be close! Taylor appeared around the turn to the last fence and came galloping up the lane to the flags, 12'11" one second over, quarter of a time fault, exactly the same as the year before! But home safe.

David dismounted and went to weigh in. Taylor looked around as if to say "What's all the fuss?" he was blowing but not excessively. Cathy

checked him out and said he was remarkable. Dorothy and Mo came galloping in also with a clear fast round. Three Americans round.

There was not time to relax, Karen and Biko were about to start out on Phase A. The nerves don't get time to relax when you have two riders out there. Karen and Biko arrived in the box. They had had a good 'chase. Studs and tack were adjusted and then they were on their way. We ran for the TV. Biko was not his usual self and kept throwing his head and running through the bit, Karen had her hands more than full. At the fourth fence, a sunken road, he almost jumped the entire thing in one. At the coffin fence he jumped in and bounced over the ditch, a distance of about 30 feet. At the water complex he jumped in well but went careening through the water taking two and a half strides to the bank and bounce out. He just could not get his feet up and slipped on his shoulder catapult-

ing Karen onto the bounce fence. She was on her feet quickly, remounted and got through the long option and continued on, but that was a costly 60 point penalty. They finished clear the rest of the way but with an additional 49.4 time faults.

The O'Connor camp was both up and down.

Bruce and Eagle Lion made short work of the course with a super round that improved their standing from 46th to 16th overall. David and Taylor were in second behind Ian Stark and Stanwick Ghost by 2.8 points. Mary King and Star Appeal were third, just one point behind.

Back at the stables the support group of grooms, families and veterinarians were working to ensure the comfort of the horses. Brendan Furlong the vet for the USET hooked up IV's of fluids for the horses. "The FEI allows fluids to be administered for three hours after the last horse finishes the course. That gives us from 5-

continued on page 66.

The Mitsubishi Motors Badminton Horse Trials CCI****

HORSE	Rider	Dressage	A & C	Steeplechase		Cross-Country		Show Jumping		Final Total
				Jump	Time	Jump	Time	Jump	Time	
1. CUSTOM MADE	David O'Connor	48.6	-	-	-	.4	-	.25	49.25	
2. STAR APPEAL	Mary King (GBR)	50.0	-	-	-	-	5	-	55.0	
3. COSMOPOLITAN	William Fox-Pitt (GBR)	55.6	-	-	-	-	-	-	55.6	
4. CHESTERFIELD	Blyth Tait (NZL)	56.2	-	-	-	-	-	-	56.2	
5. LAFAYETT	Linda Algotsson (SWE)	48.6	-	-	-	3.6	5	-	57.2	
6. SQUIRREL HILL	Sally Clark (NZL)	61.4	-	-	-	-	-	-	61.4	
7. HEADLEY BRAVO	Daisy Dick (GBR)	49.6	-	-	-	12.4	-	-	62.0	
8. EAGLE LION	Bruce Davidson	64.2	-	-	-	-	-	-	64.2	
9. BITS AND PIECES	Pippa Funnell (GBR)	60.0	-	-	-	-	5	-	65.0	
10. BOUNCE	Vaughn Jefferis (NZL)	62.0	-	-	-	3.2	-	-	65.2	

Also competed: 11. Watermill Stream, Bettina Overesch-Booker (GER), 70.0; 12. Enterprise, Eric Smiley (IRL), 70.4; 13. Stanwick Ghost, Ian Stark (GBR), 71.2; 14. Arakai, Ian Stark, 71.25; 15. Malakai, Dorothy Crowell, 71.8; 16. Captano, Leslie Law (GBR), 75.1; 17. Home Run II, Anna Herrmann (SWE), 75.8; 18. Double Trouble, Alexandra Morley (GBR), 75.8; 19. Uiane Des Pins, Rudolphe Scherer (FRA), 76.8; 20. Twist La Beige, Jean-Lou Bigot (FRA), 78.6; 21. Nice N' Easy, Dag Albert (SWE) 78.8; 22. Kiltullan Bay, John-Paul Sheffield (GBR), 80.4; 23. Bally Free, Jancis Yeat (GBR), 81.4; 24. Duneight Carnival, David Foster (IRL), 82.8; 25. Word Perfect II, Christopher Bartle (GBR), 83.4; 26. Hooray Henry II, Carolyn Ryan-Bell (GBR); 27. Coral Cove, Polly Phillips, 85.6; 28. Nikki Dow, Lara Villata (ITA), 87.4; 29. The Soup Dragon II, Nick Burton (GBR), 87.65; 30. Monaghan, Paula Torngvist (SWE), 89.0; 31. Rimini Park Fabian, Nigel Thomson (AUS), 89.4; 32. Cartoon II, Andrew Nicholson (NZL), 93.2; 33. Dutch Treat, Anne-Marie Evans (GBR) 93.8; 34. The Frenchman II, Nigel Taylor (GBR), 96.1; 35. True Blue Girwood, Phillip Dutton (AUS), 100.6; 36. Bronze Blade, Paul Rigby (GBR), 101.4; 37. Gray Spirit II, Caroline Sizer (GBR), 104.2; 38. Last of the Incas, Erica Watson (GBR), 105.05; 39. Incidental, Owen Moore (GBR), 105.65; 40. Poggio, Polly Clark (GBR), 106.2; 41. Faritamar, Laurent Gallice (FRA), 108.6; 42. Magic Rogue, Gary Parsonage (GBR), 110.1; 43. The Yellow Ear, Virginia McGrath (IRL), 110.9; 44. Taby, Javier Revuelta (ESP), 118.0; 45. White Girl, Peter Thomson (GER), 122.0; 46. Out and About, Kerry Millikin, 123.05; 47. Mistotiger, Charlotte Ridley (GBR), 123.2; 48. Diamond Pedlar, Lucy Jennings, 124.4; 49. No Comment, Eddy Sibbe (WED), 130.6; 50. Ballycotton, Sarah Longshaw (GBR), 135.6; 51. Master Chip, Alec Lochore, 144.65; 52. Man in the Moon II, Georgia Bale (GBR), 152.6; 53. Wellton Molecule, Lucy Thompson (IRL), 167.45; 54. Archie Brown, Paddy Muir (GBR), 167.8; 55. Biko, Karen O'Connor, 171.0; 56. Ebenezer Scrooge, Bernd Vieter (GER), 182.65; 57. Master Diligence, Sally Arscott (GBR), 196.3; 58. Coxley Kontiki, Phillip Surl (GBR), 202.25; 59. Foxground Dusky Song, Sam Lyle (AUS), 206.2; 60. Passadena II, William Millin (GBR), 209.1; 61. Crown Lapis Lazula, Sarah Taylor (GBR), 221.45.

Withdrawn Final Horse Inspection: Come Alive, Robert Mickleburgh (GBR); Darien Powers, Andrew Hay, (AUS); Just An Aca, Robert Lemieux (CAN).

Withdrawn after Cross-Country: Alfred of Church Farm, Darrell Scaife (GBR); Mr. Bootsie, Chris Humble (GBR). **Retired end of Cross-Country:** Hector T, Therese Olsson (SWE). **Eliminated on Cross-Country:** Sir Knight, Archie Buller (IRL); Augermist, Alyse Clancy (GBR). **Retired on Cross-Country:** Staks, Victoria Sinnatt (GBR); Ussy, Cedric Lyard (FRA); Hinnegar, Matt Ryan (AUS); Park Royal, Frances Hooper (GBR); Cameron, Xavier Lavoisne (FRA); Cornish Foor, Katie Parker (GBR); New Flavour, Leslie Law (GBR). **Withdrawn after Phase C:** Baia, Timothy Collins (BER); Cousin Jim, Enrique Sarasola (ESP). **Retired on Steeplechase:** Kayem, Mark Todd (NZL). **Withdrawn after Dressage:** Too Smart, Karen Dixon (GBR). **Eliminated First Horse Inspection:** Willibrod, Simo Leppanen (FIN). **Withdrawn First Horse Inspection:** Get Smart, Karen Dixon (GBR).