

# The Royal<sup>®</sup> HORSE SHOW

A Celebration  
of Horses:

## The Royal Agricultural Winter Fair

By Lindsay Brock/Jump Media

Stepping into the Coca-Cola Coliseum at Toronto's Royal Agricultural Winter Fair feels more like strolling into a rock concert than a horse show with red carpets, lights, and music. Celebrating 96 successful years, the Royal Horse Show embraces the pomp and circumstance that once defined equine events when royalty and spectators alike donned tuxedos and ball gowns.

With a storied history within both the North American horse show scene and Toronto culture, the Royal Horse Show continues to get better with age.

### Champions Collide

With ornate six-horse hitches, high-stepping Hackney ponies, and athletic sport horses dominating the pony ranks to the international level, The Royal is a true celebration of the horse as well as a coveted event that Canadians mark on their calendars with the goal of qualifying each and every year.

"It's great to win, but it's even better when you win at The Royal!" said Toronto's own Jordan Macpherson, who claimed the 2018 Canadian Junior/Amateur Jumper Championship title riding Fiestamunde.



Jacqueline Brooks and D Niro by Ben Radvanyi Photography

Hunter competition was highlighted by the \$15,000 Braeburn Farms and the \$25,000 Knightwood Hunter Derbies with Quebec's Isabelle Lapierre riding Carrera S to both titles. The Royal Horse Show hosts the Jump Canada Medal National Final as well as the Running Fox CET Medal Final, the two most prestigious honours for up-and-coming athletes in Canada. Hot off his win in the ASPCA Maclay National



Final south of the border, Sam Walker claimed his first CET Medal title while Miranda Burruano, based in Orchard Park, NY, won the Jump Canada Medal.

Delighting thrill-seekers in the crowd, the \$20,000 Horsecare Indoor Eventing Challenge saw a win for Virginia's Lauren Kieffer riding Glendening Avis in her Royal Horse Show debut while fellow U.S. Olympian Adrienne Lyle topped the newly-introduced Royal Dressage Derby. Lyle bested Tom Dvorak and Jaimey Irwin of Canada as well as Guatemalan rider, Esther Mortimer, in a knock-out format riding borrowed horses. "Dressage Night" also included an emotional farewell to Jacqueline Brooks' 2012 London Olympic Games mount, D Niro, who retired from competition in front of an appreciative home audience.

## Stars Align

The 96th Royal Horse Show kicked off with the \$125,000 Canadian Show Jumping Championship, held over two nights during opening weekend. Nicole Walker of Aurora, ON, earned her first Canadian Championship title riding Falco van Spieveld.



Nicole Walker and Falco van de Spieveld by Ben Radvanyi Photography



Daniel Bluman and Ladriano Z by Ben Radvanyi Photography  
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McLain Ward and HH Gigi's Girl by Ben Radvanyi Photography



Adrienne Lyle and Ribot by Ben Radvanyi Photography

"I will never forget this!" said Walker, who claimed the title one day before her 25th birthday. "The atmosphere is incredible here. The Royal has so much tradition, and I would recommend that every rider come visit at some point, even if they're not riding."

International riders representing seven nations, including Australia, Great Britain, Ireland, Israel, Japan, New Zealand, and the United States, descended on Toronto and echoed Walker's praise.

"I've come here almost every year since Eric Lamaze first got me an invitation back in 2011," said Israel's Daniel Bluman, who topped the fan-favourite \$85,000 GroupBy "Big Ben" Challenge riding Ladriano Z. "I really, really love it. It's a fantastic city, and it's a fantastic crowd. When you jump in a place that has a crowd and has an atmosphere, the whole energy changes and your desire to win also changes. Forget about the prize money, forget about the world ranking points, forget about anything else; you just want to be the best that you can be for the crowd."

Visiting riders from the U.S. included three of the four members of the 2018 FEI World Equestrian Games (WEG)



Lauren, Lilly, and McLain Ward by Ben Radvanyi Photography



Jordan Macpherson and Fiestamunde by Ben Radvanyi



Dixon Retirement Ceremony by Ben Radvanyi Photography



Isabelle Lapierre and Carrera S Presentation by Ben Radvanyi Photography



Lauren Kieffer and Glendening Avis by Ben Radvanyi



Mary and Harvey Waller Old Times Coach by Ben Radvanyi Photography

gold medal team - Devin Ryan, Adrienne Sternlicht, and McLain Ward.

Moving the \$205,000 Longines FEI Jumping World Cup™ Toronto, presented by GroupBy, to the final evening of the Royal Horse Show from its traditional Wednesday night time slot proved to be a big hit with competitors and spectators alike. In front of more than 7,000 fans in the sold-out Coca-Cola Coliseum, Ward claimed his fifth win in the World Cup class riding Double H Farm's HH Gigi's Girl over tracks set by 2018 WEG course designer Alan Wade of Ireland.

Ward, 43, estimates that he has been competing at the Royal Horse Show for almost a quarter of a century, saying, "I love it here. Obviously, I'm not Canadian, but I think of this as a second home. The show is being run beautifully and the organization is phenomenal. As you saw, we had a sold-out crowd, and I'm thrilled to be part of it."

Having also won the \$50,000 Weston Canadian Open on Friday night riding Tradition de la Roque, Ward earned the Leading International Rider title.

"It's like an 'Eloise' moment for me to be here in the big city," said the two-time Olympic team gold medalist of competing in Toronto. "I was being a little melancholy on the drive over for the last day and thought, 'I wonder how many more years I'm going to get to experience it?' and I decided to look up Ian Millar's age. I read 71, and I was like 'I still have 29 more years! That's good!' I love being here."

Ward's 2018 WEG teammate, Devin Ryan of Long Valley, NJ, jumped double clear aboard Eddie Blue to finish second and pick up valuable World Cup qualifying points while Canada's own Ali Ramsay, 26, of Victoria, BC, finished third with a fault-free performance riding Hermelien vd Hooghoeve.

## Looking to the Future

An all-encompassing celebration of Canadian agriculture – from giant pumpkins to butter sculptures to beef cows – the illustrious Royal Agricultural Winter Fair is fast approaching its centennial celebration.

"The Royal is about the best of the best and we are thrilled with the experience that the customers had this year, the show that the riders put on, and to be part of the Longines FEI World Cup™," said Charlie Johnstone, CEO of the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair. "There were folks I was speaking to tonight who had never been to a major horse show and they were in awe of what was happening. They knew they were walking into something that was going to be very exciting, and it exceeded their expectations.

"We're in a good place and I think the future is very bright for The Royal," concluded Johnstone.

The Royal Horse Show will return to Toronto with more than 1,000 horses from around the globe competing for over \$980,000 in prize money during 10 days from November 1-10, 2019.