

Women Defend Their Show Jumping Battle of the Sexes Title

For the second year in a row, the women's team defeats the men at the Winter Equestrian Festival

Edited Press Release

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Georgina Bloomberg helped the women secure victory with her win in the Six Bar class. Photo © 2010 Randi Muster/Mustphoto, Inc., Official Sport Photographer of the 2010 FTI Winter Equestrian Festival. Energized is the only way to describe the Palm Beach International Arena at the 2010 FTI Winter Equestrian Festival on Saturday night for the \$55,000 Nespresso Battle of the Sexes.

More than five thousand fans arrived for the signature Saturday Night Lights entertainment. The majestic Budweiser Clydesdales paraded in the arena with their loyal Dalmation leader Harley in an exhibition before the class. Fire blowers, chained escape artists, and knife juggling tight rope walkers from the famed Key West Sunset Carnival wowed the fans.

Yet the most amazing feats were performed by the Olympic and world-class riders in the spirited competition which pitted men against women and even husband against wife to see who would be the victorious team.

In the first speed round over fences, the men's team emerged with a lead of six winning rounds to four. But as two-time Olympic gold medalist Beezie Madden noted, "We were ready for a comeback."

In the side by side match race round over fences, where riders compete neck to neck, the women crossed the line with clear rounds first eight times out of ten. The last couple of riders to contest the match race were married couple, 2008 Olympic gold medalist Will Simpson and his wife Nicole Shahinian-Simpson.

As they rounded the bend to the final line, Will knew that his wife was gaining on him. "I saw her coming around the turn," he recalled. Nicole added, "I thought, 'Just go!' He's way too fast anyway. I can't pull on the reins!"

Nicole ended up just catching Will to win by hundredths of a second. "It was super fun! It was the way to do it. We gave it our all, and it all worked out," Nicole said.

With a handy lead of 12 to 8 going into the final six bar round where horses jump a series of six consecutive fences, two women and two men went clear. As the height was raised to 1.65m, Ali Niforushan and Will Simpson went clean again for the men and Georgina Bloomberg and Lauren Hough cleared it a second time as well.

The ladies led 20 to 16 as the fence bars raised one more time to 1.80m. Ali's horse knocked down the last bar then Georgina soared clearly over them all, securing the win for the ladies.

Bloomberg said that she and her horse Fiedi 3 had experience in this type of class. Bloomberg explained, "I did the six bar last year here with him, and it was my first class ever with him. I didn't trust him, and I leaned forward at a jump. Ever since then, I've been thinking about getting back here in this class."

She said of her team's win, "It's always fun when you win, but it's a fun class either way! Having this many people show up was amazing, and the atmosphere was great. They did a really good job putting on the class."

For a second year in a row the pretty in pink team proved the gals had the guts and the glory. The winning team led by captain Katie Prudent included Georgina Bloomberg, Debbie Stephens, Margie Engle, Beezie Madden, Laura Chapot, Lauren Hough, Casey Hodges, Cara Raether, Marilyn Meredith and Nicole Simpson. The men's team led by captain Henri Prudent included Pablo Barrios, Shane Sweetnam, Ali Nilforushan, Nick Dello Joio, Jorge Zamudio, Ramiro Quintana, Michael Morrissey, Charlie Jayne, Benjamin Meredith, and Will Simpson.

For full horse show results and information, please visit www.shownet.biz and www.equestriansport.com.