

## Badminton 2008 Begins

**The United States won't make a showing.**

May 1, 2008

Phillip Dutton (USA) won the 2008 Rolex Kentucky Three-Day Event last weekend in Lexington, Ky., aboard the 15-year-old Irish Thoroughbred gelding Connaught, but the two won't be making an appearance at the Mitsubishi Motors Badminton Horse Trials May 1 - 4 in Britain. That means another year will pass without a Rolex Grand Slam of Eventing winner. The Grand Slam title is only awarded to the rider who can win in succession Rolex, Badminton and the Burghley Land Rover Horse Trials. British rider Pippa Funnell is the only competitor in the history of the Grand Slam to win it, and that was back in 2003.

Actually, Badminton won't feature any U.S. riders this time around. Instead, the field includes riders from Great Britain, Australia, Brazil, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, New Zealand and Sweden.

Indeed, Badminton is an international event. At the top of the list of riders this year is World Champion Zara Phillips of Great Britain who will be competing two horses, Glenbuck and Ardfield Magic Star. She is vying for a prize of £60,000 (about \$118,781).

For the first time since the event's inception in 1949, a complete overall of the turf on the four-mile cross-country track was undertaken to ready it for this year's competition. According to Badminton officials, conditions are greatly improved.

The competition at this year's event will be tightly watched. Over the last year, the sport of three-day eventing has experienced its share of tragedies that have called into question the safety of the cross-country phase. Over the last year, 15 riders have died as a result of injuries sustained during accidents in the cross-country phase of eventing competitions around the world. Additionally, many riders have sustained serious injuries, including recent accidents at the 2008 Rolex Kentucky Three-Day Event that left two horses dead and one rider seriously injured.