

U.S. Team Barely Beaten for Dressage Bronze; King-Dye Remains Highest Placed American at 2008 Olympic Games

The U.S. dressage team is edged out of the medal standings in team Grand Prix competition.

By Joanie Morris

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Hong Kong, China – Steffen Peters, the anchor rider for the US Team, did everything he could to coax a brilliant performance out of Ravel to secure the team bronze medal. Peters really went for broke and finished the first Individual Qualifier in 10th place individually on a 70.00%, which wasn't quite good enough for a team medal after teammate Debbie McDonald had a completely uncharacteristic performance on Brentina. Ravel, who is only 10 years old, tried his heart out but his inexperience in such a big venue cost him a couple of marks. The US Team finished fourth on a final score of 67.817%.

"Overall I'm really pleased," said Peters from San Diego, CA. "I had nothing to lose so I really went for it. He was quite good but he got nervous in the free walk toward the screen. There were a couple of things that weren't quite as good as normal. There were a lot of good things in there."

Peters feels that the horse will be improved in Saturday's Grand Prix Special, after getting some experience in the main arena tonight.

"He only did his first grand prix in March," said Peters. "I can't risk it that much in the changes yet but I really went for it in the trot work."

The funny thing about horses is that sometimes it really just doesn't go to plan.

Peters' performance couldn't erase the completely uncharacteristic test put in by Debbie McDonald and Peggy and Parry Thomas' Brentina. Veterans (and medalists) of the World Equestrian Games and the Olympic Games, the Hailey, ID combination are always dependable for a good mark.

Tonight it was not meant to be.

"She started spooking when I went in the ring," said a despondent McDonald after scoring 63.00%. "I have no idea what she was spooking at, I couldn't put my leg on her. I was totally surprised. I don't really know what to say, I feel awful for the team. She was so much different than she was in the warm-up she totally took me by surprise."

The 17-year-old Hanoverian mare made big mistakes in the canter pirouettes and McDonald could never ask her to really go for it in the ring. The mare has been rock steady all spring and summer, she was second to Ravel at the USEF Selection Trials and no one expected her to unravel in the ring. The plan coming into these Games was for the mare to be retired upon returning home, even though this is not the way McDonald would like to see her go out – it certainly will take nothing away from her illustrious career.

Courtney King-Dye and Mythilus had put in an excellent performance on the previous evening to kick off the US' effort with a score of 70.458%. The pair made a splash at their first Olympic Games with a mistake free test. They head into the first round of the individual competition on a score of 70.458%, which leaves them in seventh place.

The top 25 riders return to the ring on Saturday with a clean slate in Grand Prix Special.

The Germans won convincingly another team Gold medal, the trio of Heike Kemmer (Bonaparte), Nadine Capellmann (Elvis VA) and Isabel Werth (Satchmo) finished on a final score of 72.917%. Werth and Satchmo had the highest individual percentage of 76.417%. It is not surprising that Werth and van Grunsven were one-two as their dominance is historical.

The Dutch team won Silver on a score of 71.750% and the Danish won Bronze by less than a point over the US.

The show jumpers finally get the closing act underway tomorrow after days of patiently waiting. All the horses were passed the horse inspection with flying colors this morning and the US horses looked phenomenal which was a great testament to



all the grooms, riders and staff and Dr. Tim Ober who looks after the show jumpers much of the year.

Authentic, Carlsson vom Dach, Cedric, Champ and Sapphire all looked fit and well jogging in the sunny Sha Tin main arena. The first Show Jumping Individual Qualifier gets underway tomorrow night as the dressage takes a day off before their individual competition starts. The US drew 14th of 16 teams for tomorrow.

For complete Olympic results, visit www.equestrian2008.org.