

Fisher Smokes The Competition At Galway Downs

Lynndee Kemmet

In the days leading up to the Galway Downs Three-Day Event, organizer Robert Kellerhouse heard a constant ringing. It was his phone.

Competitors and spectators by the hundreds wondered if Galway Downs—located in Temecula and surrounded by the raging Southern California wildfires—was still on.

"I kid you not," Kellerhouse said. "I must have gotten 300 calls at all hours of the day."

Galway Downs itself was never in danger. The closest fire was 10 miles away, and it was a smaller blaze that had been easily contained. The worst of the fires remained 45 miles away. Still, nearly 40 competitors—all of whom had planned to compete in the horse trials—didn't make it. Most of those competitors had either lost houses or been evacuated and were too concerned about their homes to focus on competing. All of the CCI competitors showed, but many, including Robyn Fisher, the top finisher in the CCI**, had second thoughts.

"I wasn't sure about going," said Fisher, of Davis, Calif. "I finally decided to drive down and chance it. I figured the worst-case scenario was that I'd turn around and come home. Those first few days the smoke was so bad that I wasn't sure I was going to [run] on Saturday. It was just too thick to run a horse cross-country."

But then, as Kellerhouse put it, a miracle happened on Wednesday. The winds shifted, the smoke blew out, and by Thursday the air was clear. It remained that way throughout the rest of the event, held Oct. 30-Nov. 2.

"Had the air remained bad, the ground jury was pre-

pared to make adjustments," Kellerhouse said.

But no adjustment was needed, and for Fisher, her gamble to show up paid off. In her first CCI** with Le Samurai, whom she affectionately calls "Sparky," she finished the dressage in third place with 51.6 penalties.

They went clear on speed and endurance day and added a mere 3-point time penalty in show jumping to win with 54.6 penalties. Their closest competitor was Frankie Thieriot riding Fric Frac Berence, who finished second with 62.6 penalties.

"Sparky was in top form," Fisher said. "He jumped as if he had had a week off. He was straight and cleared everything by a foot."

Her only concern on the cross-country course was the second water jump. "It was followed by a bounce, and I was a bit concerned that after the steeplechase phase he wouldn't

have enough 'bounce' left in him to make it," Fisher said. "It was a big course, but fortunately, not too big."

The win was a special victory for Fisher, 23, who bought Le Samurai, an 8-year-old, 16.1-hand, Hanoverian gelding, five years ago against the advice of nearly everyone.

"They all told me I was nuts—my vet, my farrier, my trainer and my friends," Fisher said. "Everyone said he was a kook. You would just put your foot in the stirrup and he'd freak."

Fisher trains with Valerie Bertoli, and Le Samurai (Sabotage—Heiali) had been sent to Bertoli for retraining after he had become difficult to handle. Bertoli had done the initial training on the horse before he was sold the first time. Back in her care, Bertoli assigned the horse to Fisher, who worked for her at the time.

"Within a week, I told my trainer that I wanted to buy him, and she warned me that he was crazy," Fisher said. "I had jumped a triple line with him. The last jump was a 3'6" oxer. He cleared it, then bucked and knocked me loose. The second buck got me off. I decided then that I wanted him. There was something between us that just clicked."

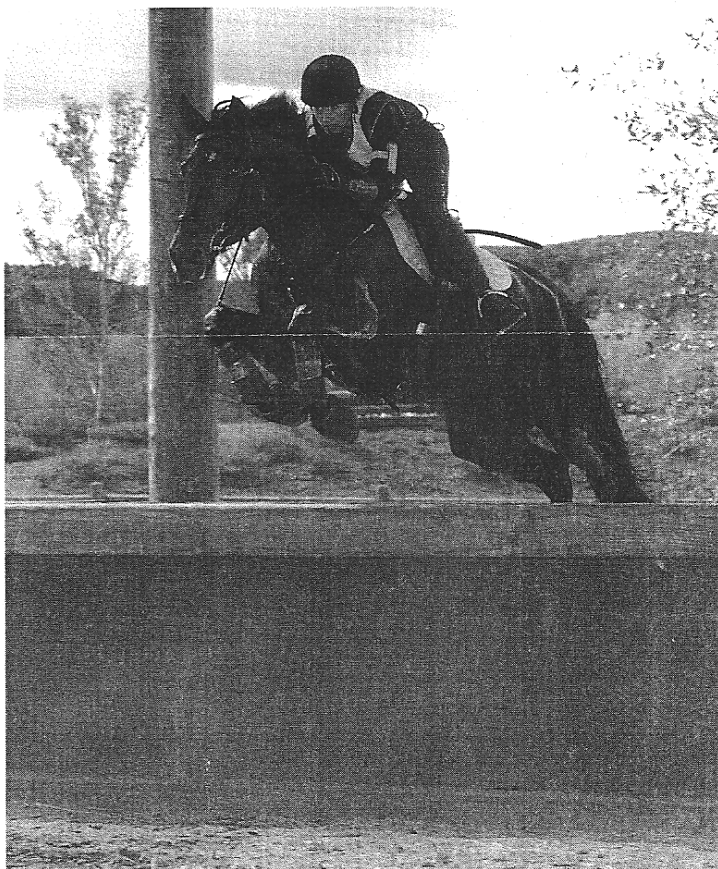
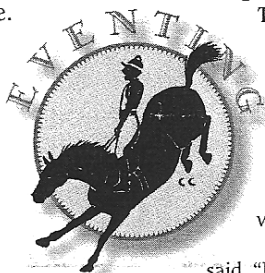
Slowly, others came to believe that maybe Fisher wasn't so crazy after all. "Valerie asked me where I wanted to go with my riding, and I told her my goal was to ride at the international level. So, she sent me off to France with the horse," Fisher said.

She took Le Samurai to Europe to train with Jacques Dulcey, a member of France's 1996 Olympic eventing team. Fisher and Le Samurai did their first international competition in Germany in 2002. And they've been moving up the levels ever since.

Fisher is now aiming for February's advanced event at Galway Downs and after that the CCI*** World Cup qualifier at the North American Beaulieu Classic (Ga).

"I'd like to qualify for the [2006] World Games even though it's a long shot," she said. "If not that, then perhaps the [2007] Pan American Games."

Fisher is devoted to "Sparky," who has given her not only an opportunity to reach the international level in eventing, but who is also giving her a reprieve from finding a job. She finishes college in December with a degree in English and minor in animal sciences. Fisher's father has told her that since she and Le Samurai are doing so well, he'll support her continued training rather than making her find a job.



Robyn Fisher and Le Samurai claimed the Galway Downs CCI.**

(Ed Moore Photo)

► Relying On Confidence

Thieriot, 17, of Occidental, Calif., displayed a superior mental focus that put her first among junior riders in the CCI** for the John H. Fritz Trophy National Young Riders Championship and second overall.

After clearing the cabana jump on the cross-country course, she and Fric Frac Berence were held up for 15 minutes after Cayla Kitayama, who rode just ahead of them on Dockside, took a fall and had to be transported by ambulance. Thieriot spent the time walking in circles waiting for the OK to head on to the next jump—the Jaguar Plunge water jump that she had most feared.

"The one jump that I was most worried about going into the course was the one I got held up in front of," she said. "I was very worried about Cayla. She's one of my best friends." As it turned out, her friend was bruised, but otherwise OK.

"I had to take it cold," Thieriot said of the water jump. "But based on how he had already done on the course, I was pretty confident that he could do it. Plus, there was enough of a distance to it for a good gallop to get his heart rate back up."

The pair sailed through the water combination beautifully, and thus Fric Frac Berence lived up to the expectations that Thieriot had when she bought him four years ago.

"He's amazing on cross-country, and that's why I bought him. And he was there for me this time. When I pushed him for extra speed, he just went right off my leg," she said.

Thieriot found the horse, a 10-year-old, 17-hand, Selle Français gelding, during a buying trip to France with her trainers, Yves and Christine Sauvignon.

Galway Downs was the first CCI** for Fric Frac Berence (Laekin—Tyrannie II).

Thieriot hopes to move the horse up to the advanced level next year, but for right now he'll get a bit of a rest while Thieriot, a high-school senior, concentrates on a couple of other sports.

"Basketball season starts right now, and I'm the varsity team captain. And winter is coming so that means snowboarding season," she said.

► One-Star Catch Ride

Yves Sauvignon received a call from Natalie Rooney about six weeks before Galway Downs. Since she is pregnant, and her husband, Rodney Pitts, didn't want her competing, she asked Sauvignon if he could ride her horse, Jackson, in the one-star.

Sauvignon, a trainer from Santa Rosa, Calif., rode the 9-year-old appendix Quarter Horse at Ram Tap (Calif.) a few weeks before Galway and placed second (to himself on another horse). "The next time I saw him was at the one-star," said Sauvignon.



(Ed Moore Photo)

One of Rooney's students kept Jackson in work, but Sauvignon was concerned about having someone heavier do his fitness work, so Galway organizer Robert Kellerhouse did his conditioning. "There's probably a sixty-pound

Frankie Thieriot claimed the Fritz Cup National Young Riders Championship by finishing second in the Galway Downs CCI** aboard Fric Frac Berence.

difference between me and Natalie, even when she is pregnant," said Sauvignon with a laugh. "But the horse felt great. My weight was not a problem at all."

After winning the dressage (44.6), Jackson jumped flawlessly. "[The horse] has quite a bit going for him, and we got along," Sauvignon said. "He's a good mover and bold over fences. Cross-country was no problem, and we took all the straight routes."

While the pair finished cross-country 15 seconds under the time, they finished show jumping right on the clock. "Show jumping is a bit of his weak link, and I think Natalie was

GALWAY DOWNS HORSE TRIALS

Temecula, Calif.—Oct. 29-Nov. 2

HORSE/RIDER/NATION	DRESSAGE	C C I **			SHOW JUMPING Jump/Time	TOTAL
		SPEED & ENDURANCE				
		A&C	B	D		
			Jump/Time	Jump/Time		
1. Le Samurai/Robyn Fisher/USA	51.6	0	0/0	0/0	0/3	54.6
2. Fric Frac Berence/Frankie Thieriot/USA	58.6	0	0/0	0/0	4/0	62.6
3. Madison/Karly Pest/USA	59.4	0	0/0	0/0	4/0	63.4
4. Candy/Vicky Koss/USA	64.2	0	0/0	0/0	0/0	64.2
5. For Kicks/Shannon Lilley/USA	49.2	0	0/0	20/0	0/0	69.2
6. El Primero/Sara Mittleider/USA	64.6	0	0/0	0/1.2	4/0	69.8
7. Florestan du Serin/Josh Barnacle/USA	56.0	0	0/1.6	0/4.4	8/0	70.0
8. Kalypso/Tabitha Lee/CAN	62.4	0	0/0	0/0	8/0	70.4
9. Abner/Britt Roden/USA	66.0	0	0/0	0/2	4/0	72.0
10. Bucephalus/Andrew Temkin/USA	67.4	0	0/0	0/8	4/0	72.2

Also competed: 11. McTwist/T. Korol/USA, 78.2; 12. Out Of The Blue/J. Kidston/CAN, 80.2; 13. Country Toad/R. Lathrop/USA, 82.2; 14. Cosmo Kramer/J. Brownjohn/CAN, 86.0; 15. Ballad Of Eire/J. Rodgers/USA, 92.4; 16. Turning Point/B. Temkin/USA, 97.2; 17. Leicester/K. Pond/USA, 130.2; 18. Master Of Ceremony/A. Sparks/USA, 144.2; 19. Murray Of The Sea/B. Phillips/USA, 189.6.

Withdrawn before show jumping: Granite Fall's/G. Blyth/NZL. Eliminated on Phase D: Rowdy/M. Sterling/USA; The Federalist/S. Boyer/USA; Dockside/C. Kitayama/USA; Hercules IIIA. Gjellen/USA. Retired on Phase D: Macy/S. Andreotti/USA; Kildare Cavalier/D. di Grazia/USA; Fleeceworks Stars & Stripes/K. Nunnink/USA. Withdrawn before Phase D: R-Hill/J. Camlin/USA.

HORSE/RIDER/NATION	DRESSAGE	C C I *			SHOW JUMPING Jump/Time	TOTAL
		SPEED & ENDURANCE				
		A&C	B	D		
			Jump/Time	Jump/Time		
1. Jackson/Yves Sauvignon/USA	44.6	0	0/0	0/0	0/0	44.6
2. Turbonium/Adreinne Hillas/USA	49.1	0	0/0	0/0	0/0	49.1
3. Xanthia/Brett Robinson/USA	51.7	0	0/0	0/0	0/0	51.7
4. Zeth/Kristen Bond/USA	49.1	0	0/0	0/0	4/0	53.1
5. Fifth Quarter/Loreen Kay/USA	52.4	0	0/0	0/0	4/0	56.4
6. Just Right/Paula Wong/USA	57.4	0	0/0	0/0	0/0	57.4
7. Trinity/Anna Collier/USA	58.5	0	0/0	0/0	0/0	58.5
8. Belair/Ann Horrell/USA	59.4	0	0/0	0/0	0/0	59.4
9. Jerry McGerry/Stevie Dillon/USA	55.7	0	0/0	0/0	4/0	59.7
10. Macanudo/Lindsay Connor/USA	57.0	0	0/0	0/0	4/0	61.0

Also competed: 11. Malik/J. Lawrence/USA, 61.4; 12. Star Edition/K. Nunnink/USA, 61.8; 13. Las Trampas/J. Philpott/USA, 64.4; 14. Dewar's Profile/M. Bearden-Muller/USA, 65.4; 15. Christmas Spirit/S. Levin/USA, 65.5; 16. Rosie Sky/G. Silvestri/USA, 66.3; 17. Kasherai/M.A. Koch/USA, 68.7; 18. Wild Rose/D. Adamo/USA, 68.7; 19. Beamish/A. Jones/USA, 69.4; 20. Denzel/M. Brumder/USA, 69.8; 21. Mr. Swift Lane/G. Mittleider/USA, 70.0; 22. Steeltown/K. Clarkson/USA, 71.0; 23. Salish/A. Saarni/USA, 80.3; 24. Vapor Trail/D. White/USA, 81.4; 25. No Sacrifice/C. Roden/USA, 81.8; 26. Irish Accent/L. Brooke/USA, 83.3; 27. Zillion/J. Dunn/USA, 84.7; 28. Tom Henry/A. Garr-Schultz/USA, 90.7; 29. Master Piece/E. Sporth/USA, 106.1; 30. Timar/A. Stoltz/USA, 114.4; 31. Jackson/C. Fagan/USA, 118.8; 32. Mission Accomplished/N.C. Drager/USA, 122.5; 33. Reveille III/G. Arlen/USA, 126.8; 34. Silver Sage/B. Alderson/USA, 132.9; 35. High Mountain Road/D. Lynd-Pugh/USA, 152.3; 36. Trilogist/M. Yolken/USA, 155.6; 37. Balabogga/Brawley/G.J. Stritzel/USA, 156.8; 38. Logan/C. Leonard/USA, 174.6.

Eliminated in show jumping: Little Hero/J. Montgomery/USA. Failed 3rd horse inspection: Nicco/C. Hemingway/USA. Withdrawn before 3rd horse inspection: Quigley/A. Byron/USA; Audacity/K. Baumgardner/USA; Ben Cruise/V. Koss/USA. Eliminated on Phase D: Caluques/B. di Grazia/USA; Respected Glory/T. Smith/USA; Harem de la Brosse/L. Vandewalker/USA; Hipias Fary/M. Mirsky/USA. Retired on Phase D: Pik A Sport/H. Hornaday/USA; Silver Wings/S. Vernlund/USA. Withdrawn before Phase A: East Wing/L. Metcal/USA. Eliminated in dressage: Quizzler/T. Duch/USA.

The John H. Fritz Trophy for National Young Riders Championships—1. Fric Frac Berence/F. Thieriot/USA, 62.6; 2. Madison/K. Pest/USA, 63.4; 3. El Primero/S. Mittleider/USA, 69.8; 4. Florestan du Serin/J. Barnacle/USA, 70.0; 5. Country Toad/R. Lathrop/USA, 82.2; 6. Ballad Of Eire/J. Rodgers/USA, 92.4; 7. Master Of Ceremony/A. Sparks/USA, 144.2.

The Richard D. Collins Trophy for National 1-Star Championships—1. Jackson/Y. Sauvignon/USA, 44.6; 2. Zeth/K. Bond/USA, 53.1; 3. Just Right/P. Wong/USA, 57.4; 4. Trinity/A. Collier/USA, 58.5; 5. Belair/A. Horrell/USA, 59.4; 6. Macanudo/L. Connor/USA, 61.0; 7. Star Edition/K. Nunnink/USA, 61.8; 8. Las Trampas/J. Philpott/USA, 64.4; 9. Dewar's Profile/M. Bearden-Muller, 65.4; 10. Wild Rose/D. Adamo/USA, 68.7; 11. Denzel/M. Brumder/USA, 69.8; 12. Mr. Swift Lane/G. Mittleider/USA, 70.0; 13. Salish/A. Saarni/USA, 80.3; 14. Vapor Trail/D. White/USA, 81.4; 15. Zillion/J. Dunn/USA, 84.7; 16. Jackson/C. Fagan/USA, 118.8; 17. Mission Accomplished/H.C. Drager/USA, 122.5; 18. Silver Sage/B. Alderson/USA, 132.9; 19. High Mountain Road/D. Lynd-Pugh/USA, 152.3; 20. Balabogga/Brawley/G.J. Stritzel/USA, 156.8; 21. Logan/C. Leonard/USA, 174.6.