

Erynn Ballard & Ceitasi Top The \$75,000 Stirrups Restaurant Grand Prix At World Equestrian Center – Ocala

An international list of competitors from 11 different countries lined out the entries in Saturday's \$75,000 Stirrups Restaurant Grand Prix during the third week of the WEC – Ocala Summer Series. FEI Level 3 course designer Joey Rycroft of Canada designed the technical tracks for the grand prix as well as the \$10,000 Futures Prix 1.30m – 1.35m, which featured multiple combinations, along with jump-off courses that required adjustability and accuracy.

Saturday evening's \$75,000 Stirrups Restaurant Grand Prix hosted 53 entries under the lights in the WEC Grand Arena. Rycroft's course included a triple combination, a double combination, and a triple bar. Twelve entries advanced to the jump-off, but it was Erynn Ballard (CAN) and Ilan Ferder's Ceitasi (Caretello B x Ceitas) that captured the win.

Ballard and Ceitasi yielded a flawless first round, soaring to the top of the standards over each fence, stopping the first-round clock at 82.750 seconds.

Ballard & Ceitasi soaring over the Lugano Diamonds oxer. Photos courtesy of Andrew Ryback Photography.

"Ceitasi is magical," said Ballard of the 11-year-old Westphalian mare, who returned to Ballard's string this year. "I rode her as a nine-year-old and then she was sold in the barn to Natalie Dean who had huge success on her. We got her back to do classes like this; to be a speed horse when I need her. She is reliable and is always on her game. She



Erynn Ballard patting Ceitasi in the \$75,000 Stirrups Restaurant Grand Prix. Photos courtesy of Andrew Ryback Photography.

never lets you down."

With 12 in the jump-off, Ballard returned for the jump ready to give it her all. "I had nothing to lose," confirmed Ballard. "I had two very fast riders behind me and in my own riding, my next step is to try and win more classes. In a class like today, being a fast four-faulter wasn't going to get you a nice ribbon. It wasn't worth the risk of being a slow clear."

Ballard and Ceitasi started the jump-off strong and fast, leaving out a stride from fence one to fence two,

"Ilan said to ride it off my eye," said Ballard. "Once I got the nine [strides] from one to two, I was on a roll." Ballard and the careful mare rocked through the rest of the jump-off, stopping the clock at a very fast time of 38.937 seconds for the win.

Aaron Vale (USA) and Major, a 14-year-old Danish Warmblood gelding owned by Don Stewart and Sleepy P Ranch LLC, topped last week's \$75,000 Calluna Spa Grand Prix. Vale and Major were the last pair to return for the jump-off, and it was Vale's second attempt at



\$75,000 Stirrups Restaurant Grand Prix
Ballard & Ceitasi jumping to first place in the \$75,000 Stirrups Restaurant Grand Prix. Photos courtesy of Andrew Ryback Photography.

the shortened course. While he also did nine strides between the first two jumps, Vale landed just short of the winning time in 39.264 seconds for second place.

Thursday's \$15,000 WEC Welcome Prix winners, Tracy Fenney (USA) and MTM Dolce Vita, rounded out the top three placings in Saturday evening's Grand Prix. Fenney and the nine-year-old Holsteiner mare, MTM Dolce Vita (Diarado x Philadelphia) were also the fastest four-faulters from last week's \$75,000 Calluna Spa Grand Prix. This week, they were clear in the

first round in 83.837 seconds, qualifying the duo for the jump-off. Fenney and MTM Dolce Vita galloped through the course with tight turns and forward distances to stop the clock at 40.833 seconds, securing third place.

Kristen Vanderveen (USA) and Bull Run's Divine Fortune received a \$5,000 reward for being the fastest-four faulter of the \$75,000 Stirrups Restaurant Grand Prix. Vanderveen and Bull Run's Divine Fortune received the fastest first-round time of 78.039 seconds.