



Left, Debbie Dolan and Quantum Leap had back-to-back grandprix victories at the Lake Placid and I Love New York Horse Shows. Photo by Karen Preston. Right, Robin Sweely and Graf Bobby help their team to win the $20,000 Lake Placid Challenge. Photo by Nancy Degutis.

Quantum Leap is two for two at Lake Placid show series

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LAKE PLACID, NY —Debbie Dolan and Quantum Leap had been knocking at the door of success this year but nailed it down with a sizzling round to win the $30,000 Saab Cars USA Grand Prix, the concluding highlight of the June 28-July 2 Lake Placid Horse Show.

The speedy son of Secretariat had a blistering 51.456-second clear trip to take the five-horse elimination round. Emily Epstein's Flirtatious and Elizabeth Solter duplicated the fault-free trip but came off the course in 55.995.

The two horses, at the top of the initial round's order of go, appeared to be the only ones to be pitted for the $9,000 winner's check until the last three out—Doug Russell and Donzi, Debbie Stephens with Blank Check, and Michelle Grubb on Radames—challenged them. They tried to match Dolan's time but couldn't, winding up with Blank Check's pulling a rail in 58.369 for third. Donzi and Russell fared worst with a 62.671/12 for fourth and Radames at fifth (89.318/16).

Dolan, of Oyster Bay, NY, had been the bridesmaid of the grandprix ring all spring. Second in the same event last year, she was the runner-up in June's Grandprix of Devon (PA). She couldn't improve on that placing when she was just off the winning mark at the USET Show Jumping Championship at the IBM/USET Festival of Champions three weeks later. Even her efforts at the Upperville (VA) show didn't pan out because she rode a conservative round for sixth place.

"I was too fast at Devon and too slow at Upperville. This time I had it right," grinned Dolan after the July 2 Saab Grand Prix. "Leap is a Thoroughbred, and they are always going to be speed specialists. You want to put more control into that speed," said Dolan, who found the horse in the equitation/junior-jumper ranks three years ago.

Not surprised by her clear elimination round, Dolan said, "He is a very careful horse. I believe in him and he believes in me. And when you have that going, you're going to be good."

The one difference in the trips over the shortened course, she said, "was the time in the air. My horse spends no time there, and hers [Solter's] jumps a little more lofty."

Both were confronted with a set of problems that claimed many of the others. "I felt the course was very technical. And any time you have a field with a lot of ups and downs in it, it adds a new dimension," said Dolan.

Course designer Steve Stephens used the undulating terrain of the grass grandprix field to add to the challenge the starting lineup of 23 faced. One of the most taxing spots lay toward the end as the horses had to skim over fence 10, a water jump; and take fence 11, a simple vertical, on the turn. Then they had to angle off toward the center, going uphill to a triple-vertical combination.

First to return over the shortened route, Dolan said she knew she was "going to set the standard" with pure speed. "After I went, everybody had to push it faster, so that's when people make mistakes," she said.

Dolan's all-out attitude proved that she has overcome a confidence crisis after a fall off a young horse in Florida left her with chipped shoulder. She tried to keep riding, "although not very well," and it affected the way she handled Leap. Finally, in Tampa, he won a class, "and that was enough to get my confidence going.

"This horse has been wonderful. Our partnership really feels great now," said Dolan, who is aiming the gelding toward next spring's Olympic trials.

A familiar face, Piquet, showed he still had the right stuff as the blaze-faced chestnut turned in the only clear round over a shortened route for the $5,000 Show Jumping Hall of Fame Amateur-Owner Classic. The seventeen-year-old former grandprix jumper outdid Robert Ross' Black-Eyed Pea and Hiro Tomizawa's Lincoln.

Although the years have treated the Belgian-bred horse kindly, "now he's a lot more comfortable in the amateur division and so am I," laughed Louis Jacobs, who rode the gelding for his parent's Deer Ridge Farm of East Aurora, NY.

"This is a great division for those of us who used to do the bigger stuff," said Jacobs, 31, as he cradled his two-year-old son, Louie Jr. Jacobs also has a six-month-old daughter, Charlotte; and he surmised that "I think my future is more in the pony ring than the big ring."

"I do this whenever I can now but it's hard to find time," said Jacobs, who has competed in just three shows this year due to his business commitments at his family's catering company.

A former grandprix rider himself, Jacobs' coaches have included Conrad Homfeld and Joe Fargis. His French-bred Janus De Ver won the 1986 Lake Placid Grand Prix.

Quantum Leap makes history

Under bright skies, with a brisk wind blowing away the heat and humidity of earlier in the week, the Lake Placid Horse Shows Association closed out its annual pair of shows on July 9 with the $50,000 I Love New York Grandprix.

Dolan and Quantum Leap faced 21 other competitors in the closing event of the I Love New York Horse Show. She hoped to make it two for two in the shadow of the Adirondack high peaks, a feat only accomplished so far by Leslie Lenehan.

There was trouble early on in the class when nineteen-year-old McLain Ward struggled to keep his seat when Nunn Better spooked and reared repeatedly, forcing Ward to withdraw. The next competitor, Laurie Jakubauskas on Locked & Loaded, broke a stirrup leather early in the class but still negotiated several fences before withdrawing. Posting clear rounds over a course designed by Steve Stephens were Russell on Donzi, Chris Kappler on Rolex and Ike, Solter on Flirtatious, Dolan, and Debbie Stephens on Blank Check.

In the jump-off, both Donzi and Flirtatious posted clear rounds but were left behind by the blazing speed of Quantum Leap, who posted a time of 37.124. Next up was Stephens, also mounted on a Thoroughbred. She went for broke and blew around the course in 37.031, only to take down the final fence. In the end it was Dolan, Solter, and Russell in the first three places.

Said Dolan of her horse's speed: "He's not letting go with as much as he's got. That's becoming a problem, because sooner or later gravity will win....He wanted to go, so I just let him rip. I can lose a jump-off because I have a rail, but I should never lose it because of time." Dolan was thrilled to win her first back-to-back grandsprix. Stephens observed graciously, "It would have been hard to go a whole lot faster and leave the jumps up." Also congratulating Dolan was Michelle Grubb, who said emphatically, "Good things happen to nice people!"