



Mélissa Boutin rode her Anglo-Arabian Siamese Kat to a win in the advanced division at Fair Hill.

Siamese Kat Captures An Advanced Win At Fair Hill

Young rider Mélissa Boutin and her longtime partner defy expectations in their first season at advanced.

BY LINDSAY BERRETH
PHOTOS BY GRC PHOTOGRAPHY

Mélissa Boutin didn't have high aspirations when she bought Siamese Kat as a 3-year-old. She thought they'd make it to preliminary, and then she'd have to find another horse. But the "naughty pony" surprised her by making it all the way to advanced, and they won their third outing at the level at the Fair Hill International Horse Trials, April 20-22, in Elkton, Md.

Boutin, Sherbrooke, Quebec, bought Siamese Kat when she was 15. At the time, she'd only ridden to training level on a schoolmaster, so the change to a "barely" 15.1-hand green broke Anglo-Arabian was a sharp contrast. "I was small at the time, so I bought him, but then I grew up to be 5'8"," she said.

Once the pair hit prelim, the gelding surprised his rider. "He just kept improving, and the harder it gets, the

better he gets," she said.

Despite some trepidation from people around her, Boutin was confident in her partnership with the 10-year-old gelding, owned by Boutin and Kaitlyn Bennet. "Every time I told someone I'd like to go intermediate, then advanced, people would say, 'Maybe it's too big for him,' or, 'He'll get scared,' but I don't think he knows he's small," she said.

With the help of coach Anne Grimard, with whom Boutin has been training for 13 years, the pair moved up the levels safely, culminating in a team bronze medal for Canada at the 2011 Adequan/FEI North American Junior and Young Riders Championships (Ky.).

Fair Hill was their biggest success to date at advanced. They moved up from 17th after dressage (40.9) to finish on top of the leaderboard after half of the division (which was full of Rolex Kentucky-bound combinations) withdrew. "It was a bit unexpected, but it was fun," said Boutin, 21. "Our dressage wasn't our best, so I was just going cross-country for a three-star qualification."

The gelding was as nimble as his namesake on cross-country, finishing with 3.6 time penalties. "He felt comfortable with the [harder] footing. Usually we're going fast because he gets excited, but this time I was able to be fast and more in control at the same time. I could just let him go. It was great," said Boutin.

Only one pair in the advanced division show jumped clear, and Siamese Kat had a rail. But Boutin admitted it was a marked improvement from their last outing at Red Hills (Fla.) where they had four down.

"We still need to work on that. I wasn't hoping to stay in the lead [after cross-country]. I was just hoping to have a better round than last time. He's careful; I just need to find the balance between energy and precision. I'm not the best show jumper, but he can be clear most of the time," she said.

They've been added to Canada's National Eventing team long list, but Boutin is taking it one step at a time. "It's surprising, but it's the best feeling. Every time we reach a new step, I say to myself, 'Let's go with the flow and see how it goes.' I would love to be able to go to a four-star, but time will tell."

Back In Business

Crown Talisman was back on form for Doug Payne to win the CIC** after a serious injury last spring.

After topping multiple preliminary events, including the preliminary horse division at the Land Rover American Eventing Championships (Ga.) and the Cosequin Stuart Horse Trials CIC* (N.Y.)

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—MÉLISSA BOUTIN

in 2010, the Holsteiner-Thoroughbred gelding tore the ligament off the patella on his left stifle in February of last year and was off for five months.

"At his second intermediate at Pine Top [Ga.], he was jumping into water, and in mid-flight he put his hind end down too soon and stifled it. He didn't

hit it hard but just right," said Payne, 31.

The X-rays taken at the competition weren't clear, so Payne took the gelding to the University of Georgia's veterinary center for a more comprehensive look. "It's a strange injury to have," he said. "They went in arthroscopically and flushed everything out. The lucky thing about it is that he hit it just right, and the ligament pulled back and pulled part of the bone off the patella and out of the joint capsule, but there were no fragments of bone in the joint."

"Tali" spent four months on stall rest with hand walking and received stem cell therapy. He was back in full work by October and better than ever according to Payne.

The gelding was difficult to start as a young horse, but Payne,

FAIR HILL INTERNATIONAL HORSE TRIALS

Elkton, Md.—Apr. 20-22

► CIC***

HORSE/RIDER	DRESSAGE	CROSS-COUNTRY JUMP/TIME	SHOW JUMPING JUMP/TIME	TOTAL
1. Amistad/Michele Mueller	46.8	0/1.6	0/0	48.4
2. Downtown Harrison/ Jonathan Holling	41.1	0/16.4	4/2	63.5
3. Fernhill Flutter/Kevin Keane	57.0	0/6.8	0/0	63.8
4. Ballylaffin Bracken/ Kristin Schmolze	50.7	0/17.6	0/2	70.3
5. Win The War/ Jessica Bortner-Harris	63.9	0/21.2	0/3	88.1
6. Enchantez/ Lindsey Solorzano	62.7	0/14.8	8/7	92.5

Also competed: 7. Cavendish/J. Wendell, 101.4; 8. Cecelia/L. Chelstrom, 106.5.

Rider fall in show jumping: Polar Storm/K. Willis. Eliminated on cross-country: Let's Be Frank/S. Harrison. Retired on cross-country: Mastercraft/W. Lewis. Withdrawn before cross-country: Ideal Contini/W. Coleman III.

► ADVANCED

HORSE/RIDER	DRESSAGE	CROSS-COUNTRY JUMP/TIME	SHOW JUMPING JUMP/TIME	TOTAL
1. Siamese Kat/Mélissa Boutin	40.9	0/3.6	4/0	48.5
2. Westerly/Sarah Cousins	39.4	0/10	0/0	49.4
3. Wil'Ya Love Me/ Courtney Sendak	38.8	0/15.2	4/0	58.0
4. Catch A Star/Caitlin Silliman	36.3	0/16	4/3	59.3
5. Zara/Tracey Bienemann	51.3	0/5.6	4/0	60.9
6. Medici/Elissa Gibbs	45.0	0/10	8/0	63.0

Also competed: 7. High Society III/J. Hampf, 66.1; 8. Pirate/M. O'Donoghue, 70.7; 9. Loki/J. Kibbie, 72.3; 10. Griffin/C. Fraser, 76.5.

Technical elimination in show jumping: Cool Connection/W. Coleman III. Eliminated on cross-country: Berkley/E. Van Gemeren. Retired on cross-country: Nyls Du Terroir/K. Samuels. Withdrawn before cross-country: Inmidair/J. Byyny; Seamus/S. McQuillan; Atlas/P. Dutton; Rich N Famous/P. Humphreys; Rafferty's Rules/S. White; Ribbo/P. Moon; Manoir De Carneville/S. Halpin; Running Order/D. Payne; UN/J. Sleeper; Brazen Bomber/K. Williams; Madeline/H. Payne; Donner/L. Symansky.