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Contact: EquestriSol
310-930-2744

WAGGING TAILS AND THE WIND IN WILL SIMPSON'S SAILS

September 29, 2007 – Del Mar, California – A touch of Autumn in the air welcomed competitors and spectators alike at the **\$50,000 Antarès World Cup Qualifying Grand Prix** presented by Mary's Tack & Feed held during the **8th Annual Del Mar International Horse Show at the Del Mar Fairgrounds**. The **\$1,500 Dog Agility Class** began the evening under the arena lights and warmed up the crowd with laughter and high enthusiasm as they cheered on each canine competitor and their handler.

Always a crowd pleaser, the Dog Agility class began with twenty-seven dogs competing in the preliminary round earlier in the evening. The top ten returned at 7p.m. with speed and crafty maneuvering over a course of tunnels, ladders and jumps. **Wish**, a three year-old Border Collie was victorious for her proud owner and handler **Jay Picking** from Anaheim Hills, California. He proudly accepted a \$750 check and gift card from **Mary's Tack and Feed**.



It did not take long for the ring crew to break down the dog agility obstacles and prepare the arena for the main event. Twenty-eight riders competed for the World Cup qualifying \$50,000 Antarès Grand Prix under the lights of the Del Mar Arena and a cheering crowd of thousands. Course designer **Olaf Petersen, Jr.** felt there would be one or two clean rounds over a very technical course. However after the first seven of the twenty-eight horses had completed the course, four jumped clean and it seemed there might be a big field in the jump off. Turned out those four set the pace and could not be matched.

Twenty year-old rider Lauren Hester found the course to be extra challenging as her first World Cup qualifying experience. Her trainer Erin Duffy commented, "The Lego jump had to be ridden very strong and the riders then had to shorten up quickly to a four stride." That challenge among others ended in rails coming down.

So with four horses in the jump off, Ireland's **Eddie Macken** and his horse Tedechine Sept faced the shortened course first and took down two rails with the time of 47.15. Second in the jump off was **Keri Potter** riding **Rockford I** with their round ending in a refusal at the last jump that sent Potter to the ground. **Guy Thomas** went third riding **Carino**. He, like Macken, ended up eight faults in a time of 46.96. Needing a clean round, **Will Simpson** carefully maneuvered his mare **El Campeon's Tosca** to the blue ribbon with no faults and a time of 48.10. After completing the winning round, Simpson quickly saluted his helmet with a big victory smile to the roaring crowd of appreciative spectators.



Simpson and Tosca also won the \$5,000 1.45m class earlier in the week. After dismounting from his victory lap, still basking in the Grand Prix win, Simpson said about the eleven year-old, 16.1h Belgian Warmblood mare, "her heart is as big as it gets. We flipped a coin as to which horse would be my World Cup horse and we made the right decision!" The spectators quickly began seeking out Simpson as he, along with 12 other Grand Prix riders, headed for the autograph table.