

Tika Makes Her First Three-Day A Winning One At Morven Park

Joshua A. Walker

It was somewhat of a surprise, said Skyeler Icke, to pin the division 1 CCI* blue ribbon to young Tika's bridle. But at the conclusion of Morven Park's CCI* and Horse Trials, held Oct. 5-8, Icke beamed as she rode her 6-year-old mare around the ring during their victory gallop in Leesburg, Va. The event marked Tika's first three-day competition.

The pair presented a pleasing dressage test for a score of 52.5. "It was one of her best tests. She's really grown up," said Icke.

With that, they sat in fourth place overnight but wouldn't sit long. On Saturday, one-star competitors awoke to gray skies and consistent rain. But Tika seemed completely at ease in the mud, which quickly quelled any worries Icke may have had.

"I was a little worried because she's young, but she completely rode like an experienced horse. It was probably one of the best rounds I've ever had on her," said Icke of their cross-country trip. "She just ate the course up."

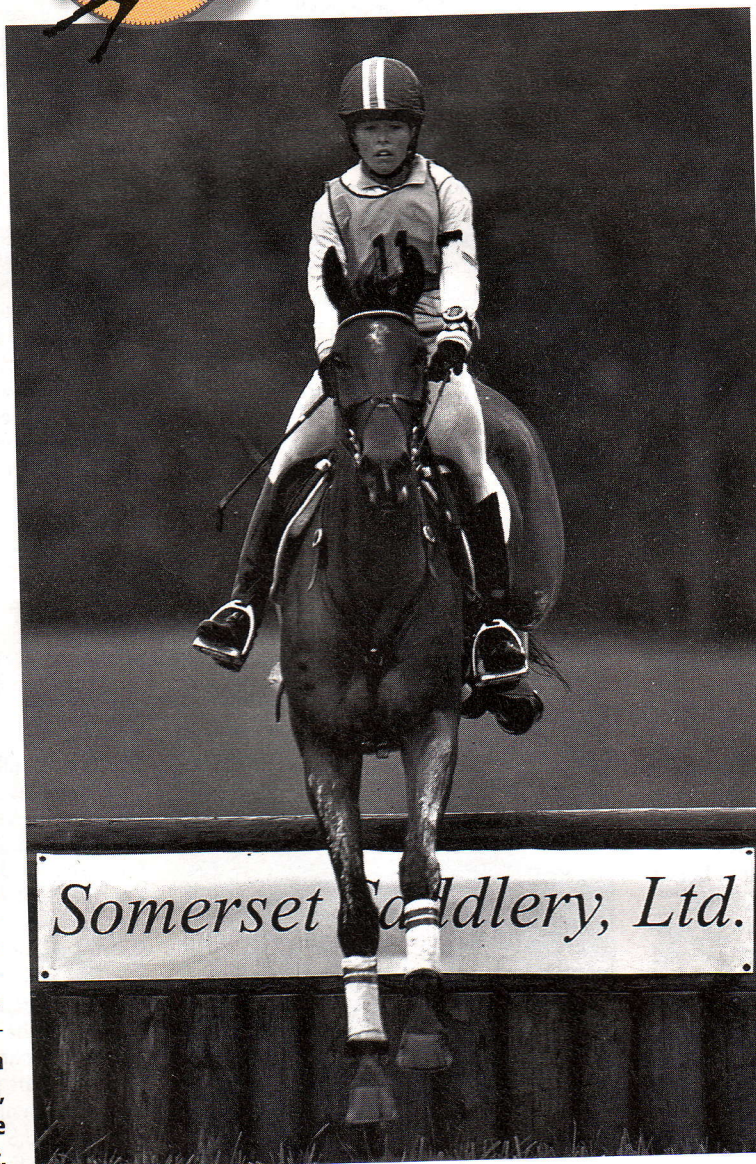
And she left no scraps behind, entering Sunday's show jumping in the top position.

Clark Montgomery and Up Spirit initially led after dressage, followed by Icke's trainer, Stuart Black on Fleeceworks Mystery du Val, and Molly Hooper Bull aboard Hole In One. But cross-country became the deciding factor for these top three riders as Montgomery and Bull incurred 20 jump faults and a

handful of time faults each, while Black's time faults dropped him down the standings.

Icke owned one rail in hand over Beth O'Rourke and Daxtra-Ordinaire, and the fate of the blue ribbon came down to the last rail in the show jumping arena. Icke cashed in her one-rail cushion halfway through the course but managed to remain composed and leave the rest in the cups to finished their three-day on top with 56.5 faults.

Tika was imported from France by R-H Equine and Black,



(Joshua A. Walker Photo)

Skyeler Icke and Tika won the CCI*, division 1, at Morven Park, in the mare's first three-day start.

and Icke had her first ride with Tika at Rubicon Farm Horse Trials (Va.) in November last year. "I've been working with Stuart Black for the last eight years, but just this year I became a full-time working student for him. So I've been with him every day getting [Tika] ready for this three-day, and it's really helped us get prepared," Icke said.

In December of 2005 Icke bought Tika with the generous help of close family friend Dr. Ilona Letmanyi, who is currently doing her residency in Santa Rosa, Calif. Though she couldn't be in Leesburg to watch Tika win, "she's been on the phone the whole time," Icke said. "She'll be very happy to hear."

"I'm lucky to have been given the opportunity to have her," Icke added.

► A First For Everything

Hadley Warner would have been happy to head back to Middleburg, Va., with second place in the CCI* young rider division at Morven Park. But after a close contest in the show jumping, she pinned a blue ribbon to No

Secrets' bridle and led the victory gallop to finish her first three-day on top.

After dressage, Lucia Strini and Liste de Folie held the division's highest seat while Warner and No Secrets stood second.

"We've really been working on dressage a lot, and we're really starting to hit it off," said Warner. "It always takes a little while to get to know a horse, and I feel like we've really reached a good point now."

Warner trains with Rainey Andrews during the school year while attending Foxcroft School in Middleburg, Va. During the summer, she returns to her home in Bridport, Vt., to train with John Bourgoïn.

"It's definitely fun—they're both really supportive," said Warner.

"We ride six to seven days a week, which takes a lot of commitment since it's not at school. I have to sacrifice a lot of other stuff for it," said the 18-year-old senior. "But we do a lot of hill work and have definitely been working on dressage."

And the extra work reaped major results as Warner and "Gabby" mastered a soggy cross-country course without fault.

"Roads and tracks was definitely muddy, which made it difficult. But I knew that