

## TODD WINS EVENTING INVITATIONAL AT KELT CAPITAL HORSE OF THE YEAR SHOW

By Diana Dobson

Mark Todd makes it all look so easy. He and NZB Gandalf were the winners by a rail in the eventing challenge at the Kelt Capital Horse of the Year Show in Hastings.

Todd was lying second after the dressage, with John Twomey on Flaunt It in the front.

The beautiful dapple grey NZB Gandalf rattled a rail on his way around the course but finished well inside the time allowed with nothing on the ground. He's very pleased with how he and NZB Gandalf are starting to work together but quick to point out it is too early to say whether the horse has the "wow factor".

Todd himself certainly has that wow factor. His very presence at the Horse of the Year Show has a somewhat surreal feeling about it.

When he enters a ring a hush descends on the crowd as people crane their necks and jostle for position to get the best view.

"The reaction to my coming back to compete is quite amazing," says Todd. "It is fantastic that everyone is getting so much enjoyment but it is still very early days yet."

And there is plenty of expectation out there. Eventing New Zealand's team manager and high performance director Blyth Tait is pleased with Todd's progress.

"If you could write a script you could say it is going to plan," he says with a chuckle.

Next stop for Todd is Puhinui Three Day Event where he will continue to chase qualifying scores.

Meanwhile, young Mathew Dickey (New Plymouth) has plenty to celebrate after taking first and third places in the Pony of the Year class.

The head prefect at Spotswood College had two of the three horses in the jump-off. Reigning Pony of the Year title holder Charlotte Myers (Hawera) and Miss Coruba stumbled after the second fence but quickly regained their footing to fly home clear in 38.53.

Dickey then brought out his grey Co Calico and despite a firm rub of one rail, managed to stop the clock clear in 37.83.

With only himself to beat, he came back out with the little palomino Wilful, and after stumbling at that second fence, went for a steady clear and came home in 40.45.

Wilful had earlier won the Pony Show Hunter of the Year award.

New Zealand couldn't replicate their win from yesterday in the second round of the Tri Nations today, but still hold a two point lead going into the final day tomorrow. It came down to a jump-off once again – this time it was South Africa and New Zealand tied on eight faults apiece, forcing two from each of the four-man teams to jump-off against the clock.

South Africa's Loretta Knowles-Taylor laid down the challenge, going clear in 35.57, followed by New Zealand's Anna Trent who was also clear but slightly slower in 36.19. South Africa's Barry Taylor stepped it up even more coming home in 34.17, leaving it up to reigning Horse of the Year title holder Oliver Edgecombe who couldn't match it, and dropped the last.

So the day belonged to South Africa, with New Zealand second and Australia third.

In the Tri Nations dressage, South Africa held onto its lead in the series, but New Zealand managed to move up into second place, leaving Australia trailing in third.

Tomorrow's final test will decide the overall winning country. New Zealand needs two high scoring tests to pull into the lead.

South Africa's Andrea Harrison has posted the top score in both rounds of the competition, with 19-year-old Jayden Brown (Australia) in second place today and yesterday.

New Zealand's Debbie Barke (Rotorua) produced two solid quietly ridden tests to end up third in both rounds, keeping New Zealand in the running. Fellow Kiwi rider Charlott Bayliss (Cambridge) had two difficult tests, with yesterday's challenging ride leaving her in last place. Today she again competed in unfortunate circumstances, with her drawn mount Roulette SW reacting strongly to applause from the next arena, giving Bayliss a bronco experience, both before and during her test. However she managed to pull a workable test out and ended up in fifth place, with Australia's Alycia Targa in last place after an uninspiring test on Aviator.

The Horse of the Year Show culminates tomorrow (Sun) with the Bell Tea Olympic Cup being presented to the showjumper of the year, along with a cheque for \$120,000.

Twenty-two of the nation's best have entered, including internationals John Whitaker and his niece Ellen Whitaker – both of who look highly likely to ride for Great Britain in the Olympics this year.

#### Results –

Eventing invitational: Mark Todd (Canterbury) NZB Gandalf 1, Mark Twomey (Cambridge) Flaunt It 2, Donna Smith (Waikato/USA) Stannage 3.  
Pony of the Year: Mathew Dickey (New Plymouth) Co Calico 1, Charlotte Myers (Hawera) Miss Coruba 2, Mathew Dickey (New Plymouth) Miss Coruba 3, Greta Porter (Hawke's Bay) Chobidong, Luke Dee (Cambridge) Wild Thing, Alexandra Randall (Auckland) Millbrook =4.