

IRELAND INTERNATIONAL CAVAN 2010 - Hetty Woyka and Smokin Gun

Time seemed to rush by between the announcement of the teams and GCSE's. However the morning arrived and family Woyka, Valentine, Hetty, Arthur, the dog and mummy were ready.

We had a good trip out to Ireland stopping on the way with the Meyricks in Pembroke, who let us turn out Gunner in one of their paddocks. Arthur had a fantastic afternoon with Freddie at their Dinosaur Park. We got on the boat at 3 am and finally arrived at Rosslaire at 6.30am. The Welsh convoy of three boxes, allowed us to join them (we stuck the flag out of the window after the petrol stop) and we made Cavan four and a half hours later.

Cavan is a fantastic place and completely set up for horses. It has three International size arenas under one roof with bars and shops. There must have been five out door arenas and two grass arenas with permanent banks and ditches. The stables were all indoors with permanent stables for about 800. We moved to the English Camp and decorated everything with flags. The lorry park was brilliant with taps and electric hook up all over the place.

After a day of rest, we did dressage on the first morning in the large International arena indoors. As this was the Irish Pony Society's Championship show, it was alive with atmosphere. All the dressage judges where Irish and had an interesting ploy of stopping the riders before they went in for a chat. However Gunner and Hetty pulled off a good solid test, as in fact did all the English team.

We then had the welcoming parade with teams coming into the bandstand and all coming forward for presentation with their National Anthem. The two English teams looked brilliant in their sponsored rugs and numnahs by Fylde Saddlery.

This when the blip appeared. The Irish Pony Society deemed that for their rule reading, every part of the competition (and this included the jumping) everything had to be done in a snaffle. This for team Woyka was not good news because Gunner is not a snaffle pony and we had a bleak future at the competition between not letting the team down and what would be safe for our daughter. The Chef's got together and the Irish agreed to let everyone compete but it would be with five extra penalties in the worker part and five seconds in the show-jumping for non snaffle ponies.

The Working Hunter Course was brilliant, quite technical but not too big. Claire McCullagh worked all the ponies in and did a fabulous job. Hetty set off with Gunner determined to make this score count as she knew five seconds in the show jumping would make too much difference. They went brilliantly, from a huge water ditch filled with ping pong balls to a double with sloping rails. The one at the top of the hill came down, (Hetty getting him slightly deep). So they finished with ten penalties with five to add. Fifth after this section.

The show jumping was full of atmosphere and they went clear again with one down in the jump off. The other team members did brilliantly, Lucinda Parkes and William Hinkley jumping amazing rounds.

By now it was nearly midnight as the showjumping had been delayed by two hours, (an unusual class of loose jumping four and five year old ponies in our warm up arena). The closing party and presentation was alive with tension as none of the scores had been announced after each class and no one had any idea of where we were. Hetty's team got bronze and the other English team won. Irish second. It was an amazing moment when the Welsh and Scottish helped us sing the National Anthem we blasted it out and went back to the lorries to drink Champagne till the early hours.

We had a great run back again stopping by the Meyricks to let Gunner have a sleep.

Hetty had a fantastic time and met lots of new friends. It was stressful but then it wouldn't be an International Competition without a bit of tension.