



One stride closer

Olympic dreams become real

Holly Jacks-Smith and More Inspiration are officially qualified for Eventing at the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro.

The two competed at their first CCI*** event at Jersey Fresh International Three-Day Event, New Jersey, May 6 to 10. Not only were they the highest-placed Canadian team, finishing in a respectable 12th place, they became the first Canadian pair eligible for the 2016 Olympics.

"I was looking forward to having a positive experience around such a demanding course," Holly said. "I didn't even realize I was in a position to qualify for the Olympics."

Holly put in a solid dressage test, before letting More Inspiration do what he does best: jump.

The former racehorse made fast work of the cross country course, boldly conquering each question. He crossed the finish line in trademark race horse style, still revved up and ready to go. He show jumped well on day three to complete the event in a solid spot.

"I'm thrilled with how far we've come," Holly said.

More Inspiration is a former race horse, having ran at Woodbine and Fort Erie. Holly purchased him for \$2,000 as a show horse prospect.

"More Inspiration has exceeded every expectation I've had for him," she said. "He's matured a lot, and is proving himself in ways I had never dreamed of."

Jacks-Smith and her husband Bruce Smither operate an equestrian training facility in the Orangeville area.

About eventing

Eventing is an equestrian triathlon of sorts. Riders use the same horse to compete in three different events over the span of two to three days; dressage, cross country and show jumping. The goal is to accumulate the fewest number of penalty points. In dressage, a panel of judges rate how accurately and correctly horse and rider negotiate a series of predetermined manoeuvres. The cross country phase is the most exhilarating element of an event, where teams set out to cover ground quickly over a course of "natural" obstacles. Courses usually span kilometres, and require horse and rider to jump solid fences, splash through water, negotiate banks and drops and leap over ditches, all while maintaining a galloping speed. Penalties are added to a team's score if they have refusals or if they go over the allotted time limit. Show jumping is a technical challenge over a course of jumps in an arena. Once again, teams must complete the pattern within the time limit, leaving the rails up. Knocking down fences and going over the time also result in penalties.