

## Meet Four Fair Hill First-Timers

By: Lindsay Berreth

What do a four-star veteran, a nighttime nurse, and two “quirky” Thoroughbred fans have in common?

They're all making their first trek to the Dutta Corp. Fair Hill International!

We caught up with four riders who all came to Fair Hill with a different goal.

### **Jessica Schultz**

The last time Jessica Schultz visited Fair Hill was in 2003 to watch the Pan American Games, so she was excited to get back, but this time, she brought Lock N'Load to compete in the CCI\*\*.



*Jessica Schultz and Lock N' Load (shown at the AEC). Photo by Lindsay Berreth*

Fresh off a reserve championship in the intermediate division at the Nutrena/USEA American Eventing Championships (Texas), the pair have been competing at the level for a few years now, but getting to a CCI\*\* has been tough since Schultz was working on her nursing degree.

Now a registered nurse, she works in the ICU at a hospital in Augusta, Ga., and runs her eventing business, Fair Play Equestrian, with partner Scott Sipala, who she met in nursing school, in Aiken, S.C.

Schultz, 30, bought "Lucas", a 13-year-old Thoroughbred gelding (Doneraile Court—Bering), as a 3-year-old and brought him through the levels.

"I got him as a rank 3-year-old. You had to catch him with a whip in hand," she said. "I've had him from his first horse trial leaving me in the dirt. He's great on the flat, when he listens, and cross-country he's very bold. I've been working pretty hard with a show jumper and that's gotten better."

Schultz works night shifts to be able to ride and enjoys a flexible schedule so she can compete.

"I've been trying to head this direction for a couple of years and this year we made the right steps to make it happen," she said. "He feels great and he's going really well. We had to take the opportunity when we had it."

She's excited to tackle the course at Fair Hill and is hoping for a competitive placing.. "Even on a bad day in dressage he's been fairly competitive," she said. "I'm hoping, number one, to finish the event with a sound horse, and then of course hoping to be competitive."

### **Joe Meyer**

Joe Meyer is certainly no CCI first-timer, having ridden around most of the world's four-stars and represented New Zealand at the 2008 Olympics in Hong Kong, but he's never stepped foot on Fair Hill's grounds until this weekend.

## THE CHRONICLE OF THE HORSE



Joe Meyer and Clip Clip (shown at the AEC). Photo by Lindsay Berreth.

Meyer moved to the U.S. about four years ago and is now based in Ocala, Fla. He brought his long time partner Sanskrit, and newer ride with the best name, Clip Clop, to contest the CCI\*\*\* at Fair Hill.

Sanskrit (Silent Hunter—Deb's Delight, Drumochter) was bred by Meyer's parents at their Mamaku Stud in New Zealand. Their program has produced such four-star horses as Mark Todd's Charisma and Dan Jocelyn's Silence, as well as Meyer's now-retired four-star partner Snip, who's a half brother to Sanskrit.

The gelding's had a light season and hasn't contested a CCI at any level since Pau CCI\*\*\*\* (France) in 2010, but Meyer wanted to bring him along with Clip Clop. "He has been a fabulous horse. He's had niggly on and off soundness problems, but in his day he's been around Pau CCI\*\*\*\* and was second in the British Open in 2010," he said. "He's been more of an advanced horse since [I was based] in England. This last half of the season, even though he hasn't had good results on the board, he's felt pretty good and sound.

"He feels a million bucks. He's a big galloping horse. Everyone told me that you've got to go really fast to make the time, and it's really hard, so I thought, well, this is probably the right horse to have," he added.

Meyer said he knows what Sanskrit's limits are, so he'll listen to him as he makes his way around the cross-country.

"It's a bit like an old marriage really," he said. "He's unlike Snip in the way that you can't just get on him and say, 'Can you go and do this now?' after a break. He's a big, rangey horse and takes warming up and getting him in the groove. It takes a few days. We have a great partnership and I know him pretty well."

Clip Clop came to Meyer's barn via his owner, Madison Foote, who'd campaigned him to the two-star level. He was meant to be sold, but he and Meyer are forging a partnership this season after a less-than-perfect start, so he might be staying in the barn longer.

"He is a very quirky, tricky little horse, who's had me off a few times because of his little quirks and bits and pieces," said Meyer, 44. "In the last three to four months, even though he's still quirky, he's really turned the corner, cross-country wise. He's starting to feel now like he's a really good horse. His last run at the AECs and at Richland [Park (Mich)], he's starting to feel like he could really do the big stuff. I'm quite excited about him. I know that I've still got masses of work to do, but his cross-country has come along and he's an exceptional show jumper. The dressage gets better and better."

Meyer is excited to jump around Derek Di Grazia's track at Fair Hill and is enjoying his time in Maryland. When we spoke, he'd already indulged in some crab cakes.

“All they ever told me was it’s hock-deep mud and it never stops raining,” he said. “Right now, it could be nothing more to the contrary. It’s been gorgeous. I love coming to new events. It’s part of the cool thing about the sport.”

### **Hillary Irwin**

Hillary Irwin brought two vastly different horses to the CCI\*\* at her first Fair Hill. A former rider under Sharon White, Irwin is now out on her own, forging her way to the upper levels from “middle-of-nowhere” Elkin, N.C., where she trains with Bonnie Mosser.



*Hillary Irwin and Danehill Sunset (shown at Fair Hill). Photo by Lindsay Berreth.*

Bit Of Irish, an 8-year-old Thoroughbred (Drewman—Tarascon, Notebook) bred by her grandparents, never made it to the track after the economy went bad, and she inherited her as a giveaway sales horse.

Now 8, she's stayed in Irwin's barn and has become a willing, but quirky, partner.

"I adore her. She's the best friend type, but she's a snarky little thing," she said. "She loves to jump. She's a wonderful partner and I trust her. She's probably one of those horses that I'll never have again. She's very much a mare in that she needs her confidence. It took me awhile to get there. I was sort of hit or miss last year, and this year she's been absolutely amazing. She's stepped up beyond belief and I'm so excited for her. She deserves to do well here."

While the 15.3-hand mare is not the best mover on the flat according to Irwin, she tries her heart out over fences.

Irwin's other ride, Danehill Sunset, was imported as a 3-year-old after racing in Ireland and England. He raced a bit in the U.S., and Irwin bought him from Graham Motion.

Now 8, "Dobbie" is also sensitive and quirky, but quiet enough that a child could ride him.

"He's a different little guy, but he's a neat horse and gets better every day," said Irwin, 29. "They're so different. He probably should have been a mare. He's very sensitive and is the most genuine horse you could find on the face of the planet. He's such a good guy. It took him three years to really, really trust me."

Irwin came to Fair Hill last year to ride another homebred in the Young Event Horse championship and stayed to walk the two-star course and she's excited to tackle her first CCI\*\* on Saturday.

"I feel good. I don't think you could ask for two better horses to do it on," she said. "I brought them along, so I know everything about them. For me, that's the best thing. We've been together so long we're like the three musketeers going along. It's a big deal, and I think we're ready."

## **Bevin Dugan**

Riding at the upper levels has always been a dream for Bevin Dugan, and until three years ago, she was beginning to think it might not ever happen.

Dugan grew up riding at King Oak Farm in Massachusetts, and now has her own business out of Winchester Stables in Newfane, Vt. About three years ago, a group of friends and clients decided she needed a shot at the top with a nice horse, so they bought Kemmerlin, who'd previously been campaigned to prelim by Jan Bynny.



*Bevin Dugan and Kemmerlin (shown at Plantation Field). Photo by Lindsay Berreth.*

The Thoroughbred gelding of unrecorded breeding had raced and has a few quirks that made getting to know him a challenge.

“It’s taken us a long time to really trust each other,” said Dugan. “Not that I ever felt he was unsafe or anything, but he was quirky and a bit tough, but more than being in a hurry to get up the levels, I sort of felt like he was a horse I really needed to make sure I took time and did things right and developed a really good partnership. He’s taken a bit of patience and a sense of humor. Now that we have that, I feel like he would do anything.”

Dugan describes “Kem” as very brave and careful with a great gallop. She’d been to Fair Hill to watch and help friends the last two years, but it will be her first CCI\*\*.

“I always felt like this would be a good place for him because he’s such a great galloper and tends to be a horse that does well with a bit of terrain and an attacking kind of course. I’m really excited to do it,” she said.

Dugan, 37, had only ridden through prelim when she got Kem, always selling nice horses or never having one that could make it through the levels.

“It’s so exciting for me. I’m not young, and I’ve been doing this for a long time. I think for that reason, it’s just all that more exciting for me to be doing it,” she said. “I’ve always felt like I was doing things pretty well and trying to do things well and always doing right by the horses, and you start to think, ‘Oh, this may never happen for me,’ but the fact that I’m starting to be able to do this is really cool.

“It’s such a great sport, and I’ve spent enough time at the dressage shows and the hunter/jumper shows to really appreciate how special the eventing is,” she added. “I think everybody kind of feels that way about it. I’m so appreciative of being able to be here and do this and not be watching anymore.”

Wonder how these first-timers are doing? [Make sure to follow along with all the Fair Hill CCI action with the Chronicle!](#)