

Tina Yates Keeps Her Cool To Win \$70,000 Go Rentals Grand Prix At HITS Coachella

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The second week of the HITS Coachella Desert Circuit wrapped up with stiff competition in the \$70,000 Go Rentals Grand Prix. Tina Yates and her mount Zelote VDL scored a big win with a little help from trainer and husband Jonathen Yates.

“My husband said, ‘Whatever you do, do not go crazy,’ ” said Tina. “I knew when I went in that I had to be quick and tidy, but not crazy. So that was my plan, and it all just fell together today.”



Tina Yates on Zelote VDL. Photo by ESI Photography

A total of 34 horse-and-rider pairs took to the grand prix field on Sunday afternoon to tackle Florencio Hernandez’s first round track. The technical course proved challenging, with only seven pairs turning in a clear round to advance to the jump-off.

First to jump off was Derek Braun and Split Rock Farm’s Lacarolus. The 14-year-old bay Holsteiner gelding had a refusal at the triple bar but circled and finished the course to end on 4 faults.

Four more competitors would also incur jumping faults in the short course. Guy Thomas and Emily Livermore’s Jonkheer Z were quick and tidy but had one rail down, as did Keri Potter and Julia Koetting’s Bitalica. Christian Heineking and NKH Caruso put in the fastest time of the day, but they paid for it with 8 faults, and Richard Spooner and Cristallo had three down.

In the end, only two pairs finished double clear. Robert Blanchette piloted his own 10-year-old gray Oldenburg gelding, Coupis, to a beautiful clear round with a time of 40.99 seconds. He held the lead for several rounds until Tina and Zelote VDL stopped the timers at 39.30 seconds.

Tina said the key to her clear round was to keep it cool at the beginning of the course. “Sometimes when you let him go too early, he just wants to go,” said Tina of the 14-year old bay Dutch Warmblood gelding, owned by the Yateses’ Highpoint Farm LLC. “So I just tried to hold him together.”

Want to know more about Tina Yates, who was a junior star but took a winding path to the professional rider ranks? Read COH’s 2016 Winner Of The Week article about her.

Tina has had Zelote since he was an 8-year-old, and she’s developed a great relationship with him. “He’s a blast to ride,” she said. “He’s hot, but there’s nothing you feel like you can’t do on him.”

They made their five-star debut together in 2016 and were third in the Longines FEI Las Vegas World Cup qualifier in November of 2016.

Tina said she had a hunch it would be a good day at Coachella because she knew Zelote was feeling particularly spunky. “The sassier he is, the better he is,” she said. “This morning in the stables, his tongue was out, and his head was to the side, and he was acting all goofy. Usually, those are the days when he’s the best.”

Tina will be at HITS Coachella through the remainder of the Desert Circuit, but she hasn’t decided on her exact 2018 plans for Zelote. “We’ll see what develops, but mostly we just want to be as consistent as we can be,” she said.

See full results from the \$70,000 Go Rentals Grand Prix.