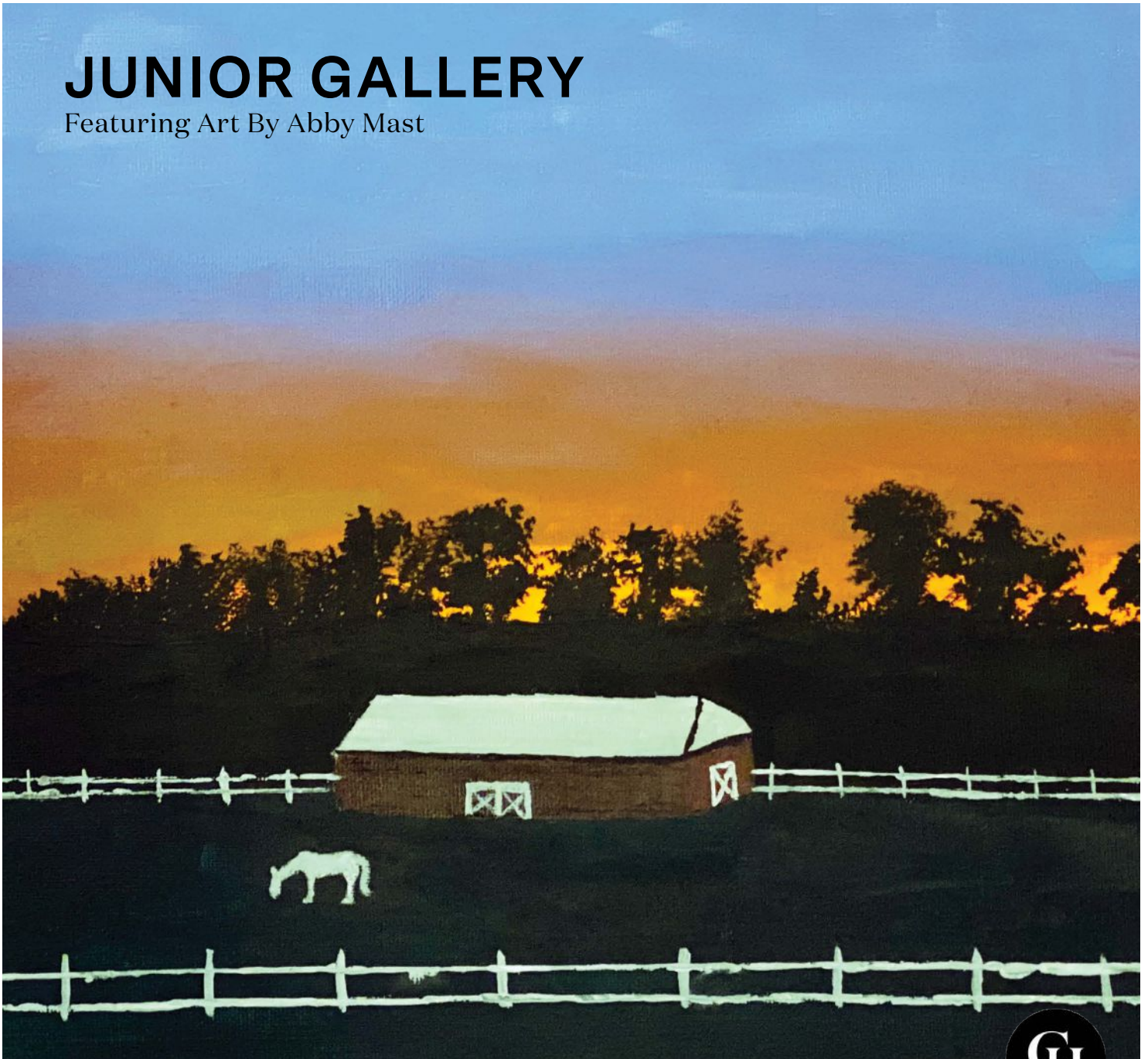


THE CHRONICLE OF THE HORSE

JUNIOR GALLERY

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5 QUESTIONS WITH:

Phillip Dutton

By **KIMBERLY LOUSHIN**
Photos By **CEALY TETLEY PHOTOGRAPHY**

Phillip Dutton knew he'd found a good horse when Azure arrived at his True Prospect Farm almost two years ago, but his experience told him it would take time to establish a true partnership with the mare.

The Irish Sport Horse (Omar—Cavalier Roselier, Cavalier Royal) was bred and brought up to the four-star level by Irish eventer Elizabeth Power. Under Power's saddle, "Sky" was second at the 2021 Mallow CCI4*-S (Ireland) and ninth at the Aachen CCI04*-S (Germany) in her first season at the level before Caroline, Anne and Michael Moran purchased the 11-year-old for Dutton to ride.

"She's a great athlete," he said. "She's a very comfortable ride and just gives you a good feeling. She felt very scopey, and that the size of the jumps wasn't going to back her off, and she could do that easily. Obviously she had done well with Elizabeth as well, and so [I had] the confidence that she had a good upbringing and good start to the sport."

Though Dutton and Sky earned top placings in 2022, including fourth at the Red Hills International Horse Trials CCI4*-S (Florida) and third at the The Dutta Corp. Tryon International Three-Day Event CCI4*-L (North Carolina), Dutton was still refining the dressage and show jumping phases. Their partnership took a giant leap forward when they topped the CCI4*-L at the Mars Equestrian Bromont CCI, held June 8-11 in Bromont, Quebec.

The pair sat 15th after dressage, adding just .4 time penalties on cross-country to move into the lead. They added another .4 time penalties in show jumping to clinch the victory over Arielle Aharoni and Dutch Times.

"She was pretty spectacular," said Dutton, West Grove, Pennsylvania. "Obviously the dressage is the weakest part of what we do at the moment, and it's a work in progress. She got a little wound up in the test. She's been working pretty well at home, but we had a bit more atmosphere.

"She's pretty much a freak on cross-country," he continued. "She's careful but still honest and brave, and she's a very fast horse and has great stamina, so that part went well. Show jumping, she's been a bit difficult for me as well because she does get wound up and pretty aggressive, but we worked hard at that all winter with Lauren Hough, and she actually show jumped beautifully."

Dutton is friends with Hough, an Olympic show jumper, and she's helped him on and off for about a decade. Hough helped him develop a warm-up routine that works well for Sky.

"[We're] doing plenty of walking and slowing it all down, so that each jump is very deliberate, and trying not to let her get thinking like a cross-country horse but more like a show jumping horse," he said. "And even on the sort of more open, forward lines, trying to slow her down at the jump and not let her get quick at the jump."



Azure, ridden by Phillip Dutton, earned her first FEI win at the Mars Equestrian Bromont Three-Day Event in the CCI4*-L.

With two good four-star long runs under Sky's belt, Dutton is now looking toward the mare's five-star debut, which he hopes to do at the Maryland 5 Star at Fair Hill this October. In the meantime, he's going to continue chipping away at her dressage with the help of Grand Prix rider Silva Martin.

"She gets better every day. The main thing is that she's got to be able to take a deep breath, at least at competitions," said Dutton, 59. "She's working well at home, and I think the movements are becoming a little easier for her now as well, so I think that's helpful. Certainly six months ago the four-star movements for the test were pretty hard for her, and that contributed to tension as well, but everything's becoming easier and easier for her now. We're definitely on the right path."

What was it like building a partnership with a horse that competed at a high level with someone else?

I'd done that a bit with other horses, and when you take over somebody else's horses, they kind of still are somebody else's ride. It takes a while until the horse becomes your ride in most cases.

I have to say on the cross-country right from the first event,

we just clicked. [Power] said to me, "This will be one of the best cross-country horses you've ever had," and she's right. But it's certainly taken some time with her flatwork and show jumping for me to understand her, and for her to work with me as well, and that's still ongoing. But we're starting to mesh pretty well.

What made you feel Bromont was a good event for her to target?

If you jump around Bromont four-star and do it well, I think you've got a horse that's ready for a five-star.

She's only done the one four-star long, which was at Tryon last year, and it's fair to say that I think Bromont's cross-country is a big step up from that. So it was kind of logical for her to go there and make sure that she's as good and prepared as I thought she was to move up to the next level.

You've had such a long, successful career, but is there anything else you'd still like to accomplish?

There's plenty I'd like to accomplish. Certainly I'd like to notch up another win at a five-star.

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Boyd Martin scored a hat trick at the Mars Equestrian Bromont Three-Day Event. He topped the CCI3*-L with Chiraz (pictured), the CCI2*-L with Asti's Charming, and the CCI4*-S with On Cue.

Mars Equestrian Bromont CCI Three-Day Event Bromont, Quebec, Canada—June 8-11

CCI4*-L				
Horse/Rider/Nation	Dressage	Cross-Country Faults/Time	Show Jumping Faults/Time	Total
1. Azure/Phillip Dutton/USA	36.4	0/4	0/4	37.2
2. Dutch Times/Arielle Aharoni/USA	32.9	0/8.4	0/0	41.3
3. Capitol HIM/Hannah Sue Hollberg/USA	35.6	0/6.8	0/0	42.4
4. FE Golden Eye/Colleen Loach/CAN	27.6	0/15.2	0/0	42.8
5. Bacyrrouge/Lindsay Traisnel/CAN	31.0	0/12.4	4/8	48.2
6. Lovely Assistant/Hanna Bundy/CAN	37.3	0/12.4	0/4	50.1
7. Watson GS/Jessica Phoenix/CAN	33.0	0/23.2	0/0	56.2
8. Cooley Flight/Ryan Wood/AUS	35.8	0/22.4	0/0	58.2
9. Freedom GS/Jessica Phoenix/CAN	35.2	11/14.8	0/0	61.0
10. Diara/Ariel Grald/USA	36.2	20/23.6	4/0	83.8

Also competed: 11. Dasset Olympus/L. Heard Wood/USA, 86.0; 12. Chilly/L. Heard Wood/USA, 95.8; 13. Rock Phantom/S. Kozumplik/USA, 140.8. Rider fall on cross-country: Flower Girl/J. Jarnstrom-Dennis/SWE; Audacious/K. Lehari/CAN; Ideal HX/S. Lilley/USA. Retired on cross-country: Isla GS/J. Phoenix/CAN; Fluorescent Adolescent/J. Phoenix/CAN. Withdrawn before dressage: Forrest Gump 124/A. Grald/USA.

Is there a horse from earlier in your career that you wish you still had now or could ride again?

A horse I feel I didn't quite get to finish on was Woodburn. He unfortunately had a pasture accident, and we had to euthanize him. But he was such a talented horse.

He was a full New Zealand Thoroughbred and talented beyond most horses in all three phases. Everybody I worked with in dressage and cross-country and show jumping were all really taken by him. He got to run at the [2010 Alltech FEI] World Equestrian Games [Kentucky], but I never quite got him to his full potential. It was still a work in progress, so that would be one that I sort of think that I didn't quite get where I wanted to go with him.

The sport's changed so much. Is there anything that you wish hadn't changed?

No, I think it's all good.

The part that concerns me the most is the big variation in cross-country standards and difficulties. This four-star long at Bromont was maximum dimensions and length and very tiring, but then you can go to other ones that are much smaller and not really as difficult in the standards. There's a big disparity in cross-country difficulty, especially at that four-star level and three-star level. That sort of sends mixed signals about what horses you're going to have. You can certainly get a horse that's won a three-star at a softer event, but that doesn't mean to say it's going to be at the same level or talent as a horse that has won at, let's say a Bromont in the three-star.

Then that flows onto championships and Olympic Games, and what kind of horse are you going to take to some of championships, which may be lesser difficulty on cross-country. It's a little bit of a mixed bag of events that we have going on at the moment. ●

**Mars Equestrian Bromont CCI
Three-Day Event**

Bromont, Quebec, Canada—June 8-11

CCI3*-L: 1. Chiraz/B. Martin/USA, 29.6;
2. Maks Mojo C/M. Clarkson/USA, 32.5;
3. Mitchell/K. Lehari/CAN, 33.1. **CCI2*-L:**

1. Asti's Charming/B. Martin/USA, 23.0;
2. Fernhill Shutterfly/P. Dutton/USA,
24.9; 3. Mo Chroi/B. Martin/USA, 26.9.

CCI2*-L Under 25: 1. Cooley Chromatic/S.
Schulman/USA, 29.6; 2. EWSZ Mozart/E.
Gilbert/USA, 34.1; 3. DHI Showman/N.

Stanlaske/USA, 37.2. **CCI4*-S:** 1. On
Cue/B. Martin/USA, 45.8; 2. Z/P. Dutton/
USA, 51.7; 3. Millfield Lancando/B.
Selmayr/USA, 54.9.

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The advertisement features a background image of a white horse rearing up against a sunset sky. In the foreground, there is a gold-colored bag of 'Custom Blend Formula' with a label that reads 'secondvet secondvet Apothecary Shoppe'. The text is primarily in white and orange, with a dark orange footer containing the website and phone number.