

'A legend of all time'

Ros Canter successfully defends her Burghley title while pregnant with her second child, as the extraordinary Lordships Graffalo becomes the first event horse to win twice here as well as twice at Badminton



FINAL PLACINGS
1st Ros Canter (GBR) on Lordships Graffalo
2nd Austin O'Connor (IRL) on Colorado Blue
3rd Harry Meade (GBR) on Cavalier Crystal

Winning owners: Archie and Michele Saul
Breeders: Lordships Stud and Pennie Wallace
Groom: Sarah Charley



Main image and inset: the inimitable Lordships Graffalo etches his name in the annals of eventing legend with Ros Canter, as they retain their Burghley title

Defender Burghley, Lincs

By MARTHA TERRY

ARKLE, Frankel, and now Lordships Graffalo. Very rarely, once in a generation, a horse comes along who transcends the sport. In defending his Burghley title, by a record nine-penalty margin, Lordships Graffalo has surely galloped his way out of the eventing niche and into the realm of household names.

"What an amazing horse – I hope he'll go down in history as a legend of our sport, a legend of all time, not only for his performances but also his character," said his rider Ros Canter after sealing this historic victory. "Walter" is an unbelievable horse who thrives on these occasions. I could have dropped the reins and waved at the crowd for 15 minutes – not many horses would do that."

Michele and Archie Saul's Grafenstolz 13-year-old gelding was sublime in every phase. His extraordinary cross-country was sublime on a track deemed the toughest in 18 years elevated him to a class of his own despite high-quality rivals. Quite simply, he looked like he was running over a different course set to a different time.

"He's the ultimate event horse – he can do every single phase, but the standout is cross-country; he doesn't have a weakness," said Ros, 39. "What a lucky girl I am." Not just lucky, but exceptional in her own right.

It's easy to give all the credit to this outstanding animal, but Ros has herself won seven five-stars on three separate horses. She's the first to insist that she didn't naturally have the knack of riding fast across country but has honed her talent to be able to bring out the best in her remarkable partner.

And this competition came with added pressure, as Ros announced a few weeks prior that she is pregnant with her second child.

"There was a lot at stake, all eyes were on me and rightly so," said Ros, admitting she only decided to run cross-country after "popping a few fences" on Walter on Saturday morning. "I knew then it was all systems go. But it was a big deal. At the start of the week, I felt quite bodily self-conscious and bloated, knowing I'm bigger than I was, so I tweaked my diet and a few things.

"But the moment I'd done my dressage and performed well, I felt better and better and had no doubts. The more I think of myself as an athlete, the more comfortable I feel.

"On the whole I've had nothing but support, and the sense people just wanted to see Walter again."

And so they should. For we are witnessing greatness playing out before our eyes. The crowd applauded Walter

Pictures by Peter Nilsson

SUNDAY TACTICS
Ros distracted herself from the long wait to jump by "setting lots of alarms" telling her when to switch on, switch off and get changed. "I whittled away the day, otherwise I never switch off and that's a dangerous place to be."

4 HORSES HAVE WON MORE THAN ONE BURGHLEY
1963 THE LAST TIME AN IRISH RIDER WAS ON THE PODIUM

THE GREATEST OF ALL TIME?

FOR the past year Lordships Graffalo has been mentioned in the same breath as Michael Jung's mighty double Olympic champion La Biosthetique-Sam FBW, but could we now be witnessing the greatest event horse of all time?

Both are no-nonsense bays, with Graffalo the more likely to be in the top few after dressage. They would both add precious little to that first-phase score, with cross-country prowess their superpower. Both seem in a different league to their peers, and can stamp their superiority at both five-star and championships.

By the time Sam was 13, Graffalo's age now, he'd won one standalone five-star to Graffalo's four, but 17 internationals compared to eight, and four individual medals to his rival's one. The question is how much more Graffalo can achieve.



LA BIOSSTHETIQUE-SAM FBW
Born 2000
Individual championship medals
● 2 Olympic golds 2012 and 2016
● 1 world gold 2010
● 1 European gold 2011
● 1 European bronze 2009

Standalone CCIS* wins
● Luhmühlen 2009
● Burghley 2015
● Badminton 2016
● Plus, two seconds and two thirds

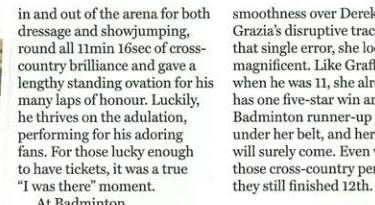
24 international wins



LORDSHIPS GRAFFALO
Born 2012
Individual championship medals
● 1 European gold 2023

Standalone CCIS* wins
● Badminton 2023 and 2025
● Burghley 2024 and 2025
● Plus, one second

8 international wins



CAVALIER CRYSTAL
Born 2012
Individual championship medals
● 1 European gold 2023

Standalone CCIS* wins
● Badminton 2023 and 2025
● Burghley 2024 and 2025
● Plus, one second

8 international wins

Paul and Diana Ridgeon's mare was the only horse to match Graffalo for speed and

Rosalent takes early lead

Oliver Townend and Cooley Rosalent trump the eventual winners in phase one, as personal bests flood in

EVENTING'S chief protagonists carried on where they left off at the last British five-star, with the Badminton winner Lordships Graffalo and runner-up Cooley Rosalent locking horns from the outset.

Personal best scores proliferated throughout the two days of dressage (see box, below), and with Vitali already holding the Burghley record of 18.7, another sub-20 looked likely. But it was Rosalent who danced to the fore on this occasion, her score of 22 short of her own five-star high of 21.1, but good enough to hold off Graffalo, by 0.4.

Bar a rushed mid-test halt, the mare's marks did not drop below seven, yielding six nines. "I was caught out by the atmosphere; she wasn't as quiet as I'd have liked," said Oliver. "At times she's more like a racehorse than an event horse. But once she'd had her spook and we were into the more open work, she started to breathe."

While Rosalent's hallmarks were harmony, boldness and impulsion, Graffalo produced a different but equally appealing picture, with softness and submission. The judges could barely split the pair. Christina Klingspor, at E, tied them; Andrew Bennie at C ranked Oliver first; and Valerie Pride at M had Ros, who scored the only 10, for the final halt, leading.

"I was thrilled with the flying changes – having missed two at Badminton," said Ros. "He loves an occasion, and thoroughly enjoys the crowd cheering him into the arena. But he's been a pain in the stable, like a pop star who's become a little high-maintenance with all his fame."

Tim Price's hopes of breaking his own record flourished when Vitali lost momentum in the shoulder-in. They recovered to post 23.1 for third, but without their usual plethora of nines.

"We had rideability and relaxation," said Tim. "It's about delivering in the ring what I know he's capable of. Just in that first shoulder-in, he was thinking, 'Are we stopping? I'm like, 'Mate, we've just started.'"

Sam Lissington franked her summer form with a stunner on Lord Seeköng for 24 in fourth. Their highlights were the flying changes, and an overall impression of power and precision.

MAVERICK ON TOP
WHILE the top four came on day two, Piggy March held

in and out of the arena for both dressage and showjumping, round all 11min 16sec of cross-country brilliance and gave a lengthy standing ovation for his many laps of honour. Luckily, he thrives on the adulation, performing for his adoring fans. For those lucky enough to have tickets, it was a true "I was there" moment.

At Badminton four months ago, Ros and Walter snatched victory in the final seconds of Oliver Townend's showjumping round on Cooley Rosalent when the mare dropped a pole to forego her lead. Here, their win was far more assured. However, it would have been a nail-biter without dressage leader Rosalent's run-out in an otherwise rapid cross-country round.

Paul and Diana Ridgeon's mare was the only horse to match Graffalo for speed and

smoothness over Derek di Grazia's disruptive track. That single error, she look magnificent. Like Graffalo when he was 11, she already has one five-star win and Badminton runner-up prior under her belt, and her tir will surely come. Even with those cross-country penal they still finished 12th.

"There was a lot at stake, all eyes were on me and rightly so"

ROS CANTER ON WINNING WHILE PREGNANT

"IT'S LIKE WIN TO A WIN"

INSTEAD, IT WAS LEFT TO AUSTIN O'CONNOR AND THE SAL SYNDICATE'S Colorado Blue to chase the winners home.

"We've been beaten by out-and-out champions," said Austin. "Finishing second is maybe as good as winning because the history books will say this is the best-ever combination to grace five-star eventing. It's like a win to me."

The runners-up posted Ireland's best Burghley result

PLACINGS AFTER DRESSAGE
1st Oliver Townend (GBR) on Cooley Rosalent
2nd Ros Canter (GBR) on Lordships Graffalo
3rd Tim Price (NZL) on Vitali

Overall: final scoreboard

Final position	Horse and rider	DEFENDER BURGHLEY 2025				Total
		Dressage	Cross-country Jumping Time	Showjumping Time	Penalties	
1	Lordships Graffalo (Ros Canter, GBR)	22.4	-	-	1.2	23.6
2	Colorado Blue (Austin O'Connor, IRL)	27.8	-	0.8	4	32.6
3	Cavalier Crystal (Harry Meade, GBR)	30.5	-	2.8	-	33.3
4	Annaghmore Valenor (Harry Meade, GBR)	29.8	-	3.2	4	37
5	Topspin (Alice Casburn, GBR)	31.4	-	4.4	4	39.8
6	Vitali (Tim Price, NZL)	23.1	-	8.8	8	39.9
7	Zaragoza (Gaspard Malsud, FRA)	31.8	-	5.6	4	41.4
8	High Time (Caroline Powell, NZL)	31.1	-	11.2	-	42.7
9	El Hop Du Metz (Harry Meade, GBR)	32.7	-	2.4	8	44.2
10	Bling (Laura Collett, GBR)	31.4	-	8.8	4	44.2
11	Billy Alberto (Samantha Lissington, NZL)	39.5	-	5.6	-	45.1
12	Cooley Rosalent (Oliver Townend, GBR)	22	20	9.2	4	55.2
13	Ballyneety Rocketman (Sam Watson, IRL)	35.4	-	23.2	-	58.6
14	Ballyneety Silver Service (Holly Richardson, GBR)	32.4	-	9.2	16	58.8
15	Dassett Rock Star (Tom Crisp, GBR)	28.5	-	31.2	-	59.7
16	Global Fision M (Lauren Innes, NZL)	38.7	-	18	4	60.7
17	Redfield Fyre (Cassie Sanger, USA)	37.4	-	9.2	16	62.6
18	Autograf (Simon Grieve, GBR)	37.8	-	28.4	-	68.6
19	Hawk Eye (Tom Jackson, GBR)	35.1	20	17.6	4	76.7
20	Trevorra (Katie Magee, GBR)	29.3	20	32	-	81.7
21	Public Address (Tom Strawson, GBR)	39.8	-	25.6	16	82.2
22	RCA Patron Saint (Lucy Latta, IRL)	34.4	20	18.8	8	82.8
23	Deerpaic Revelry (Max Warburton, GBR)	29.1	20	34.8	-	83.9
24	Church'le (Arthur Marx, FRA)	36.2	20	36.4	8	101.4
25	PSH Encore (Aimee Penny, GBR)	34.4	20	49.6	-	104
26	Cowling Hot Gossip (Tom Bird, GBR)	43.2	20	24	20	108.4
27	Sizmilwater (Austin O'Connor, IRL)	33	20	54.4	4	112.6
28	Icarus (Emma Thomas, GBR)	37.3	60	18.8	-	116.9
29	Jewetwel (Emma Hyslop-Webb, GBR)	36.6	20	46	12	117

QUOTE OF THE PHASE
"He's like a pop star who's become a bit high-maintenance with all his fame"
ROS CANTER ON LORDSHIPS GRAFFALO

TALKING POINT

"WE CAN GO AND DO WHAT WE DO"

IN 1995, Mary King won two European medals when secretly five-and-a-half months pregnant, and 30 years on, Ros Canter's pregnancy was a major talking point.

"Before dressage there was lots of chat about my condition and it sows the seeds of doubt, but once I got my test done, I felt good and in the right frame of mind," Ros said.

"I did hop on Walter on cross-country morning to pop a few fences to check my tummy muscles were functioning well and my mental state was good enough to go out of the start box. And I thought, 'You are just Ros, and it's Walter, and we can go and do what we do.'"

"This is what I do every day, it's what my body is tuned to do. It's not like an amateur riding five days a week. It shows pregnant people can be normal! I felt I was riding well, and I had unwavering support from the people who were important to me."

Ros explained her only modification was to ride with longer reins, because she is not as strong in her upper body as usual.



"THE PRESSURE WAS ON TODAY"

HAPPILY for Ros, who was next out, things really do happen in threes and with that trio of mishaps out of

"I do feel protective, like sending your little sister off to school and worrying she'll be bullied"

HARRY MEADE ON ANNAGHMORE VALONER

the way it was the defending champion's turn. So many times this horse has cruised round courses, making an intense, rough-and-tumble track look like Pony Club, and it was history on repeat.

The tricky fences that had caught out so many of the world's best looked like simple schooling exercises. He breezed through the finish 8sec inside the time, big ears pricked, not a fleck of sweat on him, looking for all the world as though he would like to go round again. A relieved Ros admitted the pressure has been magnified.

"The pressure was on because he doesn't make mistakes, we were in a good position, I want to do well for his owners and my team, and because I'm pregnant," she said. "There was a lot at stake, but it's not pressure I've never felt before."

What was Ros's secret as to the apparent gulf between Lordships Graffalo's ability to



ease round such a track and the rest of the field?

"The secret is 'Walter', really," she said. "He's the most incredible horse – there is no other horse that you can spend time preparing for the fences to make sure you get it right, and still cruise home inside the time. He gives me every opportunity to ride well."

But even Ros insisted she had to chase the clock.

"I always move the minute

markers up 10 seconds to give me a buffer and I felt I was down all the way round, which is good for me as it makes me try harder," she said. "He did feel wearier than usual leaving the Leaf Pit, but the crowd was insane. It gave me that extra push to keep chugging Walter along, and he galloped to the finish comfortably."

Only one horse left, Sam Lissington's Lord Seeköng, could get within a rail of Ros,



Aimee Penny rounds out the top 25 on her first visit to Burghley, aboard 13-year-old PSH Encore (by PSH Overture)