

Canter triumphs for Caroline

Emotions run high as Britain's Ros Canter and the incomparable Lordships Graffalo land their second Badminton title



"I hope she's looking down with a smile," says Ros Canter, paying tribute to trainer, mentor and friend Caroline Moore, as she and Lordships Graffalo are inducted into the select group of two-time Badminton champions



Ros Canter with Lordships Graffalo's owners Michele and Archie Saul and the Duke and Duchess of Beaufort

Mars Badminton, Glos

By PIPPA ROOME

"THIS one's for Caroline," said Ros Canter as she won her second Badminton title, the emotions of going to her first big event without her trainer, mentor and friend Caroline Moore – who died of cancer in March – showing after a week of living through the intensity of high performance competition.

"Even when Caroline wasn't there, like at the Olympics, she was on the end of the phone, calling and texting me."

"And it's what it would have meant to her as well – she might not have achieved such great things when she was riding, but she put her life and soul into her career and was so selfless with everything she gave. Me winning was like... she just loved it so much. So I hope she's looking down with a smile on her face."

Eventing is very much a mental game and confidence is a battle for Ros, although she is outwardly unflappable and appears one of the calmest, most level-headed competitors. She admitted she rang Nick Turner and said, "I'm having a panic" the week before Badminton. Nick and long-time coach Chris Bartle are the trainers she has relied on since losing Caroline.

Caroline kept Ros busy at events, too, and she said it had

been "a long old day" building up to the showjumping phase without her.

"I was sat by myself quite a lot, overthinking and questioning my life choices of trying to be an event rider," she explained.

Ros, of course, has done far more than "try" to be an event rider – world champion, European champion, Olympic team gold medallist, Burghley victor and now double Badminton winner.

In Lordships Graffalo, the 39-year-old British rider has a partner who can go down in the history of eventing. Michele and Archie Saul's son of Birkhof's Grafenstolz is still only 13, with hopefully so much more to come.

Character matters in event horses, more than in any other discipline, and "Walter" has it in spades – his easy confidence in his own skin and his ability to relish rather than be intimidated by a big atmosphere are huge attributes.

"He enjoys his life. He knows what he wants, he tells us what he wants, and in between, he's pretty chilled and happy," said Ros. "He's like a puppy in the stable and he licks you to death. He knows he's the best and he's full of self-importance, but at the

Picture by Peter Nixon

FINAL PLACINGS

- 1st Ros Canter (GBR) on Lordships Graffalo
- 2nd Oliver Townend (GBR) on Cooley Rosalent
- 3rd Austin O'Connor (IRL) on Colorado Blue

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

same time, he's just completely lovable. I love him to bits."

Lordships Graffalo is the sixth horse to win Badminton twice and the first to regain the title, that is, to win more than once but not in successive years. In his three visits here, he has been second (2022) and then won in 2023 and this year.

ECHOES OF 2023

BEHIND Ros, the other podium places were also a mirror of 2023, with Oliver Townend and Austin O'Connor taking the honours. The only difference was

A GROWING LEGEND

ROS CANTER started this Badminton with a huge 36% win chance, according to data analytics company EquiRatings. Although she was undoubtedly the out-and-out favourite, it felt like an outlandish figure in an 85-starter field, in a sport with as much jeopardy as eventing.

But in the end, the legend of Ros and Lordships Graffalo only grew through this week; we recommend placing a bet on them winning individual gold at Los Angeles 2028 now.

"THAT'S MY FAULT"

EARLY on Thursday, favourite Ros Canter was trending ahead of Tom until a slight stutter in the first flying change was met with fours across the

board, as was her final flying change, when Lordships Graffalo stepped together with his hindlegs. Their 25.3 left them in fourth.

"The changes have always been something he has struggled with a bit. I probably didn't help him quite enough, so that's my fault," said Ros.

Between Emily King (Valmy Biats) in fifth and Germany's Christoph Wahler (D'Accord FRH) in 25th, there were just five marks.

"I do a lot of test riding with him, not necessarily in the

Left: debutant Jack Pinkney (Rehy Revelation) jumps clear. Above: Bubby Upton and Cola, eighth, record their third top-10 Badminton result

25th to sixth with D'Accord FRH. He was chased round by Ros Canter, who had an absolutely foot-perfect, gloriously harmonious round on Lordships Graffalo, cruising in 11 seconds inside the time.

"I'm just so privileged to have a horse that loves it, but stays composed and calm at the same time, though he was actually shaking in his stables before I got on, for the first time ever," said Ros.

"He just knows his job so well, he reads things so well,

and he's super-clever with his feet. I think that's what makes him outstanding – he's got a turn of foot, but he's also so rideable. You sit up and he comes back to you, and he comes back into a balance, so you never feel like you know you're fighting backwards to go forwards, and he's always saving energy.

"When I jumped the gates at the end, my minute mark went off, and I thought, 'Maybe I'm not as up as I thought.' I always panic. And I just went, 'Go

on then', and I was like, 'Holy moly, you're flying.' I was able to balance to the last fence – you don't get that feeling very often at Badminton."

But there was a shadow – a flag penalty from the corner out of Huntsman's, where "Walter" had gone very slightly sideways to give himself more room. Surely this couldn't be a repeat of Ros's controversial penalties in Paris? Happily, the faults disappeared on review, leaving the pair second overnight.

Meanwhile, Georgie Goss was more than a minute over the time to tumble from 11th to equal 35th with Feloupe.

"The mare is phenomenal, but I feel I let her down," she said. "I wasn't strong enough

get trickier, because the anticipation is always there. But with 'Walter', he relaxes in that environment in a nice, bubbly way, and he just thoroughly enjoys himself. I was quite nervous today and I think I hoiked him up a bit. But anyway, he helped me out so that was good of him."

Oliver started without a rail in hand and he and Cooley Rosalent made it to fence 10 without using it up, but then touched off the front bar of the Spillers over. But they cleared the rest and held on to second.

And so it was all rise for Graffalo, Badminton's returning king. H&H

and things then fell apart, with four more fences tumbling – resulting in an excruciating drop from third to 15th.

Ros Canter followed, with Lordships Graffalo jumping

dramatic, routh moment"

IE 10 WITH SUPERSTITIION

very carefully and they came home fault-free to put the pressure on Oliver Townend.

She said: "He loves anywhere where there's people watching him. I think most horses, as they get older, know the crowds and almost

EVENTING MARS BADMINTON

In pictures



The top 10

We celebrate Badminton's leading horses and riders in pictures

Overall: final scoreboard

Final position	Horse and rider	Dressage	Cross-country		Showjumping	Total
			Time	Penalty		
1	Lordships Graffalo (Ros Canter, GBR)	25.3	-	-	-	25.3
2	Cooley Rosalent (Oliver Townend, GBR)	21.1	-	1.2	4	26.3
3	Colorado Blue (Austin O'Connor, IRL)	30.8	-	-	0.4	31.2
4	Cavalier Crystal (Harry Meade, GBR)	33.8	-	-	-	33.8
5	Valmy Biats (Emily King, GBR)	27.3	-	7.2	4	38.5
6	Superstition (Harry Meade, GBR)	31.8	-	-	8	39.8
7	D'Accord FRH (Christoph Wahler, GER)	32.2	-	-	8	40.2
8	Cola (Bubby Upton, GBR)	30.2	-	6	8	44.2
9	JL Dublin (Tom McEwen, GBR)	22.4	11	10.8	-	44.2
10	Vitali (Tim Price, NZL)	30.6	-	3.6	12	46.2
11	Treworra (Katie Magee, GBR)	31.8	-	5.2	8	46.6
12	Dreamliner (Tom Rowland, GBR)	33.1	-	8	4	46.7
13	Master Point (Ian Cassells, IRL)	30.7	-	3.6	12	48.7
14	Hooney D'Arville (Lara de Liedekerke-Meier, BEL)	31.7	-	13.6	4	49.3
15	Chilli Knight (Germa Stevens, GBR)	29.5	-	-	20	49.5
16	Ardeo Premier (Alex Bragg, GBR)	35.2	-	12.8	4	52
17	Topspin (Alice Casburn, GBR)	37.9	-	14	-	52.3
18	Heartbreaker Star Quality (Libby Seed, GBR)	36.7	-	16	-	52.7
19	Centennial (Tayla Mason, NZL)	40.2	-	4.4	8	53.8
20	Black Ice (Jérôme Robiné, FRA)	35.2	-	14.4	4	54
21	High Time (Caroline Powell, NZL)	36.6	-	14	4	55
22	Grappa Nera (Janelle Price, NZL)	35.3	-	11.6	8	55.3
23	Ballycoog Breaker Boy (Will Rawlin, GBR)	30.6	-	16	12	58.6
24	Findus PFB (Sammi Birch, AUS)	40.8	-	16.8	4	62
25	Zaragoza (Gaspard Makoud, FRA)	30.7	11	8.8	12	62.5
26	Blackthorn Cruise (Dan Joynt, NZL)	34.8	-	24	4	63.2
27	Ferozo Nieuwmoed (Ryuzo Kitajima, JPN)	33.5	-	19.6	8	63.5
28	Feloupe (Georgie Goss, IRL)	29.6	-	29.2	4	63.6
29	Clever Trick (Susie Berry, IRL)	36.5	-	20.4	8	64.9
30	Game Changer (Grace Taylor, USA)	35.4	-	24	8	69
31	Withington (Rafael Losano, BRA)	34	-	22.8	12	70.8
32	Jack Daniels (Jack Mantel, GBR)	41.2	-	19.2	8	71.6
33	Calmaro (Joseph Murphy, IRL)	32.6	-	21.6	16	72.2
34	Classic VI (Kirsty Chabert, GBR)	33.7	-	22	12	73.7
35	Creewagh Silver De Haar (Fiona Kassel, GBR)	28.4	-	24	24	78.4
36	Itoon Lan (Patrick Whelan, IRL)	34.4	-	27.2	16	78.4
37	Commander VG (Aistis Vitkauskas, LTU)	51.3	-	17.6	12	80.9
38	Rehy Revelation (Jack Pinkney, GBR)	39.9	-	21.6	20	83.9
39	Cowling Hot Gossip (Tom Bird, GBR)	55.2	-	26.8	12	85.2
40	Ballyneely Rocketman (Sam Watson, IRL)	40.5	20	20.8	4	85.7
41	Viscount Viktor (Tim Price, NZL)	33.2	20	19.6	12	86
42	Cargo Diem (Helen Bates, GBR)	40.2	-	40.4	4	86.6
43	Bling (Laura Collett, GBR)	37.8	20	26	4	87.8
44	Cancaras Girl (Tiana Coudray, USA)	34	20	34	-	88.8
45	Deerpaic Revelry (Max Warburton, GBR)	32.7	31	28.4	-	92.1
46	Quintera (Wouter de Cleene, BEL)	38.1	20	30	8	98.5
47	Timmo (Nicola Aldinger, GER)	33.9	20	37.2	8	99.1
48	Dasset Select (Kate Rocher-Smith, GBR)	33.1	-	42	24	99.9
49	Belline Fighting Spirit (Joseph Murphy, IRL)	39.2	20	31.6	8	100.4
50	Church'ile (Arthur Marx, FRA)	37.3	20	30.4	16	106.9
51	Dasset Rock Star (Tom Crisp, GBR)	34.9	20	38.4	12	107.3
52	Icarus (Emma Thomas, GBR)	46.9	20	37.6	8	114.9
53	Grantstown Jackson (Sarah Ennis, IRL)	35.6	40	49.6	4	130.4
54	Gelmer (Selina Milnes, GBR)	37.6	35	48	16	139.4