



Buenos Aires - My First Nations Cup Experience

Quentin and HH Carotino in the Nations Cup in Argentina.

All photos courtesy of Double H Farm

It has been my lifelong dream to represent the United States in an international Nations Cup competition. After years of training and hard work, that dream finally came true last year with the support of my fantastic family at Double H Farm, including my wife Cayce and her parents Hunter and Jeannie Harrison. Wearing the prestigious "pinque" coat of the United States Equestrian Team (USET) and competing alongside fellow first-timer Catherine Pasmore and veteran team members Charlie Jacobs and Alison Robitaille, I traveled to Buenos Aires to compete in and win my first Nations Cup last September. I really pushed to be on the team to be honest. We got an email



from Lizzie Chesson from the USEF saying that they were possibly going to send a team and we thought it would be a really good first experience. They went off the computer list and I was one of the top four riders ranked that applied to go. I took my horse HH Carotino, who has been a real soldier for me. Carotino is a 10-year-old Holsteiner gelding by Caretino x Carrado I. We bought him from Matt and Germaine Edelmann in New York. His first season doing grand prix was in 2011 and he was Germaine's first grand prix horse. Cayce and I saw him in the summer and

Cayce and Quentin Judge

tried him and bought him just before our wedding last year. Carotino has really come along a lot in the last year. We threw a lot at him in one year and he has gotten better and better throughout the whole process. He has a really good mind and he is brave and he really tries hard. He is good at going to a new show, going right into a new ring, jumping well and not needing a lot of classes to warm up. He kind of just does his job.

Arriving In Argentina

The horses got to Argentina on Sunday before the show to give them a few days to acclimate and we arrived on Monday. Carotino had been in Florida for about a week before that, so he was used to the heat already. We stayed in Buenos Aires, which was great. We only had one horse each, except for Charlie had two, so it was a pretty easy, light week. We were at the show a couple of hours a day and then we could go walk around the city and explore. In preparation for the Nations Cup we all did a 1.40m warm-up class the first day on Wednesday and Carotino jumped really well. We just cantered around the course and went in to get a feel for the ring. I decided not to show him until the Nations Cup then because he went so well and he felt so confident. We were supposed to have the Nations Cup on Friday, but it rained terribly and they had to scratch it, but Guilherme Jorge was doing the courses and he put the jumps in a great place for the next day. The showground itself was really beautiful. I had never been there and only seen pictures; but I was surprised at how nice the ring and the jumps were. Probably about 75% of the course was jumps that had been from previous Olympics and they were really impressive. The ring was a big grass field that they only use for that one show a year. The footing was perfect; even when it rained it was really good.



The United States team enjoys the center spot on the podium.

Riding As A Team

There was a great sense of team camaraderie between the riders and our Chef d'Equipe, Norman Dello Joio. Catherine and I were both on our first team and Charlie and Alison had both had experience before, so they could guide us a little bit and give us some tips as we went along. Beezie Madden was there to help Charlie and Alison, so she could also help us both, which was great. On the day of the Nations Cup, we all walked the course together. Everyone gave their input and Beezie and Norman gave us some tips. It was different walking the course as a team. There was a feeling of unity. When you walk a course normally, you want everyone to do well; but you want to do the best. There, it felt like everyone was really being open and wanted everyone else to do well. Having Norman there as Chef gave me a lot of confidence because he is also my trainer at home. He has been helping me for about a year-and-a-half and he has known Carotino since the day we got him. He has been at that show himself and showed in the Nations Cup there several years ago, so he also knew how it works there and the size of the jumps and the technicality of the courses. That was really helpful. Carotino was clear in the first round and had one down in the second round, which was completely my fault. He was jumping really well. The course suited him well because it wasn't huge, but there were a few difficult technical lines. He jumped perfect in the first round; I don't think he touched a jump. In the second, I was more relaxed and I did one extra stride in the first line and had the front rail of the oxer down because I got too deep. I think I actually rode better the first round when I was more nervous!

I think the course was a good test because the competition was hard. There were two or three teams there that had really solid, experienced horses and riders. The biggest competition was Canada and Argentina.

The Thrill of Victory

It was a very exciting moment when we realized that we had won. In the first round we had three clear rounds. Catherine had a few jumps down - her horse was being really careful and over jumped; but we went into the second round on zero.



Quentin was thrilled to wear the "pinque" coat of the United States Equestrian Team.

In the second round, Charlie was clear again, I had one down and when Catherine was clear and we knew that the worst we could do was be on four faults. Canada was the closest and the best they could do was eight faults. After Catherine jumped clear, we knew that Alison didn't have to go and we had won, which was really exciting. Everyone was happy and jumping around! The presentation was a big awards ceremony. Carotino is normally extremely spooky; but he stood like a soldier the whole time. We had the victory gallop, national anthem and sprayed champagne! It was a long ceremony; but it was really cool for all of us. It was such an honor to represent our country and win. It has been a goal of mine for a long time to ride on a team. I want to continue riding on the team and I hope that now this will give me more chances. It obviously feels good to win any time; but it feels really good when you have three other people there that won with you. I think we will all remember it for a long time and I hope it is the first of many Nations Cup experiences I can do.

About the Writer

Quentin Judge rides for Double H Farm with stables in Ridgefield, Connecticut and Wellington, Florida. Judge, 25, showed in his first grand prix in 2011 and jumped his top mount HH Carotino to a clear round in his first USEF Olympic Selection Trials in Florida last winter. Judge grew up in Chicago and has ridden with many top trainers, including Alex Jayne, Missy Clark, Joe Fargis, Jack Stedding, Linda Andrisani, Jan Tops and Margie Engle.



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