



Local Course Designer Rises To The Top

Holly Grayton

[Back to Articles...](#)

Those of us from Alberta know him well from our local shows over the years, but Peter Grant is not just a local course designer anymore. He is an FEI Level 3 course designer that just had his designing debut in the Spruce Meadows International ring at the CSI 5* 'National' Tournament.

The feature event of the week, the RBC Grand Prix presented by Rolex, was a success by all accounts, and Peter was also pleased with the result. With just three clear rounds in the first round, clearly he had set a test up to the level of a 5* Grand Prix. "I maybe expected one or two more clears, but overall I was happy with the result," Peter said. The course saw faults come throughout the track, described as "subtle faults" due to the minor rubs that caused the knockdowns, and not concentrated on any particular part of the course more than any other. A successful Grand Prix design to be sure.

Peter made good use of the natural obstacles within the International ring this week. The well-known CNOOC Nexen Derby had a format change for this year, as a new 1.50m Grand Prix class, but this didn't stop Peter from staying true to his own style and sticking to the roots of the sport. "It's definitely my style, with my influences being at Spruce Meadows and also Alberta in general," says Peter. "Consistent delicate courses don't lead to balanced horses. I believe very much in the roots of the sport whether it's riding hunt courses or the military applications, throughout history boldness was one of the most important things for a horse and rider."

Not unlike the riders heading into the ring to jump the courses, Peter had some nerves and distractions through the week designing his courses for this largest of stages. Peter reflected on the week after the final event completed:

"In general I liked the week, but Friday was not a good day for me; just a couple mis-calculations in the first competition and then I wasn't thinking clearly for the second competition. I never like to see horses struggle. In the big picture, though, I was quite happy with the week. If I could redo Friday it would be a nearly perfect week for me."

It's nice to know that course designers are not unlike riders, in that they too can make mistakes and wish they had done things differently. He says "The failure for me [in the 1.45m on Friday] is that the triple combination was predominantly the most difficult part of the course. Being a course designer we are fans of horses, so to see them struggle, that's not the way I like to go about setting my tests. I like to have subtle faults – when the jumps come down all around the course, that shows good balance and asking different questions in different places to different horses."

Also not unlike riders, course designers worldwide revere the international ring as the "most prestigious arena in the world." For Peter having designed in the International ring represents something special especially amongst his colleagues. "It's a point of pride, same as it is for a rider to ride in the International ring."



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[Back to Articles...](#)

What's next for the newly minted International ring course designer? He will be assisting the International division for the rest of the summer series. "It's always fun to build, but the education and chance to build with these guys at the top level is great." Over the next three weeks of competition the course designers have exquisite records, as Peter detailed. "We have got the past Olympic course designer [Guilherme Jorge Rio 2016], the next Olympic course designer [Santiago Varela Tokyo 2020, who also designed the World Cup Finals in Paris this year], and the Indoor Brabant Rolex Grand Slam course designer [Louis Konickx]." It is a great opportunity for learning and growth.

The next big highlight of Peter's biggest year yet will be assisting Alan Wade design at the World Equestrian Games (WEG) in Tryon, NC. Keep an eye on big things to come for Alberta's Peter Grant!