

EQVALAN[®] GOLD

Rider of the Month

Story Stephen Lamb Photo Derek O'Leary

Having won the Australian Championships in 1994 on EBA Spirit (x Mikado), Rod Brown regained the title in 2006, with Mr Burns, and in doing so, has secured his position on the Australian Showjumping Team for WEG. National Selectors made the decision to give Rod and Mr. Burns, as well as Edwina Alexander and Isolvas Pialotta automatic selection, based on their outstanding performances to date.

I asked Rod if the announcement was a weight off his shoulders.

"Well, no, its not a weight off so much. It's a little hard to explain. When I started riding Burns again, it was to see what he was like, - to see how things went. I've had a ball riding him, and I've been fortunate to have some really good tracks to jump on him."

But you must have some pressure?

"I've felt no pressure as such. I mean, I've always had in the back of my mind that I would like to do another WEG or Olympics but even at Sydney Royal last year when I sat down with Jamie (Coman) and Peter (Horne) to map out my plans with the horse for the next 12 months, the goal was to finish in the top 3 placings at each of the Selectors series events. It wasn't so much about WEG, it was about consistency in those big events. Of course, now, WEG is a huge bonus."

Now, one year on, the combination has competed in 6 Selectors Series classes, being the warm-up speed class and then Grand Prix at Shepparton, Tempo and the Australian Championships. Other than a second place in the speed at Shepparton, they have won every one of the other classes. This, of course, begs the question, is Burns (or Goober as Rod sometimes calls him) the best he has ridden?

"I have had 3 exceptional horses in my time. Slinky, (his mount at the 1988 Seoul

Olympics) who never really reached her full potential, even after the Games. Spirit, again, an exceptional horse, but difficult. I should have taken him to Europe much earlier, he would have been a much better horse if I did. And Burns, yes, Burns is number one. He was a difficult buggler in the beginning but always when he was good, he was very good. Now, he's just reaching his peak, he's 15 going on 10. He's such a great competitive horse, in that he's great in the big rings, especially over the big tracks."

While much has been made of Rod's comeback to top level competition, he has, of course, remained very actively involved in the sport, including a stint as the National Coach, and more recently, at the Sydney Olympics, as a part owner of LL Zazu.

So, what about a comparison between the two big, brown, thoroughbred geldings?

"Well, sure, they are both big thoroughbreds, but they have different styles in the ring. Zazu was more Warmbloodish to ride, where as Burnsie is more of a true Thoroughbred ride. I can't compare them too closely because I never really rode Francis (Zazu) over any big tracks. I jumped some big fences on him in the arena at home, but not at shows."

For Rod, one of the benefits of remaining so involved at the highest level, is that he has a very clear concept of what to expect going into the WEG, so I asked him about his personal goals.

"For starters, hopefully Ian Millar will be on the Canadian team, so at least I wont be the oldest one there!"

"But, primarily, it's about going in the with the horse fit and well. I would like to think that a top 30 individual placing is achievable for me, but, if I could make the top 10 I'd be over the moon."

Each EQVALAN GOLD Rider of the Month receives 6 syringes of EQVALAN GOLD in recognition of their achievement.



ROD BROWN

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