



Prince William Writes His Own Fairy Tale At Woodside

*He and Mary Burke win the CIC*** on their way to a fall three-day.*

BY LINDSAY BERRETH
PHOTOS BY SHERRY STEWART

Mary Burke never imagined she'd be competing at advanced when she took up riding 15 years ago after a 17-year break.

But when she reached preliminary with her talented off-the-track Thoroughbred Prince William and endured the tragedy of losing her friend and trainer Amy Tryon in 2012, she was spurred to continue on to the upper levels.

She's reached the advanced level mostly on her own, and she picked up the biggest accomplishment of her career at the Woodside International Horse Trials, held Oct. 7-9 in Woodside, Calif., when she and "William" won the CIC***.

"Each horse sort of writes their own story, and I'd certainly say he's done that," said Burke. "As he's progressed through the levels, honestly I never thought I'd be an advanced rider, but he's written his own story, and each time he performs well, we re-analyze things and study really hard."

Burke, 56, grew up in Washington

Mary Burke and Prince William picked up the biggest win of their career at the Woodside International Horse Trials CIC*.**

State and rode on the A circuit in equitation and jumpers with Debbie Mars as a teenager. She picked up dressage when she was 16 as a way to improve her horses' flatwork.

Between ages 18 and 20 she worked on the East Coast for Linda Zang and Elizabeth Madlener and earned her U.S. Dressage Federation bronze medal before moving back to Washington, where she became a dressage professional and met her husband Richard.

Mary took a break from riding to raise her son, and during that time she earned degrees in physical therapy and psychology from the University of Washington. Then she took a job as a physical therapist.

Richard, a fellow equestrian and former Marine, has worked as a firefighter paramedic for the city of Bellevue, Wash., for nearly 20 years. Through his job he met Tryon, who was also a firefighter at the time.

Richard and Tryon got to talking horses, and she offered to give Mary jumping lessons if she wanted to get back into riding.

It was as if life had come full circle, since Mary had taught Tryon in occasional clinics when she was in Pony Club.

"I called her up and started jumping, and that's how I got into eventing," said Mary. "I had the hunter/jumper background and was riding Prix St. Georges in dressage before I retired from that. I thought, 'What the heck? I can combine everything I know into one.'"

Under Tryon's tutelage, Mary competed to the one-star level on Esprit-De-Corp, and they won the preliminary horse division at the Bit Of Britain/U.S. Eventing Association American Eventing Championships (Ill.) in 2008.

Finding A Prince

Mary found William as a 4-year-old and began bringing him through the levels. They contested their first novice in 2007 and were looking at an intermediate move-up by 2012 when

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—MARY BURKE

Tryon died after accidentally mixing a lethal combination of prescription medication.

Mary carried on and now trains on her own with occasional lessons and clinics.

"After Amy's passing I did push myself pretty hard on my own to move to intermediate, and that ended up going fairly well the first year, and the second year went quite well," she said. "I promised myself I wouldn't move up to advanced until I found a trainer, so I spent a year trying to figure out a way to get a trainer, and that didn't go particularly well, so I started forcing myself to study and look at online videos and watch Olympic riders ride."

They stepped up to advanced

last year and were able to get some help from Yves Sauvignon at events and clinics. They won the advanced division at Aspen Farms (Wash.) before tackling their first CCI*** at Galway Downs (Calif.) where they finished 12th.

"He's one of the key people who helped support me emotionally so that I could do it and that it would be OK to do," said Mary of Sauvignon.

William, a 14-year-old gelding (Sand Tunnel—Shesapick, Sano Tunnel) has only had one cross-country jumping penalty since he began eventing. Dressage is his toughest phase, and Mary's been adding pre-rides this season to help take the edge off.

"It's been a process learning how to channel all that energy in a really positive way," she said. They earned a personal best of 48.0 at Woodside and stayed on that score to win.

"I think he did a good job for being a short-strided Thoroughbred," she said. "A lot of times I have to manufacture what I get. It's tough to compete against the big movers, but I was very pleased with how relaxed he stayed."

WOODSIDE INTERNATIONAL HORSE TRIALS

Woodside, Calif.—Oct. 7-9

► CIC***

HORSE/RIDER	DRESSAGE	CROSS-COUNTRY JUMP/TIME	SHOW JUMPING JUMP/TIME	TOTAL
1. Prince William/Mary Burke	48.0	0/0	0/0	48.0
2. Chatwin/Frankie Stutes	41.8	0/7.6	0/0	49.4
3. RevitaVet Capato/Jordán Linstedt	44.7	0/1.6	4/2	52.3
4. Parker/James Alliston	52.4	0/0	8/0	60.4
5. Eveready II/Barbara Crabo	47.3	20/2.8	4/0	74.1
6. Indy 500/Andrea Baxter	53.2	40/19.6	0/0	112.8

Eliminated on cross-country: Brighton/R. Buehler. Rider fall on cross-country: Contalli di Revel/G. Miles. Mandatory retirement on cross-country: TF Kreister/S. Sellmer.

Show jumping was held before cross-country.

► ADVANCED

HORSE/RIDER	DRESSAGE	CROSS-COUNTRY JUMP/TIME	SHOW JUMPING JUMP/TIME	TOTAL
1. Ben/Helen Bouscaren	38.2	0/7.2	8/0	53.4
2. Eye Of The Storm/Kim Liddell	41.9	0/4.8	8/6	60.7
3. Aerollte/Dana Chase	31.6	20/16.8	0/6	74.4

Rider fall on cross-country: LC O'Shawnsee/A. Nielsen.

▶ EVENTING

Lauren Burnell and Walterstown Don's partnership started to click at the Woodside International Horse Trials, and they came away with a win in the CIC.**

Cross-country has never been a problem for William, and he loves to go fast. "We've built such a great partnership over the 10 years that just by changing my body language he's keen enough to know now what's coming up. He absolutely loves cross-country and the connection we have," said Mary.

On the ground, William is aloof with strangers. "He's a horse that has a lot of attitude," said Mary. "He has a circle of people that he allows to handle him, and he's not interested in anybody else! He's not particularly social. Myself, my assistant [Ella Mildon] and my husband are the three people he's happy to be around, and then he's extremely skeptical of anyone else. He brings a lot of energy to even just being handled in the barn. He always acts like a race horse that's ready to go out the gate."

Now based in Ellensburg, Wash., at her Burkeridge Farms, Mary focuses on her eventing students and a few lower-level horses, as well as improving with William.

She relies on videoing her rides at home and at shows and studying other riders to expand her knowledge.

"I sit down and critique myself, give myself my own lessons, and come up with my lesson plan for the next day that I'm going to work on to try to improve the quality of the way he's jumping and figuring out how to make time," she said.

However, she's hoping to find a trainer willing to work with her via Skype.

"When you're a trainer trying to pull this off on your own, there are a lot of days where you doubt what you're doing," she said. "I would definitely say I wouldn't have been able to progress to this level without the support of a group around me that keeps steering me in the direction I need to go. It's been hard training myself

Helen Bouscaren and Ben won the advanced division at the Woodside International Horse Trials.

