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# The Chronicle's Eventing Horse Of The Year: My Boy Bobby

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Created 02/05/2010 - 15:35

When Buck Davidson first took over the ride on My Boy Bobby in the summer of 2008, he didn't expect to be filling out an entry for the Rolex Kentucky CCI\*\*\*\* the following spring.

In fact, Davidson recalled that during a disastrous outing at the Express Eventing International Cup (England) in November 2008, Phillip Dutton quipped to him, "I don't think that one's going to Kentucky, mate."

But in the spring of 2009, "Bobby" seemed out to prove everyone wrong. He was undefeated in three outings at the advanced level, including the CIC\*\*\* at The Fork (N.C.).

"And it wasn't just that he was winning—it was that he kept going better and doing it easier. He was liking it again," Davidson said. "After every event, we just kept re-evaluating, and it just sort of led up to Kentucky."

So Davidson found himself confidently galloping Bobby around the imposing Rolex Kentucky cross-country course, where they finished as the highest-placed U.S. pair in third.

"Buck and Bobby's performance at Rolex was incredibly memorable because we all had doubts about whether Bobby could get through the cross-country course as well as he ultimately did," said Carl Segal, who owns Bobby along with his wife, Cassie.

"He's a bit draftier and heavier than most—we all knew he could jump all the jumps, but we just didn't know if he'd have the stamina," Carl continued. "It was something he'd never experienced before—that length of course. It was fun to see him do something we weren't really sure he would be able to do. That made it especially exciting."

Bobby chalked up a CIC\*\*\*-W win at Wits End (Ont.) in August, then finished 2009 with a 13th-placed finish at the HSBC FEI World Cup Final CIC\*\*\* (Poland).

"He was amazing at the World Cup Final. He gave me everything he had," Davidson said. Bobby lost both of his front shoes early on the muddy cross-country course and had a stop after slipping on a turn. "It's amazing to me the heart that horse has. At the age he is, that kind of thing just doesn't happen. For him to turn around like that is just amazing."

Jessica Kiener, who runs the Segals' farm in New Jersey, found Bobby for them in Ireland nine years ago as a green 5-year-old. Bobby had hunted and schooled cross-country, but because of hoof-and-mouth disease, hadn't competed.

Kiener took Bobby up the levels successfully, including a third-placed finish at the CCI\*\* at

Jersey Fresh (N.J.) in 2007. But she ran into trouble at the advanced level and turned to Davidson for help.

“The decision was mine to get Buck to ride the horse and build his confidence, and it’s gone so well,” Kiener said. “Neither the horse nor I was confident anymore. It was hard, but it was what I knew needed to be done. I wanted to see the horse go on to the next level and succeed. It was bittersweet.”

At Davidson’s first event with Bobby, at intermediate in August 2008, they won. “But I finished and said, ‘I’m not sure this horse really wants to do this anymore.’ He tried to stop at a few things and scrambled over a fence,” Davidson said. Bobby ran two CIC\*\*\*s with somewhat better efforts before Davidson then attempted the Fair Hill CCI\*\*\* (Md.) on him.

“He gave me everything he had, but it just wasn’t enough. He ran out of juice at the end and just stopped at the skinny coming out of the water. He was just tired, mentally and physically,” said Davidson, who was discouraged but thought he might have figured out the key to Bobby’s problem.

“I thought that the fitness aspect was what I really needed to concentrate on with him,” Davidson said. “Obviously, he’s a nice horse. He has all of the jump and all the movement, and he’s the world’s easiest horse to ride. Getting the fitness right was the key. It’s not easy—he’s not a clean-bred horse.”

Intensive trot sets and quick runs at the events leading up to Rolex put a keen edge of fitness on Bobby that paid off on course.

Kiener believed fitness wasn’t the only key to success. “Buck’s not giving himself enough credit. The horse needed that kind of ride,” she said. “He needed all of that experience that Buck brought to him. It’s so much about what Buck’s done for the horse.”

Davidson couldn’t be happier that 18 months after he took over the ride, he’s been proven wrong on his first impression of Bobby. “It was a great year for him and for the Segals. To me, Bobby or [the Segals’ other horse] Ballynoe Castle RM could have been horse of the year. I feel lucky to have not just one, but both of them,” Davidson said. “And I’m so glad the Segals got the [U.S. Eventing Association] As You Like It Owner of the Year Award. It’s really well deserved—they’re not only great supporters of mine, but also of the whole sport. They couldn’t be nicer people. No question about it, they like to win, but they’re as classy as anybody in defeat.”

## PERSONAL PROFILE

**Home:** The Segals’ farm in Pottersville, N.J. Bobby goes to live with Davidson for a few weeks before each event.

**Vital statistics:** 14-year-old Irish Sport Horse gelding, by Touchdown.

**Best friend:** Jessica Kiener no longer competes Bobby, but she’s a huge part of his life. She cares for him while he’s at the Segals’ farm and does most of his fitness work. “I went and groomed for him at [the Rolex Kentucky CCI\*\*\*\*] and to Poland [for the FEI World Cup Final]. I flew with him. I was excited to be a part of all that too, because for me it’s so much about the relationship with the horse, and I’ve known Bobby for so many years,” she said.

**Size:** 17 hands. “And he’s a big 17 hands. He’s Irish, and he’s got that big frame,” Kiener said.

Bobby wears an 82" blanket.

**Personality:** Bobby reminds his people of a Labrador Retriever. "He's on the quiet side. We call him 'Mr. Whatever' because things don't seem to bother or faze him," said Carl Segal.

**Favorite treat:** Bananas.

**Bobby's routine:** "When he's in full work, he eats four times a day," said Kiener. "He's a fussy hay eater, so he has me pretty well trained—I take away any old hay and give him new. He eats a good 22 pounds a day of grain before a three-day. And I like to have him out as much as possible. In the summer he's out all night, and in the winter he's out all day."

#### 2009 COMPETITIVE HIGHLIGHTS

- 1st—division of advanced, Rocking Horse Winter Advanced Horse Trials (Fla.)
- 1st—division of advanced, Southern Pines Horse Trials (N.C.)
- 1st—CIC\*\*\*, The Fork Horse Trials (N.C.)
- 1st—CIC\*\*\*-W, Wits End Horse Trials (Ont.)
- 3rd—Rolex Kentucky CCI\*\*\*\*
- 13th—HSBC FEI World Cup Final CIC\*\*\* (Poland)

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