



## **IRELAND**

# **CANADIAN BRED HORSE OF THE YEAR**



*Photo Credit: Sportfot*

## **Ireland Named Canadian Bred Horse of the Year**

Owner: Daniel Bluman and Kim Douglas

Breeder: Andrew Blais

Ireland (Zambesi TN x Gelha's VDL Emilion) has been named the 2022 Canadian Bred Horse of the year after a successful inaugural North American FEI competition season. This award is given to a horse bred within Canada who holds an outstanding performance record that has helped to enhance the reputation and visibility of Canadian bred horses.

The now ten-year-old Canadian Warmblood gelding owned by Daniel Bluman and Kim Douglas, 'Lando' was bred by Andrew Blais of Hillsburgh, ON with sire Zambesi TN to his mare VDL Verona H. Blais



came to own 'Verona', a 2002 Canadian Warmblood mare by Gelha's VDL Emilion in 2007. The pair competed together for several years until Verona retired from sport after the 2011 season.

Ireland's exceptional lineage was carefully selected for success in sport. His bloodlines include sire Zambesi TN (Heartbreaker X Calvaro Z), known for his stellar reflexes and attitude, and dam Verona, whose lineage boasts Gelha's VDL Emilion and Voltaire. Each of these prolific stallions are considered some of the world's finest producers of jumping horses. Five of Zambesi TN's offspring are currently competing at the 1.60 level, further cementing his reputation as a top sire in the sport. Verona's sire Emilion competed successfully in numerous Grand Prix, is a world cup winner, and was awarded the predicate 'Preferent'. Verona's Damsire Voltaire is an accomplished Grand Prix winner and one of the top sires in the KWPN Jumping Index with 151 points.

Blais sold Ireland to Bluman's Blue Star Investments in 2020 but still follows the partnership closely. "We knew early on that he was special. Daniel Bluman and his team have been doing an amazing job developing him into a great 5\* jumper. He is improving every time he goes into the ring. We have been watching them compete all over, but especially in Paris, Spruce Meadows and the Wellington Festival this past winter were amazing. We are also looking forward to what their future together will bring," said Blais.

Ireland spent his first two seasons under Bluman's ownership in Europe, working his way through 1\*, 2\*, and 3\* classes with Camilo Robayo. Bluman took over the ride in March of 2022, deftly moving Ireland up from the 1.40s as he made his debut in 4\* and 5\* classes. Their successful 2022 season took the pair to Europe (Spain, France, Netherlands, Belgium) and North America (Rockwood, Calgary, North Carolina, Connecticut, New York and Wellington).

"(Ireland) showed very good jumping qualities," Bluman said of the rising star. "He's a super kind horse, and wants to please. He has plenty of ability and a great mind." Finishing fourth at Spruce Meadows in the ATCO Electric Six Bar competition, Ireland was clear over 1.80, an attestation to his excellent scope and jumping technique.

With many top ten finishes at 1.50-1.60 this past year, Ireland's performance in his North American FEI debut left a lasting impression. "My plan is to continue developing him to get him to his full potential!" Bluman said of his and Ireland's plans for the future. As he continues to progress, Ireland is making his mark on the international stage, raising the bar for Canadian bred horses.