



## **SPECIAL ED HORSE OF A LIFETIME – THE HICKSTEAD TROPHY**



*Photo Credit: Cealy Tetley*

The Horse of a Lifetime Award – The Hickstead Trophy was created in 2011 to honour the life and memory of Canadian show jumping legend, Hickstead. Fittingly, 2011 marked the retirement of the 2019 recipient, Special Ed, who achieved show jumping greatness over the course of a decade with Canadian Olympian, Jill Henselwood of Oxford Mills, ON.

The Hickstead Trophy is not given on an annual basis, but only when warranted to a high performance horse of the highest exception. Special Ed deservedly joins the prestigious list of equine icons and brings the tally to six, taking his place alongside Hickstead, Northern Dancer, Big Ben, Fine Lady 5 and Somebeachsomewhere.

The story of Special Ed began in Germany, where the 1994 Oldenburg gelding (Argentinus x Grannus) was purchased at an auction and brought to Canada as a dressage prospect. It was quickly decided that Ed was “too spooky” for dressage, and he was offered to Bob and Jill Henselwood as a jumping prospect. Jill was immediately drawn to him, stating it was mostly his character and personality that caught her attention. In fact, it was that charisma that inspired his



name, after Jill realized that his strong personality meant a “special education” would be required for him to reach his full potential.

Little did Jill know at the time that her patient and resilient guidance would lead to one of the most beloved partnerships in Canadian show jumping history, and that together they would break records and boundaries.

By 2004, Ed was garnering attention after claiming the first of three career wins in the Spruce Meadows North American Championships in Calgary, AB. From there, Jill and Ed’s reach went international when they made back-to-back trips to the FEI World Cup Final in 2005 (Las Vegas, NV) and 2006 (Kuala Lumpur, MAS). In 2006, Jill and Ed become mainstays of the Canadian Show Jumping Team and travelled to the FEI World Equestrian Games in Aachen, GER, to experience their first major games together.

But it was in 2007 that Ed truly came into his own. Once again, he and Jill were selected to represent Canada, this time at the Pan American Games in Rio de Janeiro, BRA. These Games would prove to put Jill and Ed on the map and in the history books. After leading the Canadian Show Jumping Team to the silver medal, they claimed gold for themselves – making Jill the first woman in 24 years and just the fourth woman ever to win individual gold in show jumping at the Pan Am Games.

Jill and Ed weren’t done making history yet, and the following year Jill made an extraordinary Olympic debut in Beijing. After the first round of team competition, the Canadian Show Jumping Team were the very definition of underdogs. The first blow to the team’s chances came after an uncharacteristic stumble from Ed that forced Jill to circle and counted as a refusal. Things looked even more dire after Mac Cone had to withdraw his horse Ole due to an injury, leaving Canada without the luxury of a drop score for the remainder of the team competition.

Showing true grit, Jill and Ed were the pathfinders for the team in the final, where they set the tone and restored Canadian hopes by posting the very first clear of the day on the scoreboard with a foot-perfect round. Eric Lamaze and Hickstead kept their round to a single rail, and under unimaginable pressure, anchor rider Ian Millar piloted In Style to a second clear for Canada.

Ed’s performance with Jill was pivotal in forcing a jump-off with the American team – the heavy favourites - and ultimately helped Canada take team silver, marking the first Olympic medal for the Canadian Show Jumping Team in 40 years. The clutch performance aboard Ed also made Jill the first and only Canadian woman to earn an Olympic medal in show jumping.



By the time Ed retired, he and Jill had enjoyed a full decade of unprecedented success. Outside of their feats at major games, they had racked up 17 major grand prix wins and Ed's incredible career was honoured during a special celebration at the 2011 Royal Horse Show in Toronto, ON.

Still cherished today by his fans and dedicated team of caretakers at Jill's Juniper Farms, including co-owner Bob Henselwood, veterinarian Dr. Maureen Lunney and farrier Terry Osborne, Ed enjoys his well-earned retirement. However, his strong character and personality remain intact, and he is no stranger to kicking up his heels and enjoying a good gallop around the pasture.

Special Ed has been fittingly dubbed as "one of the biggest hearts on four legs" and Equestrian Canada is proud to honour this gifted and iconic athlete with the distinguished Horse of a Lifetime award.