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CSI 4*

Nicole Shahinian-Simpson & Akuna Mattata Fly to Win \$36,600 Turkish Airlines Classic CSI 4*-W at the Palm Beach Masters



Wellington, Florida, USA — Saturday, February 1, 2020 — Last to go in the \$36,600 Turkish Airlines Classic CSI4*-W at Deeridge Farms, Nicole Shahinian-Simpson (USA) knew she had one more ace in her pocket aboard Akuna Mattata.

“She’s very funny, she covers a lot of ground. When you land and you accelerate, she kicks into turbo, and she really grabs the ground,” said Shahinian-Simpson, who dashed through the jump-off timers in a winning time of 33.01 seconds. “Over the years and time [together], I’ve become comfortable with that. She can leave out a stride easily, and that’s where she won today.”

The pair finished just ahead of a foot-perfect **Karl Cook** (USA) and **Fecybelle** (Carambole x Sjapoo) with 33.48 seconds and a smooth-but-speedy **Rodrigo Pessoa** (BRA) in third with **Venice Beach** (Voltaire x Escudo I) in 33.81 seconds.

Held in the Sand Arena during the Palm Beach Masters Series® Longines FEI Jumping World Cup™ Week CSI4*-W/CSI2, Course Designer Alan Wade’s (IRL) 12-obstacle, first-round track proved challenging for a number of combinations in the 30-horse field. Ten moved forward to contest the shortened course, and there, the ability to harness Akuna Mattata’s raw power moved Shahinian-Simpson to the top of the pack.

“[Akuna Mattata] is super sensitive, and although she looks very active, she’s not at all strong. She roots, but she’s very manageable and easy to rate to the jumps,” the Wellington-based rider said. This is the second win of the week for Shahinian-Simpson and the 12-year-old American-bred Holsteiner (Quinar x Landwind II), who also topped the 10,000 CSI4*-W Palm Beach Masters Warm-up on Thursday.

Despite Akuna Mattata’s specialized program for loading into the start-gate and exiting the arena, Shahinian-Simpson says the mare’s unconventionality is part of her strength. “We’ve done some training with her, keeping her manageable in the [schooling ring], and getting into the ring. We got a little bit of a handle on it, because it was getting pretty out of control—all of it is adrenaline with her.”

Shahinian-Simpson, who also rode Akuna Mattata’s mother, Carole Rosenstein’s M-Dragonfly, says that knowing the mare for so many years has helped them build a special bond. “A lot of it is trust. I couldn’t imagine trying to change her in any way, because I don’t think I would win, or anybody would win, so you just accommodate,” she said.

“I guess it’s what makes her good!”

Source: Press release from Palm Beach Masters

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