Caroline Harris Triumphs at Pau with D.Day: A Journey of Dedication and Partnership

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This weekend, Caroline Harris made her mark at the prestigious 5* Les Etoiles de Pau event, securing victory with her remarkable horse, D.Day. This achievement not only highlights Caroline's hard work and determination but also showcases the strong partnership she shares with D.Day, cultivated through years of training and preparation.

As Caroline stood in the arena after her clear round, it was evident how much this moment meant to her. “I’ve worked my whole life to get to 5*, and it’s taken me until this year to finally have a horse capable of it,” she reflected. At 34 years old, Caroline's success demonstrates that perseverance and commitment can lead to achievements at any stage in a rider's career.

Caroline’s path to this point has not been straightforward. Growing up in London in a non-horsey family, she stumbled into riding somewhat by chance. “My dad sent my sister for riding lessons, and I just went along. I wasn’t really that into it at first – then we moved to the country, and I got a pony. I was quite stubborn, and since my sister wanted to ride, I decided I wanted to as well,” she recalled, laughing at the sibling rivalry that sparked her interest in the sport.

Once the riding bug bit, there was no turning back. By her late teens, Caroline made her international eventing debut, and in her twenties, she moved to Australia to work with five-star winner Sam Griffiths, gaining invaluable experience and insight into high-level eventing.

Now based at Captain Mark Phillips’ Aston Farm alongside well-known riders such as Zara Tindall and Clarke Johnstone, Caroline benefits from a supportive environment where collaboration and learning are at the forefront. This dynamic allows riders to share ideas and techniques, ultimately enhancing their skills. Outside of eventing, Caroline also pre-trains racehorses part-time, diversifying her riding experience.

D.Day, a ten-year-old gelding, was initially intended to be a “happy hack hunter.” When he first arrived at Caroline's yard, she had no idea of the journey they would embark on together. “Fiona bred him for her son’s girlfriend, but when they split up, he came to me. I thought he was just a cute Junior/Young Rider horse, but he has continued to impress,” she said, crediting D.Day's dedication and enthusiasm for their achievements.

Having stepped up to the four-star level in mid-2022, D.Day has consistently shown promise, finishing just outside the top twenty at Burgham’s CCI4*-S and achieving 16th place in the prestigious CCI4*-S for eight- and nine-year-olds at Blenheim that same year. This season has seen them excel further, with a Nations Cup debut at Boekelo CCIO4*-L and a podium finish at Chatsworth CCI4*-S.

At Pau, Caroline and D.Day began the week in 22nd place but climbed the ranks after a strong cross-country performance. “He was fantastic. He handled the mud brilliantly, and I had no expectations coming into the week; I just wanted another 5* under my belt,” Caroline stated, reflecting on the ups and downs of competition.

This win at Pau is particularly significant for Caroline, marking her first season at the five-star level. “I never thought I’d be in a position to win here. I almost didn’t compete because of the ground conditions, but D.Day proved his capability,” she added, showcasing the importance of confidence in both horse and rider.

The success at Pau underscores not only their individual talents but also the role of proper nutrition in achieving peak performance. For many riders, understanding the right feed for their horses can be crucial, especially at top levels of competition. Caroline relies on SPILLERS Ulca Fibre, which is specifically formulated for horses requiring a low starch diet and those prone to gastric ulcers.

Ulca Fibre is an ultra-low starch, low sugar feed that supports gastric health, providing a balanced diet essential for D.Day's performance. With its high oil content, it delivers slow-release energy, ensuring that D.Day is fuelled effectively for demanding events. The inclusion of soft short chopped alfalfa extends eating time and acts as a natural buffer against stomach acid, while the comprehensive range of vitamins and minerals maximises nutrient absorption, all contributing to D.Day's overall health and performance.

As Caroline celebrated her victory, the camaraderie among competitors was palpable. “I’ve dreamt about this, but I never thought it would happen; it’s quite unbelievable to come home having beaten some of the best,” she remarked, her joy evident as she embraced her fellow riders.

The showjumping track at Pau is known for its challenges, and this year was no exception. However, Caroline's meticulous preparation and D.Day's impressive abilities culminated in a well-deserved win. The bond between them, built on trust and understanding, serves as a reminder of the importance of partnership in equestrian sport.

As they look ahead, this victory is not just an endpoint but a stepping stone for future successes. Caroline's journey serves as an inspiration to aspiring riders, proving that with commitment and the right support, goals can be achieved, one competition at a time.

Congratulations to Caroline Harris and D.Day on this significant achievement! The eventing community eagerly anticipates their next chapter and the many successes that lie ahead.

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