



## **TINA IRWIN EQUESTRIAN OF THE YEAR – THE DR. GEORGE JACOBSEN TROPHY**



*Photo Credit: Cealy Tetley*

Founded in 1995, the Equestrian Canada (EC) Equestrian of the Year Award honours Dr. George Jacobsen, and is given to an equestrian athlete who has achieved extraordinary competition results within the current award year, while acting as an exceptional role model and demonstrating true sportsmanship and dedication to the vision and mission of EC.

Tina Irwin of Stouffville, ON is a perfect fit for the 2019 title, having come off a truly incredible season, as proven by the hardware she brought home from the 2019 Lima Pan American Games in Peru.

Tina's journey to the Pan Am podium began with a carefully considered decision to bring her longtime partner Laurencio from Grand Prix back down to the small tour level, with the ultimate goal of helping the Canadian Dressage Team earn their berth to the Tokyo Olympics during Lima 2019. Small tour phenoms, Tina and the talented Oldenburg she previously owned with her husband, Jaimey Irwin, had a remarkable record – earning nine consecutive wins in 2016, and posting a world record score in 2017.



Before long, their winning ways continued in early 2019, and they contributed back-to-back small tour wins to the Canadian Dressage Team during the CDIO 3\* Nations Cup in Wellington, FL, cementing their team selection and ticket to Lima in July.

In Lima, Tina's goal was realized after she and Laurencio led the Canadian Dressage Team to their first Pan Am gold medal in 28 years, thereby securing Canada's spot in Tokyo. After posting the team's highest score (73.735%) on the first day of competition to help Canada finish just fractions behind the United States, Tina returned to the team final the following day, guiding Laurencio to an even higher score of 73.853% in the Intermediate I. Ultimately, their contribution helped Canada surpass the United States and claim a historic return to the top of the podium.

However, Tina wasn't finished with the podium yet. With the Tokyo berth secured, her attention turned to individual honours during the Intermediate I Freestyle. The duo were making a solid run for gold until Laurencio misinterpreted a cue at the very end of the test, resulting in a few big tour movements slipping into the small tour performance. Despite the misstep, Tina and Laurencio were awarded 77.780% and the individual silver medal for their attention-grabbing, custom choreography – which proved to be just a shade off the 78.980% earned by American gold medalist, Sarah Lockman aboard First Apple.

However, Lima wasn't the only major championship on her radar in 2019. An EC certified High Performance 1 Coach, Tina is a highly-sought mentor for Canada's up-and-coming dressage athletes. Together, Tina and Jaimey (dubbed "Team Irwin") are committed to guiding the next generation of dressage athletes in their pursuit of the world stage. Offering one of the top young rider programs in Canada, Team Irwin has helped numerous athletes qualify and compete at the FEI North American Youth Championships. During the 2019 edition in North Salem, NY, their working student, Julie Barrett, brought home a team silver medal in the highly competitive dressage Young Rider division.

In light of her incredible season both as an athlete and a coach, EC is thrilled to name Tina Irwin the Equestrian of the Year for 2019.