Fundraising for U.S. Athletes Begins Early for the 2010 Alltech FEI World Equestrian Games

Every four years, equestrians gather for the largest competition of horse sports in the world, the Alltech FEI World Equestrian Games (WEG). In 2010, the United States will host these world championships for the first time ever, with the best horses and riders from countries around the world coming to Lexington, Kentucky.

In order to make the WEG a complete success, it must be a total “team” effort. The U.S. riders and horses are training and competing around the world in preparation, the Kentucky Horse Park is putting the infrastructure and facilities in place, and the WEG organizing committee is fine tuning the management of each discipline’s competition. All of this will contribute to what we hope will be the best WEG ever held.

The USET Foundation’s role in the “team” is to raise the funds that will help support the preparation and participation of winning teams for the United States in Dressage, Driving, Endurance, Eventing, Jumping, Reining, Vaulting and Para Equestrian (for physically challenged riders). It is an awesome task, but one that we know the equestrian community here in the United States will embrace.

One of the many ways individuals can lend their support in this effort is through the Foundation’s benefit dinner dance, “Road to Kentucky,” to be held February 5, 2010, at the International Polo Club in Wellington, Florida. The evening will be one of celebration for all the candidates vying for a place on a U.S. team and to wish them all the best as they travel down this exciting road that will ultimately lead to Kentucky.

The event will include a live auction and the presentation of the USET Foundation’s prestigious Whitney Stone Cup and the Lionel Guinand Hermès Trophy. Also recognized on the evening of the benefit will be the 10, 20, 25, and 30 year anniversaries of our most generous and loyal individuals, our Gold Medal Club donors.

The Benefit dinner dance will help increase people’s awareness of WEG and the need to raise funds for our athletes, much like the Kentucky Cup test events did this summer.

The Kentucky Cup test events were held for many of the disciplines to take a trial run in using the venue, evaluating the footing, and making sure all the logistics ran smoothly. All these events have helped in not only making sure the WEG venues will be ready, but they have also heightened interest and excitement surrounding the U.S. Equestrian Teams’ participation.

We congratulate all of the competitors that participated in the WEG test events, and we wish them all the best in preparing for the upcoming selection trials and the opportunity to represent their country at next year’s World Equestrian Games.

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Dear Friends:

With only 10 months to go to the 2010 FEI Alltech World Equestrian Games (WEG) in Kentucky, the preparations are accelerating and entering their final stages!

This year, all of the U.S. athletes who hope to contend for a place on the U.S. Equestrian Team at the WEG were following carefully developed competition and training programs that will have them ready for the upcoming final selection trials and, hopefully, an ultimate berth on the team.

The Kentucky Horse Park will hold test events for many of the eight disciplines to evaluate and fine tune protocols and processes to make sure all is in place when the equestrian world arrives next year. The overall impression was they will be ready to welcome the world to an incredible World Equestrian Games next year.

While the developing and elite riders were honing their skills in preparation of WEG, the rising talent of the U.S. was showcased once again here in Gladstone. The USEF Talent Search Finals – East had a record number of participants and arguably one of the strongest fields ever. The final four riders of Matt Metell, Jessica Springsteen, Maggie McAlary, and Elizabeth Lubrano gave us a preview of U.S. Show Jumping teams to come, and they definitely proved that the future of the USET is strong and vibrant.

On a more somber note, the equestrian world lost several individuals who were a major part of the successes of the United States Equestrian Team over the years: President Emeritus and past Chairman of the Board, Finn M.W. Caspersen, legendary Eventing coach Jack Le Goff, and USET farrier Seamus Brady. All of these men were an integral part of the many medals won by U.S. equestrian teams during the 1970s and 1980s. They will be missed, but their contributions and legacy will live on.

Supporting eight discipline teams at the WEG is an enormous undertaking. Having the Games on our home turf, in front of family, friends, and the entire U.S. equestrian community is an opportunity we need to embrace. We look to everyone to help share in this magnificent event and the responsibility to ensure that our teams are the best funded, best prepared, and ultimately the best performers next fall in Kentucky! Please consider the USET Foundation when making your year-end gifts. We ask our athletes and coaches to give their best and strive for Gold Medals, and I am asking you to consider the same in your support this year to the USET Foundation.

Wishing you a wonderful holiday season and thank you for your continued loyalty to the United States Equestrian Team!

Sincerely,

Bonnie B. Jenkins
Executive Director
Benjamin, Geisler, Mt. Eden
Team Win Divisions for USA in Kentucky Vaulting Cup Test Event

The World Equestrian Games test events kicked off in July with the reining and vaulting disciplines, the only events which will take advantage of the park’s new awe-inspiring $45 million indoor arena.

The Kentucky Cup Vaulting test event for the 2010 WEG featured both 1* and 2* divisions with the majority of focus given to the 2* contestants, most of whom represent the “gold level” vaulting division. All gold vaulters are part of a National ranking list, which dictates potential candidates for the world championships next year.

The Saratoga, California-based Mt. Eden Vaulters team proved tremendously successful throughout the event, winning virtually every division offered. 2006 WEG gold medalist Megan Benjamin, a 21-year-old resident of Saratoga, CA, dominated the 2* division with victories in three of the four rounds, the last of which included a freestyle performance that landed her the highest score seen at the event (8.127) and secured her the overall victory with a score of 7.974. Mt. Eden teammate Mary McCormick, of Woodside, CA, secured the second place spot.

The men’s individual 2* division was equally dominant for the Mt. Eden Vaulters, with 28-year-old Kenny Geisler of Sunnyvale, CA, winning virtually every division offered. 2006 WEG gold medalist Megan Benjamin, a 21-year-old resident of Saratoga, CA, dominated the 2* division with victories in three of the four rounds, the last of which included a freestyle performance that landed her the highest score seen at the event (8.127) and secured her the overall victory with a score of 7.974. Mt. Eden teammate Mary McCormick, of Woodside, CA, secured the second place spot.

The victorious U.S. team was made up of Tom McCutcheon, Dell Hendricks, Aaron Ralston and Shawn Flarida. McCutcheon took top honors during the individual round aboard the 2002 APHA mare Darlins Not Painted with a score of 222.5 while Hendricks tied for third aboard the 2000 stallion Starbucks Sidekick with a 218. The Silver medal went to Canada’s Lisa Coulter and the 2003 AQHA gelding Hollywood Aces who scored a 219.5. Hendricks shared the Bronze with Mexico’s Jose Vazquez and Juiced Up Doc.

U.S. Reining Chef d’Equipe Jeff Petska said, “Every time we come to one of these events, the level of the competition increases. We just look forward to it every year, knowing that when we come to an international competition, it’s going to continue to get tougher every time.”

The new arena received rave reviews from all participants. “I think it’s a beautiful arena,” said Dell Hendricks. “The ground was awesome. It’s probably the best arena I’ve ever walked in and shown a horse in. The size is perfect. There’s going to be a lot of really special reining happening in this arena.”

American Reiners
Take FEI’s Newest Equestrian Sport to the Next Level

The U.S. Reining Team is no doubt ready for the 2010 Alltech FEI World Equestrian Games and is in a great place to defend their WEG Team Gold and Individual Silver and Bronze medals next year. Team USA finished in the top spot over Canada and Mexico in the WEG test event team competition, and U.S. riders took the Gold and Bronze medal (tied with a Mexican rider) in the individual competition.

The victorious U.S. team at the Reining Test Event was made up of (L to R) Shawn Flarida on Smart Spook, Aaron Ralston with Double My Whiskey, Tom McCutcheon on Darlins Not Painted, and Dell Hendricks with Starbucks Sidekick.
All countries were invited to the Kentucky Cup, and twelve riders from the U.S., Canada, and Mexico made the trip, and although the U.S. knows their competition is getting better by the day, they are excited for the opportunity to compete as a sport in just their third WEG, and this time on American soil.

Tom McCutcheon said, “This is a different format than what we’re used to. At our shows we go and we do our own thing, and it’s each man for himself. But there’s something about pulling on this jersey with this team that’s like nothing else. There’s just no other way to describe it. For me it’s the most meaningful event that we go to. I just love the fact that we ride for the U.S. and we have teammates. It’s just awesome.”

The U.S. team is thankful for this win and extremely thankful to all involved in getting them to this point. “Without the USEF Foundation we wouldn’t be here, and that sounds like a catch phrase but it’s the truth,” said Hendricks. “Reining would not be on the international stage. They do different format than what we’re used to. At our shows we go and we do our own thing, and it’s each man for himself. But there’s something about pulling on this jersey with this team that’s like nothing else. There’s just no other way to describe it. For me it’s the most meaningful event that we go to. I just love the fact that we ride for the U.S. and we have teammates. It’s just awesome.”

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Looking back at 2009, what were some of the highlights for you?

GM The first highlight was Las Vegas (the Rolex FEI World Cup Finals), where Sapphire was a very close second to Shutterfly. Sapphire’s conformation simply wasn’t as fast as Shutterfly. McLain and Sapphire were fabulous. That was a great boost.

We had some unexpected absence (Rich Fellers) and unexpected downs in the “Super League” (Meydan FEI Nations Cup). We had the back-to-back Rome and St. Gallen Nations Cup wins, which is very unusual. Ashlee Bond really was out of nowhere in a sense, and she absolutely set the world on fire over there with double-clear rounds in every Nations Cup and ribbons in the grand prix every week.

(The third leg of the tour was) Falsterbo, Hickstead, Dublin. That’s where we really could have beaten them, especially if Rich Fellers had gone. One of his horses was unsound and he didn’t feel it was worth going to Europe with one horse, which I agreed upon. If we had Rich, with one more very seasoned person on that tour and gotten more points, I think we could have won the Super League. It wasn’t a big disappointment; we ended up second, but when you’re that close to winning and when you’re ahead for most of the year, it is a bit of a disappointment. Overall we had a very nice summer in Europe.

We had the best show in Calgary that I can remember, despite that we were second in the Nations Cup. Rich won an international class and McLain won the big grand prix on Friday night, and the huge one on Sunday. We won the speed derbies, and Will Simpson won in the beginning of the week. That was the best Calgary I ever remember as far as individual wins.

That was the end of the year for me. I watched Southhampton, I watched New Albany, and I’ll watch Syracuse. My real influence and duties after Calgary diminish considerably in the trenches, but not in the office. For 2010, we have to see everybody come forward and see every horse jump in the trials. We have to see their form. That’s what keeps you getting up in the morning.

How satisfied were you with the progress of rookies on the tour?

GM Ashlee Bond did something you don’t see happen. She ruled Europe in a sense, for those five horse shows. I would say Cara Raether was very much a contributor to the Nations Cup scores. She had a better Nations Cup run than a grand prix run. It was very good for Michelle Spadone to go. Europe is not harder, but it’s out of one’s comfort zone. For them, it was a great learning experience.

How will things progress in finding the WEG team after the trials?

GM We’ll seed them after the trials; the selectors and I will put them in an order. It will be a very, very close order. It won’t be four faults or eight faults, but maybe half a fault apart or virtually tied in the order. People shouldn’t say going into Europe, “I was fourth and now suddenly I’m tenth.” That’s very easy to have happen, for somebody who is ninth to end up on the team at WEG. After we seed the long list of 15 people, we’ll then start at the top of the list and I’ll discuss with each person which is the best tour for their horse. If you’re in the top five, you have a little edge because you get to pick any of the three tours. When you’re lower, you have less selectivity to which tour you want to be on.

What do you think of the improvements at the Kentucky Horse Park?

GM I judged the Hunter Derby Finals. The ring is magnificent, the atmosphere was fabulous, and the footing was wonderful. The new indoor ring - Nina Bonnie gave me a tour of the place - was great. For the WEG, I hope that that place is manicured to the nines. Their time schedule, their organization, all of that goes without a hitch, but I hope that the look of the place is absolutely wonderful.

Do you think it’s an advantage to have the WEG in the United States?

GM I think it’s a great boost to the sport and to our sport internally. I think it’s very good for the Europeans to come over here. Las Vegas was a great boost to our sport. I think it’s been very healthy for the Europeans to have to come over to Las Vegas and now Kentucky.

Is there any kind of message that you’d like to send for the sport for next year?

GM I always have the same message - “Do what we know how to do,” which is how to take care of horses, how to turn out horses, how to keep horses happy and sound, how to ride a jumping horse. What we know how to do, do to the best of our ability. We’ve had great horsemanship in this country. When somebody lets down and doesn’t adhere to the basics of our method, that irritates me a great deal because we know how to do it. That’s my message: Do what we know how to do, better than ever. – Jennifer Wood
A
ter an excellent showing during the dressage, marathon,
and cones tests during the 2009, FEI World Combined Pony
Driving Championships in Greven-Bockholt, Germany,
Suzy Stafford brought home the Individual Bronze medal in the
Single Pony Class for the United States with Courage to Lead. Team
USA finished in fourth place during the Nations Competition, with
Stafford as well as Sara Schmitt driving Batman in Singles. In the
Pairs Division, Miranda Cadwell chose from Danny, Rambo, and
Toby, while Tracey Morgan had Lizwell Gambling Queen, Single
Tree Tabitha Twitchit, and Farnley Coquette. Laurie Astegiano
drove with Liezelhof Dave, Templered Kronos, Templered Monsoon, and Templered St. Jerneborg in the Four-in-Hand,
and Allison Stroud handled Benjamin, Kikerin Edward, Mystic, Sir
Patrick, and Long Donal.

"I always feel privileged to be able to represent the United
States with such support from my team and the USEF," noted
Stafford. "I have a fantastic group of supporters and sponsors
that helped make this happen. This was a true group effort with
patience and love for the pony and the sport. I am especially
thankful to Courage to Lead’s owner, Beverly Lesher, for trusting
me with her most precious possession."

Stafford was very excited to compete with Courage to Lead,
also known as Katy, at this year’s Championships. The 11-year-
old Morgan mare was selected for the team in 2004, but was
injured just a few days before the competition.

"Katy is a true lady, elegant, graceful, and
independent," said Stafford. "She has self-con-
fidence and athletic ability that cannot be
missed when she trots into the arena.
Katy and I have developed a special
bond over these last few years, and we
understand each other almost with-
out any verbal communication."

To keep Katy prepared for the
Championships, Stafford stuck
to a very strict training schedule
this year. "Slow and steady was
my approach to keeping her
happy and in top form," she
explained. "I was selective in
choosing which shows I com-
peted at with Katy. I picked
a schedule that gave her
enough show practice along
with ample down-time prior
to the Championships."

"The hardest part for me
was not to over-train in the
two weeks leading up to the
Championships," continued
Stafford. "You tend to get a little
twitchy wanting to fix everything
during the last weeks leading up
to the show. I know that never
works, so I am proud of myself for
keeping that from happening."

Although Team USA did not earn a place on the podium
during this year’s Nations Competition, Stafford is
proud of the Team’s performance and feels that
it was an excellent learning experience. "Of
course I was hoping for a medal, but I feel
the team put in an honorable effort, and
we now know what our weaknesses
are as a team," she commented. "We
will come back in 2011 stronger
and more determined to be on
the podium."

Tracey Morgan showed
in the Pairs Ponies class and
climbed five positions during
the final day of competition
to earn the fifth place honors
during the Championships.

Team USA, comprised
of Keady Cadwell, Lisa
Singer, and Larry Poulin,
finished in the 12th position
at this year’s FEI World Pair
Driving Championship in
Kecskemét, Hungary. Keady
Cadwell, driving Uniek and
Finlandio, was the highest-
placed American in the indi-
vidual competition.

– Rebecca Walton

Keady Cadwell, driving Uniek and Finlandio,
was the highest-placed American in the indi-
vidual competition at this year’s FEI
World Pair Driving Championship in Kecskemét,
Hungary.
Phillip Dutton was the highest placed American rider at the 2009 Land Rover Burghley Horse Trials CCI****. Dutton and Truluck took on the stiffest competition and the toughest cross-country track in the world to finish fourth on a score of 54.5.

Truluck is owned by Annie Jones and Shannon Stimson. Dutton got the 12-year-old Thoroughbred from his student, Amy Smith, and brought him up the levels from Preliminary. The pair represented the United States in the 2007 Pan American Games in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, where they won the Individual Silver medal and were members of the Gold medal team.

The duo earned a 45.3 in dressage on the first day. Dutton remarked, “I was really pleased, that’s the best he’s ever gone in dressage. Everything came together on that day. We had good build-up to our test, and he settled really well. It gives me a lot of confidence about his dressage in the future.”

Dutton and Truluck shined on cross-country day and made easy work of Captain Mark Phillips’ (the U.S. Eventing Chef d’Equipe) challenging course. Dutton commented on the course, “It’s arguably the hardest cross-country course in the world. I thought it was actually toned down this year and it rode quite well. Overall, I think it was a really good day for the sport.”

They did have 5.2 time faults on cross-country. Dutton explained of his time faults, “Truluck got a bit tired, and he has had to come back from some injuries and this was his first big event for quite a while.” He went on, “You can only do so much fitness at home. You need these big events to get them fit. And he lacked a little bit of fitness so I had to nudge him on a little bit. But overall compared to a lot of horses, the time was pretty good.”

Not all of the U.S. riders were as fortunate as Dutton to get around the course without problems. Dutton said, “I was really pleased, that’s the best he’s ever gone in dressage. Everything came together on that day. We had good build-up to our test, and he settled really well. It gives me a lot of confidence about his dressage in the future.”

Dutton is uncertain of his plans for the future, but he competed at Fair Hill as his last competition this year. “We’ll regroup, see how the horses look, and then start to make some plans,” he explained. “We have to formulate plans for each horse based on what they are going to need to be at their best for the 2010 World Equestrian Games.”

Dutton was able to compete at Burghley with support from USET Foundation grants. He expressed his appreciation saying, “We are just so grateful to have that support, and it makes it possible for us to be a player on the world stage. We’ve got to get overseas and experience the standard over there. It just helps us all out so much to be able to do that because it is so expensive to go overseas. It’s not just the airfare, (but also) all the other costs associated with it. Having support like this makes a huge difference.”

“The support in the U.S. relies on the generosity of individuals. This is very different than Australia,” Dutton said of his birth country, where he rode for their team to Olympic gold. “In Australia, most of the international teams are government supported, which we don’t have in the U.S. So it’s a real tribute to American horse-lovers and the USET Foundation that they are able to be as generous as they are.”

– Gillian Ellis
The third leg of the Meydan FEI Nations Cup tour began with a stop in Falsterbo, Sweden in mid-July. Three “youngsters” from the United States, led by veteran Beezie Madden, were tasked with keeping the United States in first place on the 2009 tour.

Joining the tour for the third leg were Charlie Jayne and Urbanis, Ublesco with Cara Raether, and Michelle Spadone aboard Melisimo. The veteran Madden competed on one of her equine “newcomers,” the rising star Danny Boy, owned by Abigail Wexner. Interestingly, the United States team featured three of the only five women competing in Sweden this year.

Walking in the ring for the first time on the team at Falsterbo, Michelle Spadone said, “I was definitely nervous. I really didn’t know what to expect, but it was certainly a different atmosphere. At home, you really don’t realize how different it is to compete at that level, with those huge crowds.”

“I’m so grateful to the USET Foundation and everyone on the team,” Spadone added. “Without them, none of this would be possible.”

The United States ended the day well off the pace in seventh place. Highlighting the day for U.S. was the performance of Meydan FEI Nations Cup newcomers, Cara Raether and Ublesco, who offered up some great hope for the future with the only clear round of the day for the U.S, and a two round total of only four faults.

This was Raether’s first time on the major Nations Cup tour, although she had ridden before on the Developing Riders Tour and for the U.S. at the 2007 Pan American Games. She has had Ublesco, a 12-year-old Belgian Warmblood stallion, for four years, and she felt that moving up to this level of competition suited Ublesco well.

“He has lots of scope and blood, and he loves big venues that have a lot of atmosphere,” Raether described. “The more important the event and the more crowds, the better he goes. I know him very well, and it really helped my confidence that I could count on him; he wouldn’t wilt or be spooky, and he wouldn’t run out of energy. That let me focus on jumping a clear round.”

Raether feels that “any chance you get to be on a team is a great opportunity,” and noted that the support from the USET Foundation “primarily helps with the cost of the flight.” She explained, “That’s the most expensive aspect of the whole trip. The grant money covered the biggest chunk of the cost for riders.”

The penultimate stop of the 2009 Meydan FEI Nations Cup was a week later in Hickstead, England. On an afternoon in which weather conditions played a major role in the high scores, it was a troublesome day for the Americans who racked up 52 faults. On the day, because of the weather, there were only five clears during the two rounds of competition.

The bright spot for the United States at Hickstead was the continued steady performance of Beezie Madden and Danny Boy, who registered two rounds of just four faults under horrible conditions.

Following Hickstead, the U.S. was still within striking distance of the top spot in the tour rankings. The 2009 Meydan FEI Nations Cup tour drew to a close in Dublin, Ireland, two weeks later.

Charlie Jayne and Urbanis added a clear to the score sheet, and Laura Kraut and Cedric were spotless at Dublin in round one. Both Cara Raether and Beezie Madden had just a single knockdown to leave the United States with only four faults going into the second round.

The United States was unable to capitalize on their first round success, however, and would wind up in a fourth place tie on the day, with 20 total faults. The United States had a tremendous start to the 2009 Meydan FEI Nations Cup season and hung on for a satisfying second place finish in this series, just four points behind the team from France. – Kenneth Kraus
WIN OF A LIFETIME
for McLain Ward and the Amazing Sapphire

On a spectacular September day in Calgary, Canada, with a record crowd of 73,736 show jumping fans looking on, U.S. rider McLain Ward and Sapphire posted the biggest win in their already remarkable career together, taking top honors in the $1,000,000 CN International at Spruce Meadows.

For the win, Ward first mastered a starting field of forty-seven, then the ten best that advanced to the second round of action. But, it was the breathtaking jump-off against Canadian favorite Eric Lamaze and his Olympic Gold medal partner Hickstead that finally sealed the deal for Ward.

With the huge crowd on their feet for the stunning tiebreaker, it was Ward and Sapphire racing across the finish line a mere 2/100ths of a second faster than Lamaze for the win and a first place payday of $325,000.

Course designer Leopoldo Palacios was thrilled to have a jump-off against two of the best in the world, after a number of years with only one clean, and said his first and second round tests were as big as he dare make them. “I don’t know what I could have invented to stop these guys,” said Palacios with a grin. “I would simply be too afraid to build anything any bigger.”

“I went as fast as [Hickstead] could go; it was just that competitive,” said Lamaze. “For me, it was just try as hard as I could, and in the end it wasn’t good enough.”

“In the jump-off I didn’t get to see Eric go, but when he finished, the crowd literally erupted. It was deafening,” explained Ward. “It was so close. I didn’t see Eric’s time, but when I heard that crowd, I thought, ‘Oh no, here we go again, bridesmaids again.’”

For Ward, the win was very special.

“I think Aachen, Calgary, and the Championships are the major events, the pinnacles of our sport. I think anyone, if they had to choose two grand prix classes to win, those would be the two,” he said. “We’ve come so close at Aachen a couple of times now, so the win at Spruce Meadows was especially rewarding.”

“This was an incredible day,” he went on to say. “It was in a non-championship year, so you had all of the very best horses and riders in the world, it was a beautiful day with a huge crowd, so it was very, very special. As an individual, this has to be the biggest thing I’ve ever won.”

As far as his equine partner Sapphire, Ward gives her all of the credit. “She just blows me away,” he smiled. “But her success has so much to do with the people around me. Erica and Lee McKeever and the job they’ve done, the vets, the blacksmiths, plus I am blessed to have great owners that let me keep these horses, and my father, as I’ve said many times, is the person who has steered this ship and given me the best advice.”

And when the conversation returns to where Sapphire might rank among the all-time greats, Ward is quick to rank her among the elite in show jumping history. “Obviously I’m biased, but I think she has to be ranked among the very best ever. We try not to think about what her legacy is yet. Her legacy will ultimately be decided and measured by someone other than me when her career is in the record books.”

On the day before Ward’s win, the Netherlands was simply unstoppable in the BMO Nations Cup. The team from the Netherlands finished the two rounds of action with an incredible six clear jumping efforts, and just a single time fault in total, to give that country their first win at Calgary since 1997.

Lauren Hough’s double clear leads U.S. Show Jumping squad to second place finish in BMO Nations Cup

A crowd of over 67,000 was on hand to watch the defending champions from the United States finish second with only 12 faults, bolstered by the double clear performance from Lauren Hough and her rising star, Quick Study.

Joining Hough in the strong second place finish were Richard Spooner and Cristallo, who were clear in the first round and had only a single rail in round two. Ashlee Bond and Cadett 7 had two identical rounds of eight faults, while Beezie Madden and Danny Boy came back with a clean second round after scoring 12 in the first.

The solid second place finished marked a great performance for the U.S. Show Jumping team in preparation for the 2010 Alltech FEI World Equestrian Games next year. – Kenneth Kraus
Matthew Metell Shines at Platinum Performance/USEF Show Jumping Talent Search Finals East

A record entry of 97 riders came to Hamilton Farms in Gladstone, NJ, home of the USEF Foundation, for the Platinum Performance/USEF Show Jumping Talent Search Finals East on a perfect fall weekend Oct. 2-4. Autumn leaves served as a colorful backdrop for the toughest of the equitation championships.

Matthew Metell, the runner-up last year, returned with determination and a very special horse to earn top honors from judges Joe Fargis, the Olympic double Gold medalist, and Linda Hough, mother of longtime U.S. team member Lauren Hough.

"My goal was to get to the top four and ride as best I could," said Metell, a 19-year-old from Falmouth, MA, who attends Sacred Heart University in Connecticut. He has a natural style that was accurate yet in harmony with his mount, making his whole performance look effortless.

Jessica Springsteen, 17, of Colts Neck, NJ, who was third in 2007, finished second, with Maggie McAlary, 19, of Amherst, NH - second in 2006 and third in 2005 - in third place. Elizabeth Lubrano, 20, of Glenmoore, PA, finished fourth.

But everyone noted that even outside of the top four, there was plenty of depth in the field. The judges remarked that the trainers are doing a good job preparing their students for the challenge of the Talent Search, which is geared to spotlight riders who can represent the country in international competition.

"The American style is alive and well," declared Hough. "The future looks great for the U.S. equestrian team, and these young people should go on to have great careers."

The class takes on extra significance by being staged at the USEF Foundation headquarters because of its illustrious history as the starting point for so many great riders, who have gone on to represent the country in moments of glory across nearly six decades.

While McAlary won the flat phase that started out the competition, Metell went on to dominate the gymnastics segment and the Sunday morning round over a course designed by Fargis’ 1984 Olympic teammate, Conrad Homfeld.

The top three were really close there, with Metell scoring a 98.5 on former show jumper Pioneer, while McAlary was only a half-point behind aboard Cheyenne and Springsteen earned 97.5 on Class Action. That was a new ride for her; two weeks earlier, the horse was ridden by Navona Gallegos to fourth place in the Talent Search Finals- West, which was won by Theo Boris.

Several contenders who were ahead of Lubrano in the standings dropped down with mistakes, so her score of 97 got her into the Final Four. Based on the individual medal test at the world championships, this phase requires the riders to compete over a short course, then switch horses with all the other contenders and demonstrate their ability to “read” the mounts, on which they are only allowed to take two fences before entering the ring.

Lubrano had difficulty at a double with Springsteen’s mount, which put her fourth. McAlary earned a 97 with that horse, but two scores in the 80s ended her shot at victory.

Springsteen had the best mark of the competition, a 99 on Lubrano’s LB Carte Noir, but one score in the 80s with Cheyenne left her behind Metell, who was in the 90s with all four horses, including a 98 on Cheyenne as he won the competition.

The Talent Search could serve as a big springboard for Metell’s ambitions to be an equestrian professional and ride for the U.S., but he’s not abandoning his education in the process, noting, "I’m going to make sure I get my bachelor’s degree."

Pioneer, who was a 1.45-meter jumper in Europe, is new to the equitation game but quickly earned an extra accolade, the Grappa Trophy as the Best Horse in the finals. The award was presented by 2000 Talent Search winner Sarah Willeman, the owner of legendary equitation horse Grappa (now retired) and USEF Foundation Chairman Dr. Armand Leone, Jr.

Metell and McAlary are trained by Andre Dignelli and Kirsten Coe at Heritage Farm in Katonah, NY, the farm that owns Pioneer. Dignelli also acknowledged trainer Teddy Demetriou, who brought Metell to his attention last year and was on hand to pose for the trophy photo.

Dignelli said, "I think the level of riding was higher this year than we’ve seen it in quite some time. In my career, I will remember Matt’s round as one of the best jumping rounds I’ve seen."

Stacia Madden of Beacon Hill Show Stables in Colts Neck, NJ, who trained both Springsteen and Lubrano with the assistance of Max Amaya and Krista Freundlich, felt the riding from the top 10 was very strong.

"Where do you get the chance to see riders get 98s, 97s, 95s? It was so educational, too, for the green kids,” she commented. – Nancy Jaffer
A dozen Olympic and international riders turned out on October 7 at Hamilton Farms in Gladstone, NJ, home of the USET Foundation headquarters, to help celebrate the grand finale of Pennfield Feed’s That’s a Promise Tour, a seven-city tour with a mission to raise funds for the USEF’s Young Rider program.

After a great presentation on sport horse nutrition by Dr. Joe Pagen of Kentucky Equine Research, and an open forum with eight of the Pennfield Promise Partner riders, everyone enjoyed a champagne toast. Then USEF President and Olympic Gold Medalist David O’Connor and Michael Barisone wrapped up the evening with a pas de deux performed to ‘80s rock music. Spectacular!

Other Pennfield Promise Partners in attendance were: Karen O’Connor, Chester Weber, Georgina Bloomberg, Phillip Dutton, Bonnie Mosser, Buck Davidson, Bruce Davidson, and John Williams. The eager guests at the Finale lined up to get autographs from their favorite riders. International eventer Andrea Leatherman and FEI dressage rider Justin Hardin also attended, as did Jim Wolf and Sally Ike from the USEF. – Pennfield Feed
Just ask USET Foundation Chairman Armand Leone Jr. what he remembers most about team President Emeritus Finn Caspersen, and his answer comes instantly. "He said, 'We measure our success in medals.' That's something I'll never forget and that's what drives everything I do here. It's all about the athletes and the horses and the people."

As USET Foundation President and CEO Jane Forbes Clark noted, "His leadership was extraordinary. It brought the team to an entirely new level."

Although he was the dynamic force behind American driving, which was his special interest, Finn took a great interest in each of the Team's disciplines.

He was unable to be in Sydney, Australia, for the 2000 Olympics, but former USET executive director Bob Standish recalled Finn's delight when he called him late at night to say David O'Connor had won the eventing Individual Gold medal.

"He knew the value of medals," said Standish. "He knew if we did not win medals, we weren't going to get the financial support we needed from the corporate sector."

A passionate sportsman, Finn delighted in having his own four-in-hand that competed successfully here and abroad. While Bill Long drove his horses, Finn often rode on the carriage as a groom navigator, taking particular joy in the rough-and-tumble of the marathon phase.

Ronni Nienstedt, a photographer who chronicled driving events during the era when Finn played such a prominent role in the sport, thinks of him this way:

"For me, the image of Finn will always be as a navigator on the back of his four-in-hand, khaki pants splattered with mud and a smile on his face that was bright as the brass on the harness."

Finn founded the Gladstone Driving Association, which put on the Gladstone Driving Event at Hamilton Farm, home of the United States Equestrian Team. He brought over various foreign drivers to serve as an example to the Americans, who repaid him with a landmark Gold medal in the 1991 World Pairs Championship. That entitled the U.S. to participate in the 1993 edition of that competition at Gladstone, an opportunity Finn relished. It was hailed as one of the best competitions of its kind ever held.

"Finn put in what he could, financially and emotionally and with a lot of leadership, both for driving and the whole U.S. team," commented four-in-hand driver Tucker Johnson, a longtime USET trustee. "He supported various endeavors and helped them be more than they were without him."

A graduate of Brown University and Harvard Law School, Finn was a powerhouse in academic fundraising. His interests were multi-dimensional, prompting him to be active in many causes, as diverse as conservation and rowing.

An overflow crowd of more than 700 people drawn from the equestrian, financial, political, and academic worlds attended Finn's funeral at St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Morristown, N.J. The final hymns were particularly fitting -- America the Beautiful, which spoke to his great love of country, and "Jerusalem," which gained fame as the theme from the inspirational Olympic movie, "Chariots of Fire."

Thomas Kean, the former governor of New Jersey who gave the eulogy, reminisced about getting an invitation to attend the Royal Windsor Horse Show with Finn, an honorary lifetime officer of the organization who wanted the governor to meet a few of his British friends. They turned out to be Prince Philip, Queen Elizabeth, and the Queen Mother, who took the governor with them to chapel.

Finn is survived by his wife, Barbara; four sons and nine grandchildren. Contributions in his memory may be made to the Finn M.W. Caspersen ’59 Scholarship at Peddie School, 201 S. Main St., Hightstown, NJ 08520 USA or the Memorial Fund at the Weekapaug Foundation for Conservation, 366 Post Rd., Westerly, RI 02891, USA.

– Nancy Jaffer
The USET Foundation, the USEF, and the USEA honored the legendary Eventing coach Jack Le Goff in a special memorial service at Hamilton Farms in Gladstone, NJ, home of the USET Foundation. The memorial service brought together more than 100 people, including Olympic riders that trained with Le Goff.

Jack LeGoff’s Cadre Noir jacket, his boots, and fittingly, an ashtray, cigarettes and champagne, were set up as a display in the rotunda of the USET Foundation stable; it was the first thing people saw when they came to the celebration of his life.

Many of the riders who trained with Le Goff were there, such as Jimmy Wofford, Tad Coffin, Michael Page, David and Karen O’Connor, Torrance Watkins, Kerry Millikin, Mike Huber, Karen Stives, Kim Walnes, Beth Perkins and more. Le Goff’s daughters Florence and Corrine, as well as his grandson Aiden, flew in from France. Current Eventing Chef d’Equipe Captain Mark Phillips, along with Phillip and Evie Dutton were there, as well as many others who knew and worked with Le Goff over the years. USEF President and Olympic Gold medalist David O’Connor, along with Jimmy Wofford and Tad Coffin, all gave moving eulogies about the coach and dear friend that meant so much to them.

USET Foundation Executive Director Bonnie B. Jenkins stated, “It was an amazing tribute to Jack that captured the true essence of his genius and a perfect tribute to someone who has had a lasting impact professionally and personally on those who knew him. The turnout of guests for the evening was also a resounding affirmation of the love and respect these riders and friends had for a man whose legacy will live on forever.”

The historic Hamilton Farm stable in Gladstone looked handsome, with its brass polished, freshly stained and painted stalls with name plates bearing the names of the great Olympic and international Team horses trained by Jack, as well as beautiful wool dress sheets neatly draped over the blanket racks. The rotunda and trophy room displayed photos of the legend and evoked great memories and stories of this equestrian giant from those in attendance.

Jack Le Goff came to the United States in 1970 and revolutionized the American equestrian program and defined an era with medals and championships. Le Goff’s coaching record at international championships was exemplary; he never missed winning a medal with any of the Eventing teams that he coached in his 14-year tenure in the United States. Eighteen medals in eight international championships is an outstanding accomplishment by which the U.S. team still measures itself. His innovative, intensive training changed the U.S. Eventing program forever.

His teams won Team Gold medals at the Olympic Games in 1976 and 1984 – proving the Americans were invincible at the highest level of sport during his reign.

Le Goff passed away on Friday, July 24, in his homeland of France at the age of 78. The Jack Le Goff Memorial Fund has been established in his memory. The Fund will provide annual travel grant(s) to riders selected to represent the United States at the FEI Eventing World Cup Final. The Fund supports Le Goff’s passion for the U.S. Eventing High Performance program and the FEI Eventing World Cup Competition in particular. This FEI Eventing World Cup Championship event was the brainchild of Le Goff’s ten years ago.

This year’s Eventing World Cup Final was held in Strzegom, Poland, on August 21-23, and the United States was represented by 25-year-old Kelly Prather of Bodega, CA, on Ballinakill Glory.

Donations may be made in Jack Le Goff’s name to the USET Foundation, P.O. Box 355, Gladstone, NJ 07934.

– Jennifer Wood (content also provided by the United States Equestrian Federation)
The USET Foundation would like to remember and honor Seamus Brady of Whitehouse Station, NJ. Brady passed away on Monday, July 27, at the age of 77. Brady was born in County Cavin, Ireland and trained at the Irish Army Equitation School in Dublin. He immigrated to the United States more than 50 years ago and became one of the most respected farriers in the world. Brady was the official farrier for the U.S. Equestrian Team for many years and was inducted into the International Horseshoeing Hall of Fame in 2002.

Seamus came to the United States and worked for USET Director Arthur McCashin before he was drafted into the U.S. Army. After his time in service, Seamus made a name for himself by working for some of the largest show barns in the country, pioneering techniques, teaching a number of up-and-coming farriers, and being a consummate horseman.

Farrier Tom Cianello apprenticed with Seamus in 1975, and they were close friends for the next three decades. “Shoeing was his life; it was the center of his life,” he stated.

In addition to his work with the USET, where Seamus was the team farrier for all three disciplines and was the team farrier at the 1988 Seoul Olympic Games, he was the farrier at a number of show barns, including George Morris’ Hunterdon Farm for 34 years. Morris agreed, “He was the guru teacher, and subsequent generations will owe him. He brought people in as working students, he shared with other blacksmiths and in a sense, he is a father of American blacksmith technology. He was one of the greats that I ever had anything to do with. I can’t say enough about him.”

Surviving are his children, son, Douglas Brady and wife, Loriann of Flemington, NJ; his daughters, Linda Colleen Deutsch and husband, Adam of Whitehouse Station, NJ, and Laura Jean Brady of Summerfield, NC; Ruth Moyer Brady, the mother of his children; his grandchildren, Casey Ann and Douglas Brian; eight brothers and sisters in Ireland; along with many other relatives and friends who will miss Seamus.

Show Jumping Hall of Fame Member
Adolph Mogavero
1916-2009

Show Jumping Hall of Fame member Adolph Mogavero passed away on August 25, 2009, at the age of 93 in Sarasota, Florida.
Mogavero rode in races on the flat and over fences before becoming a successful professional show rider in the 1940s, '50s and '60s. Riding with stylish form that was uncommon in the early days, he showed for leading stables in Boston and New York. Mogavero won jumper championships with First Chance and Sonoro at the nation’s top shows. He enjoyed many successes with jumpers Balko’s Edge and Ping Pong, as well as with Blue Bird and Fire One, which went on to compete internationally for the United States Equestrian Team.

Equally successful aboard hunters, Mogavero rode Quaker Bonnet and Jane Tanner to AHSA conformation hunter honors. Lea’s Boots and Bronze Wing were also frequently named hunter champions with Mogavero in the saddle.

After his retirement from competition, Mogavero remained active in the horse show world as a regular AHSA jumper judge and timer, and as a Director of the American Grand Prix Association.

Mogavero was best known for officiating at the open water obstacle. His wit, sense of humor, and eye for detail could be seen all around the show ring, and the crowd always watched for his flag flying in the air.

He was inducted into the Show Jumping Hall of Fame in 1991.

In 1999, Adolph Mogavero was awarded the Pegasus Medal of Honor, an annual award which recognizes individuals who have exhibited outstanding service to horses and the sport, and who, through their dedication, have attracted people to the sport and contributed to horse sport by advancing its popularity. – Kenneth Kraus
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