



# USET Foundation NEWS



UNITED STATES EQUESTRIAN TEAM FOUNDATION • VOLUME 17, ISSUE 1 • SUMMER 2018

## FEI WORLD EQUESTRIAN GAMES™ TRYON 2018 PREVIEW EDITION

The U.S. equestrian teams in the eight international FEI disciplines of show jumping, dressage, eventing, driving, reining, vaulting, endurance and para-equestrian dressage are laser focused on preparing for the 2018 FEI World Equestrian Games™ (WEG) at the Tryon International Equestrian Center (TIEC).



### ACHIEVING SUCCESS with US Equestrian Director of Sport **WILL CONNELL**

As these teams make their final plans for their appearance on the world stage on home soil, their main goal is to be successful in front of their family, friends and fans. But how do we define success?

"I think that defining what is successful is sometimes challenging, but necessary if you're going to define what you're trying to achieve," explained US Equestrian (USEF) director of sport Will Connell.

"Ultimately at the top end of the program, success will be defined by medals at the Olympic / Paralympic level and the world level for the non-Olympic / Paralympic disciplines. We had a good Rio, but there is much to do after Rio because we are ultimately judged by our medals."

Connell stepped into his role as the director of sport in 2014 and has led a number of initiatives to help the U.S. equestrian teams achieve the success they are looking for. He believes that the five pillars of talent, vision, commitment, resource and environment are what will allow the programs within each discipline to achieve their goals.

*Longtime groom of McLain Ward, Lee McKeever, is the first to greet the two-time U.S. Olympic gold medalist and HH Azur, owned by Ward and Double H Farm, as they exit the ring at the prestigious CHIO Aachen World Equestrian Festival.*

*Photo by Shannon Brinkman*

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Dear Friends and Fans of TEAM USA,

I can feel the excitement building for the FEI World Equestrian Games (WEG) to be held, Sept. 11 – 23, on home soil at the Tryon International Equestrian Center in Tryon, NC (USA). As you will read in this WEG Preview Issue, there are advantages and potential disadvantages to having the games at home, however all these variables have been carefully considered and are part of a well-honed strategy developed by the USEF in preparing our athletes and teams, TEAM USA.



A critical component of TEAM USA is the “team behind the team.” This group of dedicated individuals is what makes the difference between medals or no medals. The owners who invest in world class horses, for whom we will never be able to thank enough. The veterinarians farriers, physiotherapists, (human and equine), grooms, coaches, chefs d’équipe, team leaders and the professional horse transport companies that fly our horses around the world giving them the care they need and deserve, and last but not least, YOU our incredible donors who are a vital part of the “team behind the team.” This is TEAM USA!

Along with the prestige of achieving excellence at the WEG, these championships are also an Olympic qualifying competition for Dressage, Eventing, Jumping and Para-dressage. While this can be daunting, this country is fortunate to have one of the most comprehensive High Performance programs of any nation in the world. These programs have been, and continue to be, a critical component in developing our athletes and horses and preparing them for international competition. I have no doubt that TEAM USA will be prepared on every front, and that they will represent us all with great pride and performances.

I hope you will enjoy reading about each of the eight disciplines’ preparations and plans leading up to the WEG, and I also hope that you will be able to attend and be there in person to cheer on TEAM USA and the sport we love so dearly.

Sincerely,

Bonnie B. Jenkins

Executive Director



## ACHIEVING SUCCESS

Continued from page 1



Photo by Shannon Brinkman

U.S. dressage athlete Kasey Perry-Glass shows her appreciation for her team, hugging dressage team veterinarian Dr. Christina Russillo, after completing a successful test on Goerklintgaards Dublet owned by Diane Perry.



## THE FIVE PILLARS

### TALENT

The first pillar, talent, does not just mean horses and athletes. It includes coaches, leaders, physical therapists, veterinarians and many others. Creating a truly world-class program requires the best at all levels through the pathway.

### VISION

The second pillar, vision, requires knowing where you want to go. While this might be clear at the Olympic and world level, it is something that must be understood at all levels, by athletes, owners and parents. They must know what the pathway is to move up through the levels.

USEF has determined three levels on the pathway as elite, the “here and now” athlete-and-horse combinations for the current WEG or Olympics, development, which are athletes and horses who are pro-

gressing towards Elite level, and emerging, which, in most disciplines, crosses over into the discipline affiliate area of operations, with the top level touching the development level.

Communication is also important to this pillar, with athlete reviews now being (or will be) included. Every six months, discipline directors and technical advisors sit down with their athletes and ask, “What are your short-term, medium-term and long-term goals? What can we do to help? How are we going to measure that progress and if there is funding available, how will it be allocated?”

Key performance indicators (KPI) have also been, or will be, introduced to monitor each discipline. A KPI can help determine if what is occurring in each discipline is helping it move in the right direction. Examples include number of horses jumping clear rounds in Nations Cup competitions for show jumping and number of horses achieving top 10 results at CCI4\* events for eventing.

### COMMITMENT

Commitment, the third pillar, is key because in equestrian sports there are as many downs as there are ups. Being committed to that vision is sometimes easy and sometimes very challenging.

### RESOURCE

The fourth pillar is resource, which doesn’t just include funding, but also the value of time, human resources and equine resources.

### ENVIRONMENT

The fifth and final pillar is environment, where the teams can operate in a way that is going to maximize their performance.

Connell noted that the environment at Tryon will prove challenging for the U.S. equestrian teams, but it is something that the federation has been preparing for. While many may perceive home soil as an advantage, there are a number of factors that must be taken into account.

## ACHIEVING SUCCESS

*Continued from page 3*

Many of our teams such as show jumping, dressage and driving are preparing in Europe, so they will still need to fly across the Atlantic, and any horses from the West Coast will also have to fly across the country for WEG.

Connell said, "One of the challenges is people perceive it as being easier to compete at home than it is to compete abroad. I'm not saying it's not, but the possible impediments are something that one has to be very aware of."

As an integral part of the British team in the lead-up to the 2012 London Olympic Games, Connell did a lot of research on the advantages and disadvantages of competing at home. The first thing to consider is that Tryon is a competition venue that many are already familiar with. During WEG, it is going to be a totally different atmosphere.

"They might be used to parking here, doing this, going to Roger's Diner for breakfast and wherever for dinner, but it's all going to be very different during WEG," explained Connell. "They should get into the expectation that this is a world championship venue in North Carolina not the TIEC they are used to."

The second issue is that there is far greater press interest and public interest on the home team, which requires careful management. As Connell explained, "Sitting in the media center, if, as an example, McLain [Ward], Laura [Graves], Phillip [Dutton] and Chester [Weber] are there, then there is going to be a greater call on their time than there is on many leading athletes from other nations."

There is also a great deal of pressure on the U.S. athletes from friends and family who come to support their team and home country. Giving the athletes the space to compete and focus on competing is often more challenging at a home Games than it is at an overseas Games.

There are also many advantages to competing on home soil as well. The athletes and teams will be familiar with many of the vol-



Photo by Shannon Brinkman

*Each of Chester Weber's driving horses require a team of grooms and specialists to ensure they are prepared to perform at their very best.*

unteers and the stewards, so should feel in a familiar environment. There is also a swell of support behind the home team, which really does make a difference (as seen in London). The primary goal for everyone involved is having the best athlete on the best horse in the best condition, and while the small details may seem insignificant, one jump down can make the difference between winning or losing a medal.



*Kelsey Russell and her team work together in sync to help Sandstormm, owned by Suzanne Hayes, recover after an endurance race.*

Photo by Becky Pearman



While medals may be the goal that the public is hoping for during WEG, USEF has different objectives for defining success. In the Olympic disciplines of show jumping, dressage and eventing, the primary goal is placing high enough as a team to qualify for the Tokyo Olympics in 2020.

"The primary aim for the Olympic disciplines is Olympic qualification," said Connell. "That does not mean we are not trying to win medals, but if we secure Olympic qualification in Tryon, it means we have a straight two-year run in to Tokyo 2020 and we're not having to qualify for the Olympics through the Pan American Games."

Funding for the U.S. equestrian teams comes from three sources: the USET Foundation, the U.S. Olympic Committee (USOC) and the Federation, US Equestrian. The USET Foundation is the primary and largest supporter of high performance programs in the eight WEG disciplines allowing the development and delivery of a "Pathway" aimed at sustainable success. Without the support of the Foundation the programs would not be able to operate at the level they do.

For the three Olympic disciplines there is also a significant amount of funding from the USOC. The USOC targets medals at the next Olympic Games. Qualification for Tokyo 2020 during WEG is the 2018 target agreed upon with the USOC. In addition, there are a number of KPIs that track the progress of the disciplines towards 2020.

There has also been a small grant from the USOC for the development of para-equestrian. The para-equestrian dressage team will also have Tokyo 2020 as an overall goal during WEG, hoping to develop solid combinations for the Paralympic team and close the gap on the podium in comparison to Rio.



Photo by Phillip Dacin

*Training, coaching and transporting of human and equine athletes around the world in order to compete against the sport's best athletes is made possible thanks to contributions made to the USET Foundation.*

There is significant funding that goes through the Federation, which supports some national programs as well as championships, however the vast majority of funding that US Equestrian and the affiliates manage goes towards supporting the national equestrian sport through the 29 breeds and disciplines.

Each of the non-Olympic discipline will also have targets, and these will include the winning of medals. For example, for endurance, the primary target will be for the team to complete the race. "If you complete the team in endurance, then you're probably not far off from winning a medal," said Connell. "In reining, medals are most certainly the target."

With the support of the home crowd behind them, each discipline will have its own specific goals, including medals and top finishes on the podium. Hoping to hear the national anthem played in front of a cheering crowd is the goal of every U.S. athlete competing at the FEI World Equestrian Games™ Tryon 2018.

– Rebecca Walton ★



Photo by Lindsay Y. McCall

*Behind the U.S. Para-Equestrian Dressage Team, presented by Deloitte, is a village of close-knit supporters, who are crucial in helping U.S. para-dressage athletes reach the podium. (Left back) Winona Hartvikson (Back row) Becky Reno, Jan Holger Holtschmit, Kai Handt, Allyn Mann, Katie Jackson, Michele Bandinu and Rowan O'Riley (Seated front) Margaret McIntosh and Roxanne Trunnell (Right back) Alanna Flax Clark and Deborah Faith Stanitski*





# STRATEGIC PLANNING PREPARES NETJETS® U.S. SHOW JUMPING TEAM FOR WEG

The FEI World Equestrian Games™ (WEG) in September kicks off the next round of major world championships for equestrian sports with the 2019 Pan American Games and 2020 Olympic Games on the horizon. As one of the only countries with no government backing for their equestrian sports teams and funded solely by the United States Equestrian Team (USET) Foundation, the United States Olympic Committee (USOC) and US Equestrian (USEF) sponsors and members, the NetJets® U.S. Show Jumping Team, and the village of support staff behind them, have devised a strategic plan heading in to the championship in Tryon, North Carolina.

*“Our biggest priority right now is our world championship at WEG in Tryon,” said NetJets® U.S. Show Jumping Team Chef d’Équipe Robert Ridland. “We’re very fortunate in our country to have some of the top riders, not just in the sport today but who have ever ridden. We are going to have a very capable and confident team and they are going to be ready to do battle.”*



Beezie Madden and Breitling LS owned by Abigail Wexner

Since its inception in 1953 (when it was originally the Show Jumping World Championships prior to the World Equestrian Games forming in 1990), the United States has secured one gold medal (team gold in 1986), five silver medals (four individual and one team) and six bronze medals (four individual and two team), most recently claiming team bronze and individual bronze at the 2014 WEG in Normandy, France.

The selection process for the NetJets® U.S. Show Jumping Team for the 2018 WEG began in December 2017 and included two phases.

Phase I: The four highest-ranked athletes on the Rolex/USEF Show Jumping “Average Ranking List” as of Dec. 15, 2017 were named to the short list. Those athletes were Kent Farrington, Lauren Hough, Beezie Madden and McLain Ward.

Phase II: The three highest-ranked athletes, who had not already been selected in Phase I, on the Rolex/USEF Show Jumping Ranking “Horse List” as of April 6 were recommended to the short list next. Those athletes included Margie Engle, Laura Kraut and Adrienne Sternlicht. In addition, the highest-placed U.S. athlete in the final overall standings of the Longines FEI World Cup™ Jumping Final in Paris, who had not already been selected, was also recommended for the short list (Devin Ryan), while Chef d’Équipe Ridland, in consultation with advisors Anthony D’Ambrosio, Anne Kursinski and Leslie Howard, named two final athletes to the short list based on discretion (Jamie Barge and Jessica Springsteen).

Originally, these 10 athletes were named to the WEG short list that was first announced on April 27. However, due to injuries and other circumstances, Springsteen, Farrington and Hough





Margie Engle and Royce owned by Gladewinds Partners LLC

all opted to withdraw themselves from consideration for the team. As a result, the only replacement made to the short list, as approved by the USEF board of directors and in accordance with the WEG U.S. show jumping selection procedures, was Lillie Keenan, who replaced Springsteen, making the current count of athletes on the WEG short list eight.

Athletes named to the short list competed at CSIO5\* observation events over the summer, which included the Longines FEI Jumping Nations Cup™ Poland (June 14-17), Longines FEI Jumping Nations Cup™ Netherlands (June 21-24), FEI Jumping Nations Cup™ Aachen (July 17-22) and the Longines FEI Jumping Nations Cup™ Ireland (Aug. 8-12).

"Six years ago, we got rid of the Olympic trials and the world championship trials," said Ridland. "I felt very strongly that this was in some ways counterproductive because they were added events to the regular schedule, and very difficult events, potentially taking a lot out of the horses.

"The selection system is now based on the current schedule with these four CSIO5\* events that we're using as selection and preparation events," continued Ridland. "We picked some of the highest-profile, toughest competitions that these riders would be going to anyway — Sopot, Rotterdam, Aachen, Dublin. I know George [Morris] before me felt the same way — you don't want to put yourself in a box and then all of a sudden show up to

the championship having not gone head-to-head with the competitors that are going to be your biggest competition."

By Aug. 13, Ridland, in consultation with the advisors, will recommend a group of athletes (minimum of five) from the short list for the FEI Nominated Entries. Following this deadline and no later than the FEI Definite Entries deadline of Sept. 10, the 2018 NetJets® U.S. Show Jumping

Team for the WEG, consisting of up to five athletes from the FEI Nominated Entries and 10 horses, will be announced.

Ridland will then evaluate the five athletes and horses and will name the team of four combinations that will compete at the event as well as the fifth athlete and/or horse who will serve as the traveling reserve prior to the start of the event.

"I rely on stats that are furnished to me



Laura Kraut and Confu owned by St. Bride's Farm

Photos by Taylor Rains / Phelps Media Group



## SHOW JUMPING

*Continued from page 7*

by the USEF, which include various categories such as clean round percentages, discard score percentages, average faults per round and so on," said Ridland. "You want to have horse/rider combinations that have demonstrated the probability of a good thing, like a clean round, happening is much higher than a bad thing. There are a variety of stats that can lead to that; there is not just one. Ranking lists and other objective criteria we use extensively in the selection process as well and then there are the intangibles. I have advisors who help me with this and there are times when you use your gut instinct and what feels right. Obviously, experience is a factor that you have to insert into the equation as well — when the pressure is really on. Additionally, we are dealing with animals who can get injured, just like riders can, and circumstances can change so we have to be flexible. You have to put all of these different factors into the pot and then hope for a little bit of luck."

Along with Ridland and the advisors, other key players who help prepare the U.S. show jumping athletes and horses for the WEG include USEF discipline director and team leader, Lizzy Chesson, team veterinarian, Dr. Tim Ober, and equine physio Janus Marquis.

"As the discipline director for jumping, my responsibility is to lead on all matters related to jumping within US Equestrian," said Chesson. "This includes a variety of programs along the pathway from the USEF Talent Search Program to the Olympic Games. There is also the component of managing the Jumping Sport Committee, overseeing the rule revisions as well as working with the Competitions Department on national and FEI related issues. In the role of team leader, my focus is on the team and ensuring that all is in place for the team to maximize their potential. This starts with communication and involves developing and overseeing logistical planning, coordinating and managing the support team of vets, physios — human and equine — chef d'équipes and delivering the plan on the ground. I see it as my role to make sure everyone remains focused on the goal and that there is a positive environment and good morale within the team."



*Adrienne Sternlicht and Cristalline owned by Starlight Farms 1 LLC*

*Photos by Taylor Rains / Phelps Media Group*

In addition to striving for a podium finish, the team will also be looking to earn Olympic qualification for Tokyo. If they place among the top six in the team event at the WEG, the NetJets® U.S. Show Jumping Team will be qualified for the 2020 Olympic Games.

"The primary aim of the WEG selection process is to allow each athlete to prepare for the championship in a manner that maximizes their performance, while giving Robert [Ridland] an opportunity to assess which athletes and horses will most likely contribute to team success," said Chesson. "The process encourages close cooperation between the chef d'équipe and athletes and trainers as well as the team veterinarian and the athletes' own veterinarians."

"The selection methodologies for WEG and the Olympics are aligned and utilize a shortlist and observation events, while the Pan American Games' selection procedure follows the ranking list approach (three athletes from the Rolex/USEF Show Jumping Ranking List and two discretionary choices)," continued Chesson. "Since the Pan American Games fall in the year ahead of the Olympic Games, it is important to give athletes and horses the opportunity to follow their own competition plan that allows them to bring along combinations for the Olympic Games."

In his second term as chef d'équipe, after guiding the U.S. team to podium finishes in every major world championship since 2014, Ridland is ready to do it all again starting with the 2018 WEG and is confident in his strategy and plan.

"A successful team is made up of incredible athletes, both equine and human," said Ridland. "This is not a sport of just great horses. Our top professional riders go to the gym every day, they are finely tuned athletes and they know their strengths and weaknesses. They also have a support team that are absolutely essential to their success. The same situation exists with their horses, who have a support team and come along with all of our top riders."

"The USET Foundation supplies an incredible support system of personnel when we go to these events — from the veterinarians to the human physios to the equine physios," continued Ridland. "We're fortunate that we have these resources as well as some incredibly generous donors and backers that allow us to do what we do. We come fully loaded when we're at these major championships. That doesn't ensure success but it does help the odds." — Taylor Rains ★



*Devin Ryan and Eddie Blue  
owned by LL Show Jumpers, LLC*





# THE DUTTA CORP. U.S. DRESSAGE TEAM

## AIMS FOR WORLD EQUESTRIAN GAMES PODIUM

With the memory of missing the podium after finishing in fourth place at the 2014 World Equestrian Games (WEG) in Normandy, France, fresh in his mind, Robert Dover, The Dutta Corp. U.S. Dressage Team chef d'équipe, is optimistic of the team's performance when they return to the world championship stage in Tryon, North Carolina, in September.

Since their success receiving the bronze medal at the 2016 Rio Olympic Games with a team consisting of Laura Graves, Steffen Peters, Kasey Perry-Glass and Allison Brock, the American high performance dressage athletes are determined to maintain their position as Olympic candidates with a WEG podium finish.

*"We have a very strong group of riders coming into the 2018 World Equestrian Games in Tryon," Dover said. "They have proven their strength over the last few years with medals at the Pan American Games, the Rio Olympics as well as winning the first year of the Nations Cup series, placing second last year."*

When US Equestrian announced the WEG shortlist for The Dutta Corp. U.S. Dressage Team in May, horse-and-athlete combinations geared up for the designated observation events in Europe for the opportunity to be selected to represent the United States in Tryon. The shortlist members consisted of: Graves on Verdades, Peters on Rosamunde and Suppenkasper, Adrienne Lyle on Salvino, Perry-Glass on Goerklintgaards Dublet, Ashley Holzer on Havana 145, Shelly Francis on Danilo, Olivia LaGoy-Weltz on Lonoir and Sabine Schut-Kery on Sanceo.

Though Schut-Kery had to regrettably withdraw Sanceo from consideration due to a minor injury, the remaining seven contenders competed throughout Europe over the summer. Quarantine requirements for stallions and mares impacted the shortlists' competition strategy, but the CDIs in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, Leudelange, Luxembourg, and Aachen, Germany, were selected as the highlight observation events. The official WEG team was selected after the CHIO Aachen World Equestrian Festival concluded in Germany in July.

The final team selected to represent the United States consisted of: Graves on Verdades, Peters on Rosamunde, Adrienne Lyle on Salvino and Perry-Glass on Goerklintgaards Dublet.

"Overall, it is a great group of talented horses and riders; not only are they great individually, but they are great as a team and support each other," Dover continued. "They are an amazing group of individuals and they really get along superbly with each other. They are supportive of each other even when they are competing against one another."

Upon entering the arena at the FEI Dressage Nations Cup™ The Netherlands



Laura Graves and Verdades owned by Laura Graves & Curt Maes

in June, Lyle pulled up Salvino, an 11-year-old Hanoverian stallion owned by Betsy Juliano, when his noseband broke unexpectedly. While all hope may have been lost as time was ticking for her to enter the ring to compete in the Grand Prix

Special, it was all hands on deck as U.S. team members and Lyle's groom, Morgan Klingensmith, rushed to the rescue. They pulled out extra nosebands and managed to save the day for Lyle to enter the ring in enough time.

Photo by Aiman Hapner / Phelps Media Group





Adrienne Lyle and Salvino owned by Salvino Partners, LLC

"The biggest memory of Rotterdam, for me, was the fantastic way in which Adrienne's team members and her groom were right there as she had only 90 seconds to change the noseband before she had to go in," Dover said. "They did it and she still went in to do a test that was just under 72 percent. It speaks not only to her great ability as a rider and trainer, but also to her teammates, who were in the process of trying out against her for those cherished four spots. They were absolutely incredible as they worked to get a new noseband on. Olivia was actually using her teeth at one point to pull a piece of the old noseband away. It was like watching the pit crew at the Indianapolis 500!"

The WEG serves as the main qualifier for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics with the top six teams qualifying for the games, excluding Japan, who is granted a position automatically as the host nation. In addition, the top two teams from the 2019 Pan American Games in Lima, Peru, will be able to qualify for the Olympics as well as the three best ranked teams from the 2019 European Championships. Teams from eastern Europe, southeast and central Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Oceania will have the opportunity to qualify teams at several designated qualifying events. The Olympic format for 2020 has three-member teams with no drop score so more nations are able to qualify.

Another rule change leading up to the WEG is the introduction of the Degree of Difficulty Freestyle system. While the system has been utilized at the last two World Cup Finals as well as at multiple CDI competitions around the world, including the CDIO3\* Nations Cup at the Adequan® Global Dressage Festival, it will be the first time it has been utilized at the WEG. Developed by Daniel Göhlen, the system requires athletes to submit their freestyle choreography prior to the competition. Similar to ice skating, it provides the opportunity for more engaging commentary for spectators and allows for more transparent judging as the degree of difficulty score is predetermined based on the submitted choreography.

"The degree of difficulty has always been present in freestyle scoring, but now [the judges] have the sequence of movements ahead of time. By putting them together, it checks off a higher degree of difficulty," Dover said, explaining his strategy for the Americans. "We have gone over every single one of our riders' compositions to make sure the value of difficulty is as great as possible, while also keeping the harmony, the quality of the composition and the musicality because all of those aspects come into play.

"The degree of difficulty is something that works well, and having the floor plans mapped out and given in advance to the judges is fine," he continued. "There is another layer to assess upon which the judges already have a great deal to look at as the riders go. They are assessing the technical aspects of the test, the artistry and composition of the test, including the musicality, and now the judges have to watch to see exactly which movements are hinged together that make it more difficult. I think it's definitely more difficult for the judges, but is it better for the riders? Certainly. I do not think the system will affect the final result at all — the great ones will be great."

As Dover helps prepare his athletes, he often reflects upon the growth of dressage and the challenges that have arisen for the sport since he began his career.

"What used to be state-of-the-art for dressage in the world in 1984 to 1988 would now be around fifth place at best," Dover said. "The quality of the horses has gotten better and better over the last few decades. In all honesty, unless you have a horse with that great gymnastic and mental and emotional ability, you can't compete at the very highest level anymore. You have to have



the best horses and you have to ride great. There was a time when if a person was able to purchase a Grand Prix horse and learn the rudiments of the sport they might be able to make a team, but now, it's so hard to make a team just about anywhere. It's very competitive in the world. Making a team for the U.S. requires great riders on great horses."

An ongoing goal throughout Dover's tenure as chef d'équipe has been the crucial development of a pipeline that supports talented riders, especially youth, as well as prospective young horses up from the grassroots level.

"Over the years, I think that US Equestrian, our coaches and staff, with the help of the USET Foundation and sponsors, have worked very hard to implement world-class programs from our littlest kids all the way up through the elite national riders," Dover explained. "There has to be a constant flow of top riders from the children on ponies all the way through the junior and young rider divisions to the U25 as well as young horses coming along through the young horse divisions all the way up into the international level then to the elite level. What we try to do is keep producing better and stronger programs at the bottom end of the pyramid as well as maintaining a high standard for the top half — this has been my goal all along. A stronger emphasis on an excellent standard of riding, education, training and competitive understanding for our youth and for those who train young horses is paramount for our future success.

"It has been one of the great honors of my life being the chef d'équipe and technical advisor for the U.S. for the past six years and I'm thrilled that Debbie [McDonald] is taking my place," continued Dover. "She and I are so alike in how we think and feel about horses and riders, and our training philosophies are very similar. I feel like the future is very bright for America and it's just about maintaining this ongoing, steady progress with the standards at all levels."

US Equestrian's Hallye Griffin, who has been the managing director of dressage since 2011, is also proud of the work required to lead a strong field of contenders to WEG.

"Our primary goal for the 2018 WEG is to secure Olympic qualification for Tokyo, as well as aiming for the podium. I hope that we can also inspire those spectating, volunteering or following the WEG," Griffin said. "We have amazing horses, athletes, grooms, owners and supporters — their ongoing dedication and commitment to their horses and the overall success of U.S. dressage impresses me every day. I can't wait for the world to know more about them!" — *Annan Hepner* ★



*Steffen Peters and Rosamunde owned by Four Winds Farm*



*Kasey Perry-Glass and Goerklintgaards Dublet owned by Diane Perry*

Photos by Annan Hepner / Phelps Media Group





# LAND ROVER U.S. EVENTING TEAM

## PREPARES MENTALLY & PHYSICALLY FOR 2018 WEG

**A**rguably one of the most thrilling and grueling disciplines that will be featured at the 2018 FEI World Equestrian Games™ (WEG) in Tryon, North Carolina, eventing will pit some of the globe's most talented and physically fit horses and athletes against each other over the course of three phases: dressage, cross-country and show jumping. Following a successful season of qualifying events, Phillip Dutton and Z, Lauren Kieffer and Vermiculus, Marilyn Little and RF Scandalous, Boyd Martin and Tsetserleg and Lynn Symansky and Donner each earned a coveted slot to represent the nation on the Land Rover U.S. Eventing Team, led by new U.S. eventing high performance director and Chef d'Équipe Erik Duvander. Up against a field of 14 other talented teams, the United States troupe is playing the long game, aiming for a top finish in Tryon to solidify a place in 2020 on another grand stage.

*"The biggest goal for the Land Rover U.S. Eventing Team will be to qualify for the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games. To do this, the team needs to finish in one of the top six positions. While mutually agreed upon targets and goals are being refined as we build towards the WEG, and as the combinations develop, we aim to have the best prepared team with combinations that are ready and equipped to compete in front of a home crowd," noted Joanie Morris, managing director of eventing at US Equestrian (USEF).*



Though competing on home turf is advantageous in that it lessens the stress of travel as well as allows for more American supporters, the Land Rover U.S. Eventing Team is quick to acknowledge that hosting the WEG on American soil will also bring with it unique challenges that the team members and US Equestrian staff will have to work together to overcome.

"A home WEG is a great opportunity for athletes to compete in front of U.S. spectators and fans. It also means less travel for those that want to come and support the Land Rover U.S. Eventing Team; this is especially beneficial for our friends, family and owners," stated Morris. "The support of the home crowd will help U.S. athletes bring home medals, but there are distractions around a home games that aren't there when you are half a world away. Part of the job of the US Equestrian staff is to minimize these for the athletes so they can compete at their best."

Under the tutelage of Chef d'Équipe Duvander, squad members have been preparing for the upcoming international test both individually and as a team. As internationally acclaimed eventers, the United States athletes have already honed strong training systems at their home farms, which were bolstered by weekly visits and recommendations from Duvander. In early July, horse-and-athlete combinations participated in an informal combined test at Great Meadow International, and later gathered at the Bromont CIC3\* in August for the final preparation event, after which they made the trek to Hoffman, North Carolina, for a training camp just prior to the WEG for ultimate preparations.

"Primarily, Erik believes that strong personal programs are critical to success. He sees himself as supplemental to what the riders are doing in their everyday training routines. Then, great team culture drives performance. It's about creating something that everyone wants to be a part of and that has value to everyone. We should create something that our next generation of riders will aspire to be a part of," said Morris.

Bringing a fresh perspective to the team, Duvander took the helm in late 2017 after a decade-long tenure with the New Zealand eventing team, which he led to a fourth place finish in the team event





*Phillip Dutton and Z owned by Thomas Tierney, Simon Roosevelt, Suzanne Lacy, Caroline Moran and Ann Jones*

at the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro. Boasting a record of success as the captain of the Japanese, Swedish and New Zealand teams, Duvander was selected as the successor to David O'Connor after being unanimously recommended for the position by the Eventing Sport Committee's appointed search group. A proponent of building a training philosophy around the nation's culture and history as well as the backgrounds of the athletes, the new chef d'équipe seems to be right on track with his training foundation.

"What I love about the U.S. is that there is an expectation of being the best. This puts healthy pressure on us all, and it is for us to embrace and use to keep our focus in every detail of our work. All of our squad riders have had plenty of experience competing at the international level," commented Duvander. "They are all very talented, but what is most important to me is their openness and willingness to make changes. The job is now to analyze all areas and look for where improvements need to be made. This should give each rider a road map to his or her success, and then it is all about putting in the hard work."

Dutton, Kieffer, Little, Martin, Symansky and their respective mounts will specifically focus on preparing for the cross-country portion of competition, a result of the recently revamped Fédération Équestre Internationale (FEI) scoring rules that altered the way the first phase of dressage influences the final score at FEI-level events. Previously, the total marks of an individual's dressage score were multiplied by a coefficient of 1.5, which served to broaden the spread of marks across competitors and placed a special importance on the initial phase of riding. With the coefficient redacted, scores will sit much closer together heading into cross-country, the distinguishing element of the discipline, forcing contenders to perform at their absolute best as movement among placings will prove to be much easier.



*Lynn Symansky and Donner owned by The Donner Syndicate, LLC*

Photos by Shannon Brickman





Marilyn Little and RF Scandalous owned by Jacqueline B. Mars,  
Michael Manders and Phoebe Manders

"The cross-country phase is the critical component to success at a championship. With the removal of the dressage coefficient, the scores after the first phase will be much tighter. Fine tuning all three phases simultaneously is the key to successful preparation for eventing," explained Morris.

Outside of perfecting their abilities in the ring, the members of the Land Rover U.S. Eventing Team will also be taking advantage of their knowledge of the cross-country and show jumping elements often used by the WEG designers, studying their past tracks to hopefully gain insight into the obstacles they will need to master come September. Mark Phillips, a former U.S. eventing chef d'équipe and the lead creator for the cross-country course, will be designing his first world championship course in 2018, while experienced Irishman Alan Wade will take his own creative liberties during the final phase, show jumping.

"These two course designers are highly acclaimed in our industry — they are fair, yet difficult. All combinations named to our WEG squad have competed on or are familiar with the courses these designers lay out. That being said, there are always questions that have to be answered on course, so our athletes will be studying these designers' courses in preparation for rising to their challenges," remarked Morris.

Hoping for a podium finish, the Land Rover U.S. Eventing Team will have to eclipse its efforts in past championships and surpass the majority of the WEG field in order to earn a confirmed slot in the 2020 Olympic Games. The U.S. last won a medal at a major championship when the team took bronze at the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens, and last won a World Equestrian Games medal in 2002. Sporting a new chef d'équipe and a strong collection of athletes and equines, the Land Rover U.S. Eventing Team members have their eyes on the prize, but have not lost sight of the incredible opportunities afforded to them.

"The goal is for the U.S. eventing team to be the best prepared team and to have a team of riders with 100 percent belief in themselves and the team as a whole, so they can feel the joy of representing the U.S. in front of our home crowd," reflected Duvander.

Eventing team and individual competition will take place in Tryon from Thursday, Sept. 13, to Sunday, Sept. 16, beginning with two days of dressage and finalizing with championship awards following the conclusion of the show jumping phase. — Elaine Wessel ★



Boyd Martin and Tsetserleg owned by Christine Turner





# U.S. VAULTING PREPARES FOR 2018 WORLD EQUESTRIAN GAMES

Vaulting is one of the oldest known forms of the equestrian sport, and can be traced back as early as the Roman games. Often described as “gymnastics on horseback,” vaulting has grown rapidly since its introduction into the United States in the 1950s. This year, the U.S. vaulting team is preparing for the 2018 FEI World Equestrian Games™ (WEG) to return to American soil, set to be held at the Tryon International Equestrian Center in North Carolina in September.

Vaulting features three different events: a male and female individual competition, the pas de deux, which consists of two vaulters on the horse at the same time, and the squad, which features six vaulters competing together. It is both a complex and artistic sport, and routines are performed on the back of a cantering horse traveling in a circle on a lunge line. Competitors are judged on a series of compulsory exercises and their freestyle routine.

Overall, both vaulter and horse are judged on a scale of one to 10, with each compulsory exercise being judged on a scale of zero to 10. There are seven compulsory exercises: mount, basic seat, flag, mill, scissors, stand and flank. Freestyle routines are choreographed to music, and may include mounts and dismounts, handstands, kneeling, standing and aerial moves such as jumps, leaps and tumbling skills. The technical test consists of five exer-



Mikhail Proctor and Goliath owned by Mikhail Proctor

cises, decided upon by the FEI Vaulting Committee each year prior to the world championships and will then be used for the two-year period that follows.

*Discipline director, Laureen Johnson, explained, “A lot of people don’t understand that the lunger is considered an athlete and part of the team. Also with vaulting, they don’t always have the advantage of working with their own horse. A lot of times they travel to Europe and they’re allowed to have borrowed horses. So they’re getting on a horse that’s unfamiliar. They do go over a week or so in advance and work with that horse, but it’s a fairly new combination so it can be a little challenging.”*

Overall scores are not only based on the vaulter’s ability to execute the proper movements, but also takes into consideration the fluidity of the horse’s movement. The overall score is determined by degree of difficulty, artistic interpretation and the horse-and-lunger’s performance. Similar to a dressage freestyle, each athlete will provide uniquely composed music for their routine to be performed on their horse. Vaulters must demonstrate strength and balance, while being in tune with their teammates and the horse.

This year, the United States vaulting team has had a large pool of applicants hopeful to compete at WEG. Johnson said, “We have had 11 individual females, six individual



Mary McCormick and Paris owned by Mary McCormick

males, four pas de deux and three squads who have applied. They all must go through a selection trial, and they need to have three scores. They are still working towards that goal. Aachen is going to be our last selection event during the qualifying period. After Aachen we should have a pretty good idea of who our team is. The vaulters are chosen based on objective criteria and ranking so it’s pretty straightforward.”

Johnson concluded, “We have a great pool of applicants and they are doing quite well! We are very appreciative to the USET Foundation for helping support our athletes and our competitions within the United States as they prepare for the World Equestrian Games.” – Allyson Lagiovane ★

Photos by Taylor PenecUS Equestrian





# U.S. DRIVING STARS READY FOR ACTION AT 2018 WORLD EQUESTRIAN GAMES

The driving competitions that are set to take place at the highly-anticipated 2018 FEI World Equestrian Games™ (WEG) in September in Tryon, North Carolina require a great deal of logistical planning, hard work and preparation in order to ensure that both the drivers and their team of horses are ready to perform at their best. Perhaps most imperative is the generous support of the United States Equestrian Team (USET) Foundation, which helps to fund and bring the sport of driving to the forefront of equestrian disciplines.

Driving is an intense sport that typically involves a team of four horses pulling a carriage over the course of three days in various competitions including dressage, marathon and cones. Each team includes a driver and two grooms, one as a navigator and

one serves as a ballist. They are responsible for directing, steering and ultimately navigating the equine athletes as they negotiate a cross-country-style course consisting of various obstacles including water and a pattern of cones. Driving is one of eight FEI equestrian disciplines featured at the WEG.

Looking ahead to September, the impressive Tryon International Equestrian Center (TIEC) is gearing up to welcome the best drivers and driving horses from across the globe. Currently, a state-of-the-art driving stadium is being built to provide fans with the optimal viewing experience during the dressage and cones phases. In addition, American course designer Richard Nicoll has been appointed to construct the course for the marathon phase of competition.

*“The USET Foundation provides an incredible amount of funding for us, which is really our biggest challenge when you talk about the number of horses [and] the amount of equipment to have to transport everywhere,” said U.S. driving director Danielle Aamodt. “We need massive vehicles and a team of people to do it... anytime there is a lot of volume, there is a lot of cost.”*



The dressage phase involves a test with a number of movements required, similar to traditional dressage. In a four-in-hand driving dressage test, the driver will be required to do one-handed movements (reins in one hand). In the dressage and cones phases, a presentation carriage is used, while in the marathon phase, the team utilizes a specialized marathon vehicle.

In the marathon phase of competition, there are eight obstacles that teams must try to race through within a designated time-allowed. The team with the fastest time and fewest number of penalties wins.

The third and final day of competition brings the highly-technical cones phase, which can be compared to a show jumping round. New to driving, there are now obstacles resembling oxers featuring a double set of cones. Drivers and their horses must navigate through each set of cones without the horses or wheels of the carriage knocking any down. Similar to eventing, the team with the lowest score of penalties after all three phases of competition wins.

Each team typically brings a total of five horses to compete, which includes a reserve for each phase. A different configuration of horses is common in driving during each phase of competition.

Six nominated driving entries have submitted their requests to represent the United States at this year's WEG. The final selection trial for American driving competitors will be in the U.S. at the Hermitage Farm Kentucky Classic in August. Selectors will propose three driving athletes to the U.S. driving team and at least one reserve. Therefore, a total of 15 horses will be brought to the WEG to represent the American driving team. The final team members will be announced in September.

For years, spectators of all ages have enjoyed the thrill of driving as a team of powerful horses display their stamina and finesse, while being guided by highly-skilled carriage drivers. The WEG is one of the most prestigious events for drivers and driving enthusiasts within the unique and competitive discipline.

Wiebe Dragstra with driving team  
owned by Amy and Wiebe Dragstra,  
Eleanor and Larry Smith and Cindy and Steve Vollers





*Misdee Wrigley Miller with driving team owned by Misdee Wrigley Miller*



*Chester Weber with driving team owned by Chester Weber*

"We rely a lot on the promotion of the sport. It is not a very well-known sport in the USA, and the USET Foundation really helps promote it and put it out in front of people, which is wonderful," Aamodt acknowledged.

This year's schedule of events for the driving competitions at the WEG are: Dressage phase on Friday, Sept. 21, marathon phase on Saturday, Sept. 22, and the cones phase and medal ceremony on Sunday, Sept. 23. – **Caroline Nickolaus** ★



*James Fairclough with his driving team owned by James Fairclough*





# U.S. PARA-EQUESTRIAN DRESSAGE TEAM, PRESENTED BY DELOITTE, GEARS UP FOR WEG

**P**reparation for the 2018 FEI World Equestrian Games™ (WEG) at the Tryon International Equestrian Center is in full swing, and the U.S. Para-Equestrian Dressage Team, presented by Deloitte, has been hard at work solidifying their partnerships with their horses and strengthening their team for the historic event to be held on U.S. soil this fall.

Para-equestrian sport has continued to develop in the United States at a rapid pace with the help of the US Equestrian international high performance programs that are proudly supported by the USET Foundation, United States Olympic Committee and US Equestrian sponsors and members. With the goal of providing competitive and educational opportunities for riders with various kinds of physical disabilities, the U.S. Para-Equestrian Dressage Team is always looking for ways to help develop talent and improve the experiences of its athletes.

Keeping with these values, each para-dressage rider is assigned a classification grade in competition based on functional ability, taking into account his or her mobility, strength and coordination. Grouping athletes into competition grades, ranging from Grade I to Grade V, helps to ensure a level playing field for athletes so they may be judged only on their appropriate skill level.

To prepare for WEG in September, the top U.S. para-dres-

sage athletes have been competing and testing their abilities in the show ring all year at international competitions around the country. Earlier this year, riders Sydney Collier, Katie Jackson, Angela Peavy and Kate Shoemaker earned a team gold medal at the Adequan® Global Dressage Festival CPEDI3\* in Wellington, Florida, in January.

At the WEG Para-Dressage Test Event in April, the team racked up more blue ribbons in the CPEDI3\* at the Tryon International Equestrian Center. The team competed in the FEI Individual Test for all grades as well as the FEI Team Test for all grades, with each round counting 50 percent towards the overall team score. With three new horse-and-athlete combinations at the competition in April, Chef d'Équipe Kai Handt coached the team of Rebecca Hart, Jackson, Shoemaker and Roxanne Trunnell to the win, confident the new partnerships would bond quickly and shine when their time came in the ring.

Veterans to the para-dressage arena, Shoemaker and her and Craig and Deena Shoemaker's 11-year-old Hanoverian stallion, Solitaer 40, have continued to improve all aspects of their tests and helped contribute greatly to the team's big wins in January and April. Trunnell and new mount Dolton, Shoemaker's 6-year-old Hanoverian gelding, made their debut at the CPEDI3\* in Tryon, and have been working towards strengthening their performance for WEG selection. The pair was brought together by fellow para-athlete and owner Shoemaker with the support of sponsor Karin Flint.

Trunnell and Dolton were not the only new pair making an appearance at the CPEDI3\* test event. Hart and Fortune 500, an 8-year-old Oldenburg gelding, also made their team debut with great success. Hart's sponsor and Fortune 500's owner Rowan O'Riley brought the combination together, and it was clear from the beginning that their partnership was strong. Hart and Fortune 500 had only been training together for a month before the competition. In addition, Jackson and her new 15-year-old Oldenburg gelding, Diesel, also put in solid tests and proved their competitive potential.

The test event also provided a valuable opportunity for the team to familiarize themselves with the venue and atmosphere prior to the upcoming World Equestrian Games. Following the test event in Tryon, Handt explained how the competition was useful in the team's preparation for WEG.

"We pretty much mimicked the entire WEG event out here this week," Handt said. "It is a very good thing for [the athletes] to do because it is a different format — individual test first, then the team test and then the freestyle. So they will get used to that."

It takes a village to prepare a team for an event as large as the World Equestrian Games, and Handt, Michel Assouline, head of para-equestrian coach development and high performance consultant, and the support staff are all putting in countless hours and providing individualized care to help prepare the athletes to give their best possible performances. With the passion and daily effort put in by these key players, the para-equestrian sport is being consistently advanced in the United States, while more opportunities are created for riders with disabilities of all kinds.

"We have a very good show manager here in Thomas Bauer," Handt noted. "He really understands the para-equestrian sport. The organization does a tremendous job with para — they really bend over backwards to make it as convenient as they can to get the para-athletes in and out."

The U.S. para-dressage athletes are now focused on the intensive selection process for the World Equestrian Games, which requires



Deborah Stanitski and Butterfinger Bonanza  
owned by Deborah Stanitski

Photo by Taylor Pence/US Equestrian





Annie Peavy and Royal Dark Chocolate owned by Rebecca Reno

them to meet various minimum International Federation (IF) standards to even be nominated. At the conclusion of the US Equestrian (USEF) qualifying period on May 23, the USEF selectors consulted Handt, Assouline and the team veterinarian to recommend eight horse-and-athlete combinations to the Para-Equestrian Sport Committee. The selected athletes were then invited to the USEF Para-Equestrian Dressage Invitational Event hosted by Wheatland Farm in Purcellville, Virginia, July 6-8. The invitational event allowed athletes to compete in a mock competition and gave selectors the chance to see how the athletes and horses perform and work together.

The final combinations selected to represent the United States consisted of: Hart on El Corona Texel, Peavy on Royal Dark Chocolate, Shoemaker on Solitaer 40 and Trunnell on Dolton.

"It is not all about international shows, but focusing on their progress and training at home," said Assouline. "From now on, we are focusing on what we have learned. Coming here, we were focusing on learning the differences between the horses and seeing the pros and cons of each horse, and then learning from that and adjusting."

With the team's preparation well underway, the U.S. Para-Equestrian Dressage Team, presented by Deloitte, is moving ahead with eyes towards a top 10 finish in front of their home crowd during the 2018 FEI World Equestrian Games™ (WEG) at the Tryon International Equestrian Center. – **Emma Miller** ★



Rebecca Hart and El Corona Texel owned by Rowan O'Reilly

Photo by Susan Stickle.com





# U.S. REINING SQUAD SETS SIGHTS ON 2018 WORLD EQUESTRIAN GAMES

The process of preparing the U.S. reining squad for this year's 2018 FEI World Equestrian Games™ (WEG) in Tryon, North Carolina, may look a little different than other disciplines. As the first of the eight disciplines to select its competing members with the five horse-and-athlete combinations named to the U.S. reining squad in mid-May, reiners will have more time to rest and

prepare their horses. This valuable time will allow the squad members to bring their horses back in a time frame that has them at peak performance for the WEG in September.

U.S. Chef d'Équipe Jeff Petska, who has served and guided the squad to a gold medal at every WEG since the addition of reining in 2002, admits the selection was no easy feat.

*"It may come as a surprise to most people how much time, effort and consideration is involved in athlete/horse identification and selection, and the logistical challenges of getting the group transported to the games. WEG is not just another show," Petska said.*



Petska also noted many reiners have been planning and aiming their horses towards the WEG for years. Reining horses are typically started as 2-year-olds and retired at a young age. However, with the minimum age requirement of 7 years old by the FEI for the WEG, horse selection becomes a crucial element in the preparation process.

With this in mind, Petska said, "Our athletes are doing a good job of designating horses for international competition earlier in their careers and proceeding accordingly. This allows them to begin qualifying earlier and gives them a better opportunity to make the team. Several of the athletes on this year's squad have been pointing their horses solely at this goal event for a couple of years. We are hoping this trend continues as the level of competition worldwide continues to improve."

The preparation is up to each individual athlete and how they feel they can best train their horse for the competition. There is regular communication between the athlete and the team vet concerning health and soundness of the horse as well as with Petska regarding routines and how the horse is performing.

The selected squad for the 2018 WEG consists of Casey Deary and Hilldale Farm's 7-year-old Quarter Horse stallion, Heavy Duty Chex; Dan Huss and Ms Dreamy, an 8-year-old Quarter Horse mare owned by Frederick R. Christen; Jordan Larson aboard the 7-year-old Quarter Horse stallion owned by HDC Quarter Horses USA LLC, ARC Gunnabeabigstar; Cade McCutcheon and Custom Made Gun, a 7-year-old Quarter Horse stallion owned by Tim and Colleen McQuay; and Tom McCutcheon with Turnabout Farm, Inc.'s 8-year-old Quarter Horse gelding, The Wizster. Four combinations will be selected to represent the squad at the time of definite entry and the reserve combination will compete as an individual.

"It's so different from what we do every day because we ride in an individual sport. [At the

Jordan Larson and Arc Gunnabeabigstar  
owned by HDC Quarter Horses USA LLC





*Cade McCutcheon and Custom Made Gun owned by Tim and Colleen McQuay*



*Casey Deary and Heavy Duty Chex owned by Hilldale Farm*

WEG], it's a different perspective and it's a different kind of pressure, but it's something that's very fulfilling," said Larson upon claiming team gold during his debut on the U.S. squad at the 2014 World Equestrian Games in Normandy, France. He is excited to represent the U.S. again this year upon tying for the gold medal at the FEI Reining Test Event and US Equestrian (USEF) Selection Trial in May.

For the McCutcheons, reining is a family affair with Cade named to the squad in his first year of eligibility at only 18 years old, making him the youngest U.S. athlete to represent reining at the games should he be one of the four combinations selected. Cade has proved his place, taking home the bronze medal at the USEF Selection Trial. His father, Tom, however, is not a new face to the squad as he claimed team gold and individual silver in reining's international debut at the 2002 World Equestrian Games in Jerez de la Frontera, Spain, as well as team and individual gold at the 2010 World Equestrian Games in Lexington, Kentucky. Tom's wife and Cade's mother, Mandy, also represented the U.S. at the WEG in 2014, where she claimed team gold and individual bronze.

Huss, who tied with Larson for the gold medal at the USEF Selection Trial, and Deary will make their WEG debut this year for the U.S. squad.

This year's World Equestrian Games in North Carolina will allow U.S. athletes to compete on home soil, but Petska notes, "There are always advantages and disadvantages to competing on home turf, especially during a world championship. The logistical challenges may be a little less, but the rest of the process remains the same. While it is convenient to be on our home soil, it also opens the door for more distractions than when we compete overseas."

The discipline of reining continues to grow each year and Petska knows with that, the toughness of their competition grows as well.

"U.S. reining has seen great success at the previous WEGs. Each year the level of competition increases and I fully expect this WEG to be one of the most competitive we have experienced thus far," Petska said.

Petska also indicated the continued success of the U.S. reining squad would not be possible without the support of the USET Foundation.

"It's impossible to overstate the importance of the support from the USET Foundation into the success and growth of reining on the international stage," Petska said. "The opportunity it affords athletes to compete on the international level and represent their country is remarkable and has had a great impact upon each athletes' career. It greatly helps to grow the popularity of the sport and improve horsemanship on a much larger level." — **Barre Dukes** ★



*Dan Huss and MS Dreamy owned by Frederick R. Christen*



*Tom McCutcheon and The Wizster owned by Turnabout Farm, Inc.*





# U.S. ENDURANCE TEAM IS READY TO RACE TO TRYON

Originating in the United States, endurance first began when the U.S. cavalry embarked on a five-day, 300-mile trek, testing their horses as each carried over 200 pounds of weight on their backs. It was not until the 1950s that endurance was recognized as a competitive sport. It was etched in history when Wendell Robie rode the Pony Express route from Nevada to California in less than 24 hours. In 1978, endurance was recognized by the FEI and the first world championship event was held in 1986. In 2002, endurance became an official part of the FEI World Equestrian Games™ (WEG).

Competition for the WEG is challenging — horse-and-athlete combinations are asked to safely and quickly navigate across approximately 100 miles in a time limit of 14 hours and 10 minutes. During the day before competition, the horses are inspected by the FEI Veterinary Commission to ensure they are fit to compete. The commission verifies that the horses are in good health and



Rae Shumate-Tysor and DM Michaelangelo  
owned by Rae Shumate-Tysor

are sound and free from any injuries. The athletes are given a map of the course, outlining the route, compulsory halts or rests, and other natural obstacles such as ditches, steep hills and water crossings.

Endurance competition is divided into six phases with each separated by a compulsory rest period. Phases one, two, four and five include 40-minute rest periods, while phase three requires a minimum of 50 minutes. During these rest periods, horses are evaluated by the FEI Veterinary Commission. The veterinarians check the horses' metabolic status, evaluating capillary refill time, dehydration, intestinal activity, demeanor and cardiac recovery index. The final vet check must occur within 30 minutes of the horse crossing the finish line. If a horse meets the vet check requirements, it is allowed to rest, eat and hydrate, however, horses that do not meet the health requirements are taken to the veterinary treatment area for further evaluation.

*Arabian horses are the most popular breed found amongst endurance competitors, discipline director for the U.S. endurance team, Kristen Brett, said, "The FEI levels of the sport are dominated by Arabian horses. Their small size, conformation, quality of bone and hoof and low basal metabolism make them particularly well adapted to the rigors of long distance riding."*



Danielle Crouse and Mysterious Mopsa  
owned by Wendy McCoubrey

As for the athletes, Brett added, "Many FEI endurance athletes take dressage or centered riding lessons. This helps with transitions and balance as the athletes navigate over challenging and often changing terrain in competition."

This year, the United States endurance team is preparing for the WEG to return to American soil. Selection for this year's team began in November 2016. Over the past two years, the team's staff has attended FEI competitions to observe combinations and complete veterinary exams. While evaluating combinations, selectors looked at the overall performance, soundness, preparation and fitness of the athletes and horses.

The following combinations have been named to the U.S. Endurance Squad for the 2018 WEG, in alphabetical order:

Danielle Crouse on AM Mysterious Mopsa, Gwen Hall on SizeDoesntMatter, Kelsey Russell on Fireman Gold and Rae Shumate-Tysor on DM Michaelangelo, while Erin Champion on Kongtiki will serve as the traveling reserve combination.

They say it takes a village, and the U.S. endurance team has a large number of people supporting them along the road to the 2018 WEG. The Veterinary Advisory Group, including Dr. Todd Holbrook, Dr. Ken Marcella, Dr. Olivia Rudolphi and Dr. Ann Stuart, Chef d'Équipe and technical advisor, Mark Dial, and Dr. Ken Marcella, the team veterinarian, are just a few of the key players who will be supporting the efforts of this year's team as they represent the U.S. on the world stage at the Tryon International Equestrian Center.

– Allyson Lagiovane ★



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