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Sun, Sand, & Stars: Dressage Riders Will Enjoy a Whole New Showing Experience During California Dreaming Productions' 2014 CDI Series



By Yellow Horse Marketing for California Dreaming Productions

As dressage competitors on the West Coast shake off the winter doldrums and prepare for a new show season, they can look forward to an especially exciting experience with the announcement of the all-new California Dreaming Productions' spring CDI schedule, which includes three qualifiers for this summer's 2014 Alltech/FEI World Equestrian Games (WEG) in France.

Formed by a partnership between long-time show organizer Glenda McElroy of Burbank, CA and Grand Prix riders and trainers David and Alisa Wilson of Chino Hills, CA, the goal of California Dreaming Productions is to bring a fresh face to international-level dressage competition on the West Coast. "We're striving to ramp up the appearance and atmosphere of our venues, as well as embrace technology and offer more amenities to enhance the competition experience for everyone," said McElroy. "We'll have online entries, scoreboards, and closed-circuit televisions with live feeds from the different arenas. We want to provide the best showing experience we can." David Wilson noted that he believes attending a top dressage competition should entail more than just riding down centerline. "Our goal is to keep competitor comfort and convenience in mind," he explained. "We will have expanded VIP offerings and hospitality at every show so that riders, owners and sponsors are able to have an improved spectator experience. There will be special events so that riders can gather and socialize outside of the horse show itself, as well as the addition of new classes, awards and prizes. We are also looking ahead to the possibility of offering a fall circuit of CDIs to better serve the needs of our West Coast riders."

Perhaps best known as organizer of the 2005, 2007, and 2009 FEI World Cup Dressage Finals in Las Vegas, McElroy has produced hundreds of international dressage competitions as well as Olympic Selection Trials. Having put on some of the best shows in the world and with an already well-established annual CDI series in California, why change anything? "As in many areas of the country, the economic downturn really affected our shows, and every organizer knows that it's expensive to keep CDIs going," explained McElroy. "But it was really important to me that West Coast riders have the opportunities they need to reach their goals at the top of the sport, and with the help of new partners, we wanted to take a fresh perspective on promoting top competitions in California. I believe that everyone needs to always be looking for ways to improve what they're doing. We're not trying to imitate other areas in the country - we simply want to put on the best possible shows we can for our exhibitors."

In addition to an established horse showing, training, and sales business, David and Alisa Wilson run a popular videography company in W Videography, as well as insurance services for equestrians. But the already-busy couple has always wanted to become more involved with the production of horse shows. "For years David and I have been talking about new ideas for competitions, and we saw a real need for an expansion of the CDI circuit on the West Coast," said Alisa Wilson. "So we decided that the timing and circumstances were right to move forward and put these ideas into fruition."

Kicking off the new season will be the Mid-Winter Dressage Fair CDI-W/Y/J/U-25, scheduled for February 20 - 23, 2014 at the Los Angeles Equestrian Center in Burbank, CA. U.S. Dressage Team hopefuls such as Steffen Peters, Guenter Seidel, Kathleen Raine, and Jan Ebeling as well as a strong contingent of international riders will have their first opportunity of the year to earn valuable WEG qualifying scores from a renowned panel of judges including Gary Rockwell (5* USA), Jean-Michel Roudier (5* FRA), Cara Whitham (5* CAN), Jayne Ayers (4* USA), and Magnus Ringmark (3* SWE). The Mid-Winter Dressage Fair has also been designed by the United States Equestrian Federation (USEF) as an official Developing Program Observation Competition, where USEF coaches will be in attendance to observe riders in select classes in an effort to spot and select talented combinations for coveted invitations to training sessions and grants.

In March, California Dreaming Productions will provide competitors a special way to maximize qualifying opportunities by offering two shows on consecutive weekends in the same location: the Capistrano Dressage International CDI-W/Y/J/U-25 on March 22 - 24, and the Festival of the Horse CDI 3*/Y/J/U-25 on March 28 - 30, both to be held at the beautiful Rancho Mission Viejo Riding Park in San Juan Capistrano, CA. While the back-to-back competition format may be new to some riders, it is a system that has been utilized successfully in the past in high performance selection processes. "I've been thinking about this idea for a long time, and wanted to see if it would be a format that would work for us too," explained McElroy. "We want this to be a destination event. We're looking at it as an opportunity for riders to come and easily get multiple sets of required scores. It consolidates their efforts: instead of going to a show, shipping home, going to another show, back home again, etc., they get to stay in one place for two weeks. With the schedule, horses have Tuesday and Wednesday off, and we hope this also gives the riders a chance to relax and have some fun by going to the beach or Disneyland and enjoy southern California. We have hotels partnering with long-term rates, and the location is also very convenient to the Los Angeles and San Diego areas for locally-based riders."

In addition to great competition, both the Capistrano Dressage International and Festival of the Horse CDIs offer world-renowned judging panels, comprised of Stephen Clarke (5* GBR), Sarah Geikie (4* USA), Bo Ahman (4* SWE), Lorraine Macdonald (4* CAN), Mike Osinski (3* USA) for the first weekend, and Eddy de Wolff van Westerrode (5* NED), Lilo Fore (5* USA), Jane Weatherwax (4* USA), Maria Schwennesen (4* AUS), Brenda Minor (4* CAN) for the second. Of particular interest for riders aspiring to ride as a member of their country's Dressage Team, both Stephen Clarke and Lilo Fore will be serving as members of the ground jury for the World Equestrian Games, providing a chance for riders to be evaluated by and receive feedback from officials they hope to see again in France this summer. Like February's Mid-Winter Dressage Fair, the Capistrano Dressage International has also been designated as an official USEF Developing Program Observation Competition, and just a week later the Festival of the Horse will once again be held in conjunction the Blenheim Spring Classic I & II hunter/jumper show, featuring a Grand Prix jumping event for added excitement.

"Our goals for this year and beyond are to produce a high quality, international show series in the spring and the fall that allow West Coast riders to qualify for national and international events while staying

close to home," said Alisa Wilson. "And we are highly focused on ensuring our competitions are more than just about showing - we want riders to leave saying that they had a fantastic experience!"

Additional show information is available on the new California Dreaming Productions website, <http://www.californiadreamingproductions.com/>, as well as regular updates posted on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/californiadreamingproductions>. For more information, contact Glenda McElroy, glenda@cdpequestrian.com, or David and Alisa Wilson, david@cdpequestrian.com and alisa@cdpequestrian.com.