



U.S. SADDLE SEAT EQUITATION WORLD CUP

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TO: ALL SADDLE SEAT PUBLICATIONS, ORGANIZATIONS AND WEBSITES
FROM: CHRISTY JUDD O'DONNELL, EXECUTIVE SECRETARY, US WORLD CUP
SUBJECT: 2008 U.S. TEAMS TAKE SILVER IN INTERNATIONAL SADDLE SEAT WORLD CUP
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The U.S. Saddle Seat Equitation World Cup teams turned in gutsy performances under less than ideal weather and ring conditions to earn silver medals in both the three- and five-gaited competitions of the 2008 International Saddle Seat World Cup. The event was held September 21-28, 2008 at a picturesque outdoor facility in Tulbagh, South Africa.

Both the three- and five-gaited U.S. teams headed to South Africa looking to defend double gold medal performances from 2004 and 2006. However, strong performances from a deep South African team and no help from Mother Nature thwarted their best efforts. South Africa earned the gold in both competitions, while Canada took the bronze in both the three- and five-gaited events.

The event was scored by a three-judge panel. Americans Patty Kent and Jan Lukens split the judging duties, with Kent judging the three-gaited competition and Lukens handling the honors in the five-gaited event. The panels were completed with judges David Brent of Canada and Hugo Visser of South Africa.

Weather played a huge role in the competition, flooding the ring and causing a lengthy delay to the start of the event. The individual tests selected by the judges were modified to eliminate the need to work on the grass, thus enhancing the safety of the riders and horses. The footing was eventually scraped from the ring and replaced for the second day of riding.

The format of the competition calls for all riders to compete on horses they have never ridden before, with each rider getting just two half-hour practice sessions to get to know the horses they ride in the event.

"The 2008 World Cup was a great example of the poise and horsemanship our riders must display," said Ellen Beard, Executive Director. "The circumstances of the competition this year were challenging for everyone, and we could not be more proud of how our riders rose to the occasion. Our coaches and managers really outdid themselves in organizing and mentoring the riders, and I have no doubt they were a big reason they were able to perform so well in such challenging situations. The South African team had a bit more experience in international competition, but our riders certainly did an exceptional job of handling their horses and the ring situation. They were great ambassadors for the U.S.A. and for saddle seat, which is what the event is all about."

The members of the 2008 US Saddle Seat World Cup Teams are:

THREE-GAITED

Emily Abbott (Whitestown, IN)

Jacqueline Beck (Aliso Viejo, CA)

Brittany McGinnis (Fishers, IN)

Coach: Gary Garone Manager: Jo Cornell

Victoria McHenry (New Orleans, LA)

Eleanor Watkins (Louisville, KY)

Angela Darrow (Alternate) (Hartland, WI)

FIVE-GAITED

Brittany Baird (Hinsdale, IL)

Brooke Jacobs (Georgetown, KY)

Mackenzie Lyttle (Huntington Beach, CA)

Coach: Anne Speck Manager: Missy Hughes

Jessica Moctezuma (Hardwick, NJ)

Cyndi Simmons (Burlington, KY)

Calee Dillon (Alternate) (Dallas, TX)

(continued)

The events are team competitions, but the U.S. had some outstanding performances from individual riders. U.S. five-gaited team captain Brooke Jacobs, competing for her fourth and final appearance for the U.S., was the top scoring individual rider for the five-gaited event. Jacobs was honored at the closing gala for her accomplishments, which have included two gold and two silver medals. First-time team member Brittany McGinnis, the 2007 triple crown Saddle Seat finals winner here in the U.S., earned the second highest score of the three-gaited competition.

“The focus of the World Cup is of course on team competition and every rider shares in the team’s accomplishments,” said Beard. “But we are thrilled that these two riders were able to turn such exceptional performances. Brooke [Jacobs] has been a consistently strong performer for us through four competitions. We had great performances from all of our riders, and every one of them should be proud of their rides – we certainly are.”

Although the prestigious World Cup trophies remained in South Africa with the winners, the U.S. Saddle Seat World Cup organization is already turning their attention toward the next event in 2010. “We know we can’t win every time, but that is always our goal,” said Beard. “We’re taking just a short time to breathe, but then we are going to start gearing up for 2010.”

The organization is hoping to be included as an exhibition event in the 2010 Alltech FEI World Equestrian Games in Lexington. “If we aren’t able to participate in the 2010 games, the U.S. will still be hosting the event at another venue,” said Beard.

For more information on the U.S. team selection process or the international event—please contact U.S. Saddle Seat Equitation World Cup Executive Secretary Christy O’Donnell (e-mail at WCEquitation@aol.com or telephone at 813-760-0465).

The mission of the US Saddle Seat Equitation World Cup is to expand the presence of Saddle Seat Equitation on both national and international levels through team-based competition and promotion of the discipline by our athletes and officials. The US Saddle Seat World Cup is a registered 501(c)(3) corporation.

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