

Alltech FEI World Equestrian Games (WEG)

Three Perspectives - Kris Lager, Ruth Rose, & Dani Koski

Postcard from the WEG; (Kris's perspective)

Every four years, the FEI organizes world championships in reining, endurance, eventing, driving, vaulting, and para-dressage. For the first time, championships in all FEI disciplines were held during the same event at the same location; and even better, the location was in the United States, also a first! The Kentucky Horse Park, within driving distance of Iowa, was the host site, from September 25 through October 10, 2010.



We selected our travel dates early in 2009. When tickets became available, we purchased them immediately. That was September, 2009. We needed a ticket for each



Our Group: Dani, Jen, Helen, and me, Kris event we wanted to see. They seemed to be priced according to popularity. For example, Final Four Jumping was \$130.00 (not including the cost for using the convenience of Ticketmaster), the driving marathon was \$50.00, and para-dressage individual freestyle was \$45.00.

I hadn't been to the KHP since the mid-80s. Once we arrived, it took me TWO days to find the iconic Man O' War statue and the original KHP visitor's center, as they were engulfed in tents, displays, the newly dedicated Secretariat statue, breed pavilions, trade show

booths, demonstration arenas, clinician pens, world-class indoor and outdoor stadiums, arenas, and cross-country courses. People milled everywhere, golf carts swarmed, and kids galloped imaginary mounts over fences set up by Breyer in the kid zone.

The entire horse park was converted for the games. In fact, Sky Coast Farm, next door, had been leased to serve as a parking lot. The championship venues were separated, the trade show was concentrated, and the equine village had a spot to call its own. Once we figured out that each venue was a dot which served as a separate entity within the park, we managed well at "connecting the dots." A ticket to an event was required to enter the park. A park ticket could be purchased if you didn't have an event to see that day; however, it was our experience that the events were often reported to be "sold out" once you were in the park so you couldn't get into a championship venue. We also soon found out that once you were scanned into the KYP you could not exit and return without purchasing a new ticket. No hand stamps. The same was true

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Good Horse Show Etiquette

July 1, 2010 by <http://hawkeyetack.wordpress.com>
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Just as with any other event, participants in a horse show need to maintain certain standards of behavior. These standards not only help make the event more enjoyable, but they also help maintain the safety of everyone involved. Here are some of the standards to follow at any horse show you attend or participate in.

The right of way

If you're walking your horse in a show, keep an eye out for any attendees. Attendees always have the right of way. If your horse is not under control, he could potentially injure someone. Not everyone at a horse show knows how to act around horses, so you have to make sure you are responsible for you both.

Watch out for other riders

Be aware of where other riders and horses are when riding in a class with a group. Avoid getting in their way, and maintain a safe distance between you and the other horses. A good guideline is around two to three feet between you and the others.

Know your surroundings

Be aware of anything around you and your horse that may frighten or excite him. Know your horse, his behavior, and how he reacts to different things. The safety of everyone around you depends upon you being able to control your horse no matter what happens.

Keep the in-gate clear

Do not gather with other horses or riders, stand around in, begin to mount, or groom your horse at the entrance of the arena, also known

as the in-gate. Make sure the area is free and clear for other riders to enter and exit.

Warm up correctly

When in the warm-up area at a show, ride left shoulder to left shoulder with other riders. This avoids crashing into other rides going in the opposite direction. Another way to think of this is to stay in the right lane of traffic. If other riders are practice jumping, make sure to stay out of their way. Anticipate their landing area and be sure you and your horse aren't in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Be a good sport

This goes without saying no matter what kind of event you participate in. Events such as horse shows are supposed to be fun. If you don't win, it's not the end of the world. It is simply a chance for you to learn to be better next time. Losing your temper if you lose only makes you look bad. As such, flaunting and bragging about winning has the same effect. Be humble and gracious to all of your competitors, the judges and everyone present at the show.

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for the event venues within the park. Once your ticket was scanned you could not exit the venue and return. Each venue (arena, stadium, course) was established with their own food stands and port-a-potties. Once you were in – you were in. At least on one occasion an exception was made...but that is another story, and we’ve sworn not to tell.

Of course, there was plenty of shopping! If you wanted gloves, they were fitted by the company expert, a saddle would be fitted for you by the developer, and boots could be custom ordered. There was no shortage of goodies to buy...or at least dream about. One pleasant surprise at the trade show was to suddenly find that a vendor was hosting a famous horseperson signing autographs. We have signed posters and pictures with Beezy Madden and Chester Weber!

Magnificent horses and equestrians, breeds we had only heard about, and horse aficionados from around the world—all were daily fare. For what more could we ask?

Ruth M. Rose’s Perspective - Eventing

After so much planning and preparation, it was finally here—The WEG! (World Equestrian Games)

I FINALLY grabbed my pre-packed bags, and hit the road, bound for KENTUCKY!

The first day, I rode the shuttle to the grounds. The range of attendees represented on that shuttle was exactly what I expected to encounter in Kentucky.

Sitting next to the window on my left was a 19-year-old woman from Australia, who had been working as a waitress after school every day since the last World Equestrian Games, stashing away every cent she earned, so that she could afford to attend WEG 2010.

Meanwhile, across the aisle was a lady who had just been delivered to the stop in her own private jet and limo. After hearing the waitress’s story, she admitted how ashamed she suddenly felt. Jet Set told us that she had been griping about the shuttles and hotel, but today she learned a valuable lesson when she heard this girl’s story.

I frequently ran into this pair of travelers, and later found out that Jet Set picked up the hotel tab for Aussie when checking out on Sunday!

Arriving at the park, I was immediately stunned by the entrance to the Kentucky Horse Park. Tall, four-sided pillars, sporting monumental photos and explanations of each discipline — its history and details for observers, greeted us.

Check-in was a breeze - volunteers were everywhere, and the weather was perfect. I



The stands were packed to capacity during the Grand Prix Freestyle Dressage Finals

didn’t even recognize the Park, as it had already been stunning at Rolex earlier this year, but was now beyond magnificent.

After watching Dressage with the stellar commentary over the headsets, shopping the Trade Fair, and enjoying the fabulous entertainment and education at “The Alltech Experience,” the day was gone in a flash.

Day Two Dressage was also amazing, and I texted my *only* ‘OMG Ride’ to Lou Ann Wulf after watching the German rider Michael Jung on La-Biosthetique-Sam. She texted back, I agree! After Dressage, I joined the Cross Country course walk hosted by Jimmy Wofford, who was the commentator for the live broadcast on NBC. Truly, in my travels all over the world, I have NEVER seen a more beautiful, astounding, and challenging course, while being completely fair to both horse and rider. The footing was absolutely perfect in the galloping lanes.

While there were flags from every country and organized cheers and encouraging squads for each country’s riders and horses, the most fun of all was the spontaneous chant that broke out on Day One, and went on through the weekend. I never did discover its origins. It was infrequent, not coming from any particular country or area of the arena, nor ever in the same spot twice. A single voice would melodically rise into the silence following the applause of a ride with, “What a Nice Rider!” The crowd in the immediate vicinity of this appreciative expression would *roar* —

“WHAT A GREAT HORSE!!”

The evening culminated in Grand Prix Freestyle Dressage Finals. The Grand Prix was astounding, but my absolute favorite performance of the night was pure entertainment — Juan Manuel Munoz Diaz,

riding Fuego XII. By halfway through their musical magic, the crowd tentatively and sporadically tried to contain themselves from clapping to the music, but when the rider nodded his approval, the entire audience burst into perfectly timed claps. Juan came down center line with one hand on the reins, waving to the sold-out crowd, with Fuego executing weightless single tempi changes. As one person, the entire stadium rose to its feet screaming and stomping. Needless to say, the explosion at the end of this ride rocked and shook the stadium, literally! The audience screamed for at least two minutes! I did feel sorry for the next rider trying to come into the stadium.

On Cross Country day, my roomie, Cindy Newenhouse, rose well before dawn to put the finishing touches on the horse she was borrowing for outriding. I was so envious of their opportunity to ride in the park all week in preparation for being outriders for the games! Cindy led the others in hours of grooming and braiding, scrubbing white socks, getting everything picture perfect for the long day of herding people, interacting with the biggest WEG crowd ever, and rescuing loose horses. Cindy took it all in stride, literally, with a huge smile from the start to the finish of the long day of XC rides.

I arrived on the FIRST shuttle, and there were already huge crowds surrounding several jumps when I hiked towards the start box. The day was a mix of joy, anxiety, apprehension, and exhilaration; the roller coaster of emotions I felt left me completely exhausted after ‘riding’ every single horse cross country. I walked the course after the last rider and looked at the hoof prints, and the marks left on the jumps. The incredible size of those obstacles when

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you’re really there — under, beside, and inside these jumps — gave me an even greater appreciation of the astounding athleticism and skill it took to get to this level of ‘team’ for both horse and rider.

The next morning, watching the trot up, I had my biggest *down moment* of the week, when Becky Holder and Comet trotted down centerline on the firm footing. In the soft arena footing he was sound, but as soon as he hit the pavement, it was clear that Becky would voluntarily withdraw her wonderful horse after being held for re-inspection.

Show Jumping was everything I had expected, a challenging but fair course that rode a range from demolition rounds and equipment overloads, to perfectly smooth hunter type rounds with no spurs and a snaffle. The ride of the day for me was double clear Mark Todd on *Grass Valley*, making a very young and inexperienced horse look like he’d ridden Championships world-wide in a long career. The commentators on our headphones were fairly silent until there was a gasp from Jean Scott Mitchell in her inimitable Irish accent; “I cannot believe what I am seeing. I am familiar with this horse and what you are seeing is a Maestro with a lifetime of experience giving this horse a championship ride.”

I was emotionally exhausted again after the excitement of the awards ceremony, especially the happily sobbing British Team Supporters behind and to the left of our seats. One other favorite moment was the explosion of happiness in the Stadium and the cheers beside Cindy and I as we were sitting directly to the right of the Japanese Eventing Team — still in their sweaty show gear. Their earwide grins and cheers upon seeing their final rider complete his show jumping round was truly an example of the “World Comes to Kentucky.”

I spent the afternoon winding down and beginning my long drive back home to Iowa. It was the most exciting experience imaginable, and exceeded my expectations on every level.

Thank you WEG and all the sponsors and volunteers who made this possible. Even now, echoing in my mind, I hear the ringing tones of the *true* spirit of the Games:

“What a nice Rider!”
“WHAT A GREAT HORSE!!!”

Dani Koski’s Perspective - Para-dressage

I have been working in the equestrian assisted therapy arena for almost four years now. I have seen the power that riding and interacting with a horse can have. I have worked with riders who are paraplegic or who have multiple sclerosis or cerebral palsy. I have instructed riders who have problems using their hands and legs for cues, or whose balance is off due to impairment. I have also seen my riders do some amazing things, but nothing prepared me for the elite level of riding and competition of para-dressage at the World Equestrian Games.

For the first time this year, para-dressage competition was included in the International Federation of Equestrian Sports (FEI) World Equestrian Games (WEG). This year, para-riders got to be a part of the international stage like they never had before. I had heard about para-dressage from one of the therapeutic riding instructors who certified me as an instructor. Her name is Sandy Rafferty, and she is currently a therapeutic riding instructor at Therapeutic Horsemanship in Wentzville, MO. She has been involved in therapeutic riding for more than 25 years and has been a coach and trainer for para-dressage for about as long. This year at WEG she was one of the stewards for para-dressage.

“I was a competitor and I wanted my students to compete too,” said Rafferty on why she became involved in para-dressage.

Para competitions have been taking place for years. There is para-skiing, para-running, and para-swimming, plus many more events. Although para-sports are usually associated with wheel chairs and prosthetic limbs, the term “para” for sport actually means “parallel to able-bodied sport.” Therefore, the para-olympics are “parallel” to the “Olympics.” There are several para-equestrian disciplines; however, the FEI only recognizes para-dressage and para-driving. In 1996, para-dressage was included for the first time in the para-olympics.

Para-dressage riders are graded just like able-bodied dressage riders, although in para-dressage body position is based more on the rider’s skill and feel of the horse. Para-dressage is broken down into four

categories. Grade IA athletes are the most impaired riders who have limited or no use of both arms and legs and have poor mid-section balance. Grade IB riders have better mid-section balance and some use of their arms. Grade II competitors may have use of arms or legs on one side of the body and have better torso control than Grade IA and B riders. Grade III riders have impairments in some of their limbs, but are usually able to walk at least short distances. These riders may also be mentally disabled or blind. Grade IV riders are those that have some use of their limbs; however, they may be limited in using one or two limbs, or may be visually impaired.

In para-dressage, competitors are allowed to use modified tack and equipment, including grab straps, whips, supportive blocks and padding, or callers. For instance, a rider without the use of his/her legs may carry two dressage whips to replace leg aids, or a rider who is blind can have a caller say where the letters are in the arena. Competitors compete in everything from a walking dressage test to a Prix St. Georges level test. The difficulty of the test is based on rider abilities and grade.

There was great excitement in the para-dressage world upon hearing that WEG would include the discipline this year. As with individuals in other WEG disciplines, para-dressage athletes went through many competition trials to make their country’s team, oftentimes competing against able-bodied riders. There were high hopes for the U.S. team, even though they finished 12th in Beijing in 2008.

“I look forward to seeing all the international competitors, all the friends around the world, and seeing the US team compete and do well,” Rafferty said before WEG, which were probably sentiments felt throughout the US para-dressage team.

Although the US team did not have anyone medal, they did finish in 7th place, a considerably better result than in Beijing two years ago.

I had the privilege of attending the Grade IV freestyle competition. Grade IV competitors complete a test that includes walking, trotting, and cantering. Riders can add additional moves like flying lead changes for increased difficulty.

I was surprised to learn that many of the riders were not on their own horses, especially the riders from overseas. Many country’s teams do not have the funding to ship horses over, so competitors borrowed horses from U.S. owners. Some of the riders had only been working with the horses for a few weeks.

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I was also surprised by the horsemanship skills of each rider. There are days I have a hard time getting a horse to walk in a straight line or complete a circle, and I have full use of all of my limbs. These athletes and horses were performing exquisite extended trots, collected half passes at the trot, impressive flying changes, and even pirouettes. The only way I could tell that I was not watching able-bodied riders, was usually by the modification of the tack. Riders may have been carrying two whips, have legs velcroed to the girth, rubber bands holding their feet in the irons, or riding with no stirrups.

One of the U.S. riders, Robin Brueckman, rides without stirrups due to severe pain. Susan Treabess, the top finishing U.S. rider in the Grade IV freestyle, rides with a prosthetic left hand. She finished tenth, even though she didn’t start her quest to compete in the World Equestrian Games until three years ago. Another rider from South Africa, Philippa Mary Johnson has only one arm, but rode her black gelding Verdi beautifully, finishing 8th in the Grade IV freestyle. Yet all of them compete at a level that few people actually achieve.

The smile that showed on Johnson’s face during her ride reminded me how all of us should feel, no matter what the challenge. I was both humbled and inspired by watching these athletes, and I hope that in the near



*Philippa Mary Johnson, Republic of South Africa, on Verdi, placed 8th out of 18 in Freestyle Grade IV
“Her smile says it all!”*



Michele George, Belgium, on FBW Rainman, silver medalist 2010 WEG Para Dressage Grade IV.



Susan Treabass, USA, on Moneypenny, placed 10th out of 18 in Freestyle Grade IV.



Robin Brueckmann, USA, on Raison D’Etre placed 14th out of 18 in Freestyle Grade IV.

future, para-driving will stand along para-dressage at WEG and receive the recognition it deserves, and that para-athletes will be looked on as the world class competitors that they are.

More information on para-dressage can be found at www.usaparalympics.org. More information on the results of the para-dressage competition at WEG can be found at www.alltechfeigames.com.

Dani Koski is a part-time therapeutic riding instructor with One Heart Equestrian Assisted Therapy that rides at Stagecoach Stables in Ames, IA and is based in Colo, IA.

Dani Koski’s Perspective - Vaulting

Vaulting is often described as gymnastics and dance on horseback. Vaulting, however, is a sport that most likely originated during Roman times. The modern version of vaulting, like dressage, traces back to French equitation schools of the Renaissance. It was used as a tool to help riders gain better balance and become more in tune with the rhythm of the horse. Vaulting involves riders showing extreme balance as they move into handstands, perform splits, or back flip off the horse, all while the horse is cantering around a lunge.

Vaulting has been recognized by the International Federation of Equestrian Sports (FEI) since 1983. The sport is broken down into three divisions: team, female individual, and male individual. Like figure skating or gymnastics, athletes perform various types of routines, including freestyle, technical and compulsory programs. As the name implies, only one athlete performs at a time for male and female individual competitions. During team competition, up to seven athletes are on the team, although only three can be on the horse at any given time. The three members perform intricate poses on the back of the horse, including pyramids.

One of the gold medals the U.S. won at the 2010 World Equestrian Games was in team vaulting. In individual women’s vaulting, the U.S.’s Mary McCormick placed fourth, Megan Benjamin placed fifth, and Alicen Divita placed seventh. In men’s individual vaulting, the US’s Todd Griffiths placed tenth and Kenny Geisler placed 13th. For a sport that has been regularly dominated by Europeans, the U.S. did very well.



Megan Benjamin, U.S., on Urfreund Rosengaard, finished fifth



Alicen Divita, US, on Giovanni, finished seventh



Mary McCormick, US, on Sir Anthony Van Dyck, placed fourth



Joanne Eccles, Great Britain, on WH Bentley, gold medalist



Patric Looser, Switzerland, on Record RS von der Wintermuhle, gold medalist

Eight Medals for the USA!

US Equestrian Athletes Earn Gold, Silver, and Bronze During the 2010 Alltech FEI World Equestrian Games (WEG)

by Erica Larson

Lexington, KY - After years of preparation, what began as a dream finally turned into reality. The 2010 Alltech FEI World Equestrian Games took place here in Lexington, KY - the first time they had ever been held outside of Europe.

The U.S. Team started on a high note, taking home the first Team Gold medal of the competition in reining. Scoring 15 points higher than their nearest competitors, the home team - made up of Tim McQuay and Hollywoodtinseltown (six-year-old Quarter Horse stallion owned by David and Bonnie Silva), Craig Schmersal and Mister Montana Nic (12-year-old Quarter Horse stallion owned by Ericka Smith and the Mister Montana Nic Syndicate), Tom McCutcheon and Gunners Special Nite, (six-year-old Quarter Horse stallion owned by Turnabout Ranch) and Shawn Florida and RC Fancy Step (six-year-old Quarter Horse stallion owned by Buffalo Ranch) - combined their scores for a massive total of 674.5.

"I don't know that we'll ever get the opportunity to put together a team like this again," McCutcheon said. "In 20 or 30 years, I'll look back and say that I remember that team. I think truly it'll be a hard team to ever get by."

At the opposite end of the competition, the American team also took home the team Gold medal in Vaulting. The team, made up of Devon Maitozo, Blake Dahlgren, Mary Garrett, Emily Hogy, Mari Inouye, Rosalind Ross, and Annalise VanVranken, received the highest score of the day to secure the Gold medal with their routine based on William Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet. Their horse, Palatine, (12-year-old Westphalian gelding owned by Maitozo) was lunged by Carolyn Bland, and helped secure their winning score of 8.029.

"This is immeasurable," Maitozo said. "This is a culmination of a lot of years of very hard work. I have to say the most amazing thing for me is to share this with my team. These girls and Blake and Caroline worked so, so hard and they've really earned this for themselves."

The other Gold medal earned by the American team came from McCutcheon as he won World Reining Championships aboard Gunners Special Nite.

One of the U.S.A.'s two Silver medals came from that same competition and was awarded to Schmersal and Mister Montana Nic. The other Silver medal was presented to the United States driving team, who finished just behind the Netherlands and just ahead of Germany to finish with a score of 300.92. The very experienced team was made up of Chester Weber, Tucker Johnson, James Fairclough, and of course their teams of horses.

"We had a great team effort from USEF and our Chef d'Equipe," said Fairclough. "Our program with our training really complimented everything well. It all came together for here."

Two of the Bronze medals earned by Team USA came from dressage rider Steffen Peters and the wonderful Ravel (12-year-old KWPN gelding owned by Akiko Yamazaki and Four Winds Farm) in both the Grand Prix Special and the Grand Prix Freestyle. Peters was carrying the weight of a nation on his



U.S. Vaulting Team Wins Gold
Photo by Shannon Brinkman for USEF

shoulders as he rode against the best in the world to show that the United States is once again a force to be reckoned with in the sport of dressage.

"I have to say there was just as much pressure on Ravel and me for the Individual medal in the Grand Prix Special," Peters said after his Freestyle. "Let's face it. We didn't have a medal in the United States for over 70 years. That was absolutely amazing. That was icing on the cake. Tonight, we sprinkled a little bit more medals on the top of that icing, and I think that's a pretty good looking cake!"

The other came on the final day of competition in the final event to be completed. American driver Tucker Johnson, in his final competition after driving competitively for 25 years, and his lovely team of Warmbloods took home the individual Bronze medal.

"It felt good," he said after his drive. "Not everyone gets the opportunity to end something they've been doing for a long time on a high feeling and sense of pride. This was just a good culmination of a lot of experiences."

The United States brought home a total of eight medals throughout the span of the competition. As fate would have it, several teams and individuals from the United States just narrowly missed out on medals, finishing in fourth place. Both the U.S. Dressage Team and the Land Rover U.S. Eventing Team finished the team competitions in fourth place. Although they have no medals to show for their efforts, both teams are now qualified for the 2012 Olympic Games in London.

"It's been really exciting and I'm absolutely thrilled," U.S. Dressage Team Chef d'Equipe Eva Salomon said, "I think they've done so well and I'm really happy with it. Our goal was to qualify for the Olympics, and we did that."

Individually, Tim McQuay and Hollywoodtinseltown finished fourth in the reining competition, and Mary McCormick finished fourth in the vaulting competition with Sir Anthony Van Dyck, who was lunged by Caroline Bland. Great Britain dominated the medal count throughout the Games, reaching a final tally of 19 medals on the last day.

The focus now turns to the 2014 World Equestrian Games taking place in Normandy, France four years from now. The first World Equestrian Games held outside of Europe has been an overwhelming success with organizers, competitors, and spectators alike. One thing is certainly true: many people will be anxiously waiting for the Games to return to this side of the pond.