

Shannon Lilley takes over reins of Eventing Riders Association of North America.

by Kim F. Miller

Bay Area-based eventer Shannon Lilley takes the presidential reins of the Eventing Riders Association of North America, ERA of NA, the association founded and known until last year as the Professional Riders Organization, aka “PRO.” Based in the Santa Cruz area’s Soquel, the 2011 Pan Am team gold medalist has been involved with the organization for several years. The group was always meant to be a wide-ranging advocacy group for the sport, but the previous name spurred an “identity crisis,” Shannon explains.



To clear up misconceptions and address concerns at all levels of the sport, PRO became ERA of NA last fall. Through the first years of its existence, PRO helped to elevate the sport as an avenue for feedback, good and bad, on various aspects of the sport, like footing, owner recognition and prize money, Shannon explains. Although it had active members and supporters on the West Coast, it was never as big as it was on the East Coast, in part for the happy reason that West Coast organizers had already responded to calls for such improvements.

Since the “rebranding” last year, Shannon heads a board of 14 people, some of them PRO carryovers and some new sign-ons. She fills the shoes of Allison Springer, an original member of the effort who continues to be very active in the association. Like the goal for membership going forward, the board has members representing various aspects of the sport: professionals, amateurs, juniors, organizers, sponsors, businesses, etc. ERA of NA’s mission statement is to “be an advocacy group that works to make the sport of eventing better for all.”

Three Membership Levels

ERA of NA has three levels of membership. Basic is \$25 and includes being kept abreast of events and opportunities, representation in advocacy work and having a profile and listing on the association's website. The next level is \$50, which includes eligibility for various programs and awards, plus discounts to sponsor products and events. The Triple Crown-sponsored Prelim To Pro education and development series is one of several programs this level of membership provides.

More expensive levels of membership target professionals because they include various levels of disability insurance. "To me it's kind of a no-brainer," Shannon explains. "The way insurance for high risk athletes is in this country, it's really important to have disability even if you have health insurance. If you read the fine print on your health insurance, there are a lot of things they don't cover." Depending on the level chosen, the policies available to ERA of NA members can go up to a million for accident coverage, plus disability payments to help cover the considerable costs of being out of commission during recovery.

ERA of NA's big picture goals include a competition rating system modeled on the North American Rider's Group's top 25 ranking for show jumping events. It continues to align itself with the Eventing Riders Association in Great Britain, which is another reason behind the group's name change and mission expansion. Working closely with the US Eventing Association and all of its Areas, including Area VI, and the US Equestrian Federation are additional priorities.

Education is an immediate and ongoing part of ERA of NA's mission. Current topics of focus include understanding the FEI anti-doping rules for human athletes and regulations governing electronic logging devices and commercial drivers licenses for horse haulers.

April Meeting at Twin Rivers

ERA of NA will stage an informational and fun meeting during the Twin Rivers Spring Horse Trials in Paso Robles, on Friday, April 14. Anyone with general interest in or ideas for the group should attend, Shannon encourages. Similar get-togethers are slated for September, at Twin Rivers and Galway Downs. Several West Coast riders are well-versed in what ERA of NA has

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to offer. Pros Tamie Smith, Andrea Baxter and Bec Braitling and amateur Jen Azevedo are among those Shannon encourages interested enthusiasts to approach, along with herself.

Shannon is happy to step up her already substantial commitment to the ERA of NA as its new president and the post continues a long history of service to the sport. She was vice chair of US Equestrian's eventing technical committee and now serves on the USEF High Performance and Licensed Officials working groups, a longtime North American Junior Young Rider chef d'equipe and coordinator, as well as a Level III ICP certified instructor.

Meanwhile, she continues to run a 20-horse eventing training program at Willow Pond Ranch in Soquel, and is campaigning two up and coming stars. Owned in partnership with clients Cassandra and Jeremy Ertl, Greenfort Carnival came out strong this year at Open Preliminary at Twin Rivers in March, and is eyeing 2* ranks later in the year. Shannon's own Ringwood Rouge is excelling at Training Level. Her accomplished students include 1* NAJYRC hopeful Sarah Ertl, who rides the veteran Utah B.

For more information on the ERA of NA, visit www.eraofna.com. And for more information on Team Lilley Eventing, visit www.shannonlilley.com

The Gallop welcomes news, tips and photos. Contact Kim F. Miller at kimfmiller1@mac.com or 949-644-2165.