

Spoiled West Coasters finally get the World Cup Finals back in our backyard!

by Kim F. Miller

When it was announced at the 2009 World Cup Finals that the event would not return to Las Vegas again until 2015, it seemed an eternity. We West Coasters were spoiled by having the Finals in Las Vegas five times starting in 2000. First it was just for show jumping, then dressage joined in 2005, 2007 and 2009, marking the first time these two Olympic disciplines shared a Finals, and to great effect.

But now here we are with the 2015 Longines World Cup Jumping Finals and the Reem Acra FEI World Cup Dressage Finals just around the corner, April 15-19. The venue is again the Thomas & Mack Center in Las Vegas. Tickets for individual sessions went on sale in mid-February, and various all-session and VIP packages are also available.

Seeing top foreign riders compete is one of the most fun parts of attending the World Cup, but it's also great to cheer for our local contenders.

With one qualifier to go in the West jumping league as we went to press, it looks like we'll be represented by a mix of World Cup experience. 2012 Finals winners and Olympic pair Rich Fellers and the amazing, now 19-year-old Flexible are second in the standings, while Susan Artes and Vinton Karrasch are first and third. Both are long time SoCal contenders, but this would be their first World Cup Final, so very exciting to see how they do if it pans out. Susan has Nations Cup experience and qualified for the Finals in 2007. With Coral Reef Follow Me II, Vinton would fulfill a World Cup destination he's been targeting all season.

Familiar names dominate the East Coast jumping standings at press time: Todd Minikus, Jack Hardin Towell, McLain Ward, Leslie Howard, Laura Kraut, Kirsten Coe and Beezie Madden and Candice King.

March 2015 - The Gallop: Finally!

Written by Kim F. Miller
Monday, 02 March 2015 02:24

On the dressage side, there is much excitement about seeing Charlotte Dujardin and Valegro stateside. This British pair has had unprecedented Olympic, World Cup and European Championship success and is amazing to see in person.

Of our American riders, Steffen Peters and Ravel lit the 2009 Finals on fire by becoming only the second American pair to win the Finals (after Debbie McDonald and Brentina). Ravel, of course, has since retired but his stablemate, Four Winds Farm's Legolas 92, is an upcoming international star. And that's just one West Coast-based pair that has declared for the Finals.

There are just two West Coast qualifiers for the North American League, from which the top two finishers earn a spot at the Finals. And they are both late in the season: the first being the Mid-Winter Dressage Fair, Feb. 20-22, and the last March 22 in San Juan Capistrano. Plus, the second of two remaining qualifiers in Florida is March 15, so it's all going to be determined this month. Keep a "keen" eye on these locally based, declared contenders: Hilda Gurney and her homebred Wintersnow, Jan Ebeling, likely with his spectacular stallion FRH Rassolini, plus Guenter Seidel, Brian Hafner, on-a-really-hot-streak Kathleen Raine and Michelle Reilly. The also hot Charlotte Jorst is declared too, but it looks like she'll spend March in Florida.

Back to jumping, we're happy to report that the \$75,000 Grand Prix of Las Vegas, on Saturday night, will see top riders vying for the new and aptly-titled John Quirk Cup. John was instrumental in bringing the World Cup to Las Vegas and making it the success it's become. He passed away in 2012, but left an indelible impression on the show and the sport. This special class takes place between the four rounds of World Cup competition. It's open to World Cup contenders who didn't make the cut for Sunday's final round and to East and West league contender who earned at least 20 points in their league.

The action starts Wed., April 15 with morning warm-ups for jumpers, then 1:30 warm-ups for dressage contenders. Thursday begins actual World Cup competition, with dressage Grand Prix at noon, and the first jumping round at 7 pm. Friday morning starts early with a dressage freestyle rehearsal that VIP tickets holders are invited to watch. At noon, it's a dressage showcase, then round two of jumping that night. The Dressage Final, a Freestyle, happens Saturday at noon, with the aforementioned Grand Prix of Las Vegas at 7 pm. The jumping cup trophy will be awarded after Sunday's final round, which starts at noon.

March 2015 - The Gallop: Finally!

Written by Kim F. Miller
Monday, 02 March 2015 02:24

To follow the latest on World Cup Finals news and/or to get your tickets, visit www.worldcuplasvegas.com

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

Kudos! California claims a fifth of the NARG Top 25 list.

The Los Angeles Masters Grand Slam made a #4 debut on the North American Riders Group's ranking of best 2014 shows. Staged in September at the Los Angeles Convention Center and orchestrated by EEM World, Inc., with a big assist from Dale Harvey's West Palm Events, the LA Masters earned a 90% score to become the top-ranked indoor jumping competition. That score compares nicely to the 96% earned by Spruce Meadows, the perennial boss of this list.

This is the fifth year of the NARG's "Top 25 Initiative," an effort to evaluate and reward shows for management, prize money, footing, spectator appeal and other criterion.

Four other California competitions made the top 25: the Del Mar International at 15, HITS Thermal at 16, the Sacramento International at 21 and the Las Vegas National at 23.

Kudos to organizers West Palm Events, HITS and Blenheim EquiSports and the exhibitors and sponsors who have supported their efforts to stage world class shows out West!

For more info on NARG, visit www.narg.org.