



NORTH AMERICAN RIDERS GROUP
THE TOP 25 of 2011



Together, we can improve our sport.

PRESIDENT

Chris Kappler

VICE PRESIDENT

McLain Ward

SECRETARY

Beezie Madden

TREASURER

Kent Farrington

BOARD MEMBERS

Norman Dello Joio

Jimmy Torano

Andre Dignelli

Murray Kessler

Will Simpson

Enrique Gonzales

Mark Samuel

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Jen Markee

FOUNDING MEMBERS

The Boone Family

The Dinan Family

The McArdle Family

The McNerney Family

The Pasmore Family

The Raflowitz Family

The Segal Family

The Weeks Family

The Ziegler Family

Barbara Ellison

Nancy Hartley

Linda Southern Heathcott

Robi Kabnick

Vinton & Ann Karrasch

Gwendolyn & Genevieve Meyer

Frances Steinwedell

Andre Dignelli

Kent Farrington

Enrique Gonzales

Chris Kappler

Beezie Madden

Mark Samuel

McLain & Lauren Ward

The Dello Joio Family

The Kessler Family

The Simpson Family

The Torano Family



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	2-3
Show Scoring	4
Show Rankings	5
Show Write Ups	6-32
Photo Credits	33
Our Sponsors	33
Membership	34

THE SECOND ANNUAL NARG REPORT: THE TOP 25 OF 2011

The North American Riders Group, NARG, remains steadfast in achieving an essential goal—improving our sport so that once again show jumping in North America will rank among the greatest in the world. It takes teamwork to achieve a goal of this magnitude. Representing the riders and owners in North America, NARG takes the necessary steps to work openly with show managements, governing bodies and associations, as collectively we all make up the team that must evolve with the times to see this come to fruition.

After overwhelmingly positive results from our 2010 Top 25 report, NARG and a host of volunteers once again spent hundreds of hours to numerically evaluate 50 of the top horse shows in North America. We wholeheartedly thank all who participated. The 2011 results are an interesting mix of top events, some pleasant surprises and some clear delineation in quality.

The NARG Board and the riders and trainers who work with us are fully aware of their own responsibility to reach and maintain the top level of the sport through our commitment to the horses, owners, grooms, vets, farriers, horse show managers, association leaders as well as to the public, our spectators and future equestrians. To achieve patriotism to not only our own countries and continent but to our sport requires top riders to compete at the best competitions in North America. However with the way the sport works on an international level to remain on the top of ranking lists as well as to earn significant prize money many riders choose to compete in Europe. Clearly it is mandatory that a select group of our North American horse shows be considered world class, not only for the benefit of our riders and our continent but also to draw riders from around the world to this side of the ocean to compete.

WHAT RANKS

In today's horse show world there are options for every level of horse and rider as well as hundreds of ways to earn ribbons, championships and points in local, regional and national organizations. With thousands of multi-day horse shows in the US, Canada and Mexico each year, we only expect 25 events from those three countries to offer the proper mix of ingredients for the top level of our sport. The rewards of the remaining shows throughout North America are notable. They build the foundation by providing invaluable experience and attainable as well as admirable goals for a large percentage of competitors. A truly essential piece to the big picture, all of our top level horses, riders and trainers participate at these non-Top 25 shows throughout their career.

Of the 50 shows we evaluated, some produce an exclusive one-arena event, while others run multiple rings and have classes for every level. A key ingredient for evaluation is at least one high performance show jumping event with at minimum of \$25,000 in prize money, preferably more, on the schedule. At this time we can only hope for valuable world ranking points, but those are few and far between in North America. One of the international challenges we need to address.

Whether the location is a large grass field transformed into a glorious grand prix or a multi-million dollar facility, each event should have fabulous footing, courses, ceremony, stabling, hospitality, healthy food, convenient accommodations, strong marketing and be managed by a knowledgeable, friendly staff. NARG divides these key ingredients into eight distinct categories and scores several aspects within each one.

HOW IT RANKS

The evaluation form, scoring and process are the same for each of the shows on the list. With 42 individual criteria grouped into 8 categories, scores are tallied by category and then each grouping is assigned a 'weight' pertinent to the importance and effect it has on the event overall - two of the top categories are Footing and Stabling which account for 40% of the total score. The remaining 60% is split among the other six categories. The completed evaluation is then peer reviewed and discussed by the NARG Board of Directors. Of course there may be some subjectivity, but our collective mission is crystal clear - to develop better competitions and better riders in North America. A full detailed evaluation is provided to each horse show manager who in many cases responds and includes corrective actions in process.

NARG truly respects the tremendous undertaking of producing a world-class equestrian competition. We value the open-mindedness of a majority of horse show managers who have reviewed our evaluations, realizing we aren't trying to criticize, but are attempting greatness with their able expertise. These top managements in turn are working hard to offer superb competition by putting sport first. As we continue to rank the Top 25 Horse Shows each year, NARG creates not only a standard for elite shows, but also a record of how they achieved this level. We feel confident that the level of quality as well as the numbers of top internationally ranked riders will subsequently increase as our top horse shows meet the marks of a world class event.

While NARG has no authority over horse show managers, and the Top 25 is just a highly evaluated opinion, we truly believe this process has begun to encourage meaningful improvements at many major horse shows. We are hopeful for the future of great sport.

ANNOUNCING THE NARG TOP 25 of 2011

Before we reveal the official list for year two, we want to emphasize some interesting aspects of our findings.

2010: The top four horse shows scored 80% or higher. The remaining shows scored less than 80%, with the lowest at 61%, a tie for 25th. *Average score 72%*

2011: The top SIX shows scored 80% or higher. To make the Top 25 a show had to score 69%, eight percent higher than 2010. *Average score 76%*

Shows ranked from 26th-32nd: all scored above 64%. Several new shows made it to the list, which alternatively may have relegated some to just below the cut-off. By addressing our evaluations we believe the shows are improving and the scores will continue to reflect this fact over the years. We are encouraged by these results.

Several top managers embrace our vision. We are willing to support their efforts in taking on the big yet essential responsibility of promoting and developing the top of the sport. We have high expectations for the 2013 New York Masters at the brand new Barclays Center. A sister show to the Gucci Masters and the Audi Masters, we hope it will encourage top international athletes to cross the pond in great numbers and give our Indoor Circuit global credibility.

We are certain that there is a blue print to success. Although the goal is for higher scores and superb shows, it is an honor to make this list and our hats are off to all of those who make these shows possible. If a manager, exhibitor or trainer feels there is a competition that belongs here that is not included, please contact NARG. We want to hear from you. Share our vision. Each year this exercise will improve our outreach, knowledge and most importantly our mission. Read on for an evaluation summary on each of the 2011 Top 25 horse shows in North America.

2011 SCORING

SCORING: ONE RING FORMAT

CATEGORY	MAX. POINTS	WEIGHT	MAX. TOTAL	% OF TOTAL
FOOTING	30	4.0	120	24%
STABLING	20	4.0	80	16%
COURSES/JUMPS	10	4.0	40	8%
TECHNICAL ASPECTS	25	2.0	50	10%
FINANCIAL	30	2.0	60	12%
CEREMONY	30	2.0	60	12%
MARKETING/PRESS RELATIONS	25	1.6	40	8%
MISCELLANEOUS	25	2.0	50	10%
TOTAL POINTS			500	100%

SCORING: MULTI RING FORMAT

CATEGORY	MAX. POINTS	WEIGHT	MAX. TOTAL	% OF TOTAL
FOOTING	45	2.7	120	24%
STABLING	20	4.0	80	16%
COURSES/JUMPS	10	4.0	40	8%
TECHNICAL ASPECTS	25	2.0	50	10%
FINANCIAL	30	2.0	60	12%
CEREMONY	30	2.0	60	12%
MARKETING/PRESS RELATIONS	25	1.6	40	8%
MISCELLANEOUS	25	2.0	50	10%
TOTAL POINTS			500	100%

CATEGORY DESCRIPTIONS

FOOTING

Quality of footing in all arenas, ability to be used in all conditions, maintenance

STABLING

Location and proximity to main arena, quality and size of stalls, security

JUMPS & COURSES

Quality of jumps, courses, and course design

TECHNICAL ASPECTS

Accuracy of scoreboards, timeliness, quality of officials, announcer, loudspeakers

FINANCIAL ASPECTS

Prize money offered, overall cost of showing

CEREMONY

Quality of sponsorship, prize giving, and VIP facilities

MARKETING

Advertising, press coverage, website, attendance

MISCELLANEOUS

Venue, customer service, food, hotel accommodations

2011 SHOW RANKINGS

EVENT	SCORE %	TOTAL SCORE	FOOTING	STABLING	COURSES	TECHNICAL	FINANCIAL	CEREMONY	MARKETING	MISC.
SPRUCE	92%	461	111	72	40	46	44	60	40	48
THUNDERBIRD	83%	415	89	72	36	40	38	58	34	48
ALLTECH NTL	83%	414	104	76	36	32	42	50	30	44
DEVON	81%	405	105	60	36	44	32	50	32	46
HAMPTONS	80%	400	81	60	32	44	46	58	35	44
PENN NTL	80%	398	92	76	40	38	40	36	32	44
WEF	79%	396	89	64	36	44	40	50	30	42
NEW ALBANY	79%	394	82	56	40	44	48	58	26	40
PIN OAK	79%	393	95	72	36	42	30	54	29	36
DEL MAR	77%	384	86	72	40	40	36	46	24	40
AMERICAN INV	76%	380	68	64	40	44	54	56	22	32
PFIZER MILLION	75%	373	84	56	32	32	42	54	37	36
KY SPRING	74%	372	116	60	36	42	34	28	18	38
NAJYRC	74%	371	120	60	32	38	34	40	11	36
WASHINGTON	74%	369	72	52	32	44	34	56	35	44
SACRAMENTO	73%	367	100	56	32	34	36	46	27	36
THE ROYAL	73%	365	48	64	36	42	48	48	37	42
XALAPA	73%	364	100	56	40	30	32	46	16	44
BROMONT	72%	362	78	56	36	38	40	42	34	38
HSBB	72%	360	84	60	34	36	26	50	24	46
OLD SALEM	72%	359	115	52	32	36	24	30	24	46
LAKE PLACID	72%	358	80	56	40	42	24	44	30	42
BLenheim	71%	357	97	56	32	32	32	42	26	40
PUTNAM BOSTON	70%	350	88	44	32	38	30	50	24	44
HITS THERMAL	69%	347	73	56	28	36	38	50	26	40

1.

SPRUCE MEADOWS





CANADA CALLS

By presenting the world with a tremendous venue for international competition year after year, this Canadian creation maintains its leading position. Not resting on their #1 laurels Spruce Meadow's managed to improve in 2011. With a final score of 92%, still an 'A' on anybody's report card, we would like to once again give this management a standing ovation for their efforts.

The ambiance at Spruce is unmatched. The grounds are immaculate, the staff is friendly, the ceremony for each class is special—it is simply a superb place to compete. NARG applauds the improved footing in the Meadows On The Green schooling area and the new configuration of the All Canada in-gate and schooling area. The food fare also improved, with healthier choices at the Time Faults Pub as well as with full dining service available at the Premier Club.

Thanks to the continued generosity of the sponsors, which Spruce is also a master at handling, prize money increased so international riders could compete in more world ranking classes. This opportunity is far and few between in North America.

During the third week of the summer series, the Junior–Amateur riders enjoy the Spruce spotlight at the Skyliner, which offers a Nations Cup style competition and a final four ride off for all levels, while giving the open horses a deserved week off. Rarely seen in North America, we applaud this extraordinary week for the non–professional riders. We only noted one criticism in the evaluation—several exhibitors were not in favor of management eliminating some of the Parours de Chasse (Speed) competitions.

EXPENSIVE?

It is true that although Spruce Meadows offers a high quality event, it is expensive to attend. That said, we looked at the percentage of entry fees to prize money, and Spruce is among the lowest of all the competitions we evaluate. You pay to play, but the playground is magnificent and offers over one million dollars in prize money each week. Of course we are always in favor of lowering the cost to exhibitors. With the housing expense as one of the biggest expenses of the circuit, we would like to see Spruce Meadows negotiate a deeply discounted rate for one or two hotels in the area. That alone could make the circuit more affordable. We should note the discount on stalls, if paid in full by a certain date, was a nice savings opportunity.

WHETHER THE WEATHER...

Spruce Meadows has received criticism over the years for the unpredictable and often cold, wet weather. However this year, except for one or two days, even the weather was quite nice. Whether serving the competitor with a fabulous venue, challenging courses, grand ceremony and prize money or serving the community by providing international show jumping to hundreds of thousands of fans annually, Spruce is simply great sport. NARG reiterates that the enduring philosophy at Spruce matches NARG's vision that sport comes before everything else. We are privileged to have this venue in North America.



TOP NOTCH

Known as ‘the horse capital of British Columbia’, Thunderbird Show Park is located just off the TransCanada highway in Langley, BC. The facility is less than three hours north of Seattle, WA and less than 30 miles southeast of beautiful Vancouver. Overlooked last year, Thunderbird is a superb 85-acre facility run by an experienced equestrian family and a top-notch show manager. From May to August they host six shows including world ranking classes and often draw top Canadian and west coast riders. Intimate, well-maintained and incredibly hospitable, competing at Thunderbird is a treat. The grass field is excellent by any standard. Maintained like a pristine golf course, it is groomed and watered with care, it can pour rain and still be great to ride on. The courses are innovative and beautiful, with custom-built jumps and natural obstacles such as a grob, bank, etc. Levels from 1.2m to grand prix get a chance to jump on the big field.

Whether competing or enjoying the VIP, Thunderbird truly takes care of their customers. The food is excellent. They serve free meals in the Riders Lounges daily. The RV facility is immaculate; with full showers that are not only clean but also have lotion, shampoo and amenities including laundry. From the first day to the last, it’s service with a smile. The staff is friendly and upbeat and ready to help.

With three CSI-W rated events on the schedule, they award over \$750,000 during the season, hosting their biggest shows in August. The ceremony is superb, including Drill Team and Color Guard for the big classes and a Parade of Champions in August. Spectators offer plenty of cheering on grand prix day. Sponsors are a part of the presentation—prize winners shake their hands as well as ride for ribbons. The stabling is also top notch. Grass and paved roadways encircle the stabling structure, which has 550 indoor stalls and 350 portable stalls under cover and is close to the show arenas. The horses love Thunderbird. With cushy trails around the entire property, many competitors begin and end their ride ‘hacking’ on the trail.

THE NIT-PICK

The footing in the other rings is all-weather sand—it is good but could be better. It gets a touch sloppy when it rains. The schooling areas have improved but still need attention, especially the manner in which they are groomed. Just a bit more care to keep the footing even, sometimes the base is exposed in spots which makes it inconsistent. Management is aware and we understand it will improve next year.

ADDITIONALLY

Truly a great place to horse show, Thunderbird Show Park is a definite stop on several top competitors’ show schedules and with such rave reviews soon may be added to several more.

3.



THE COMEBACK

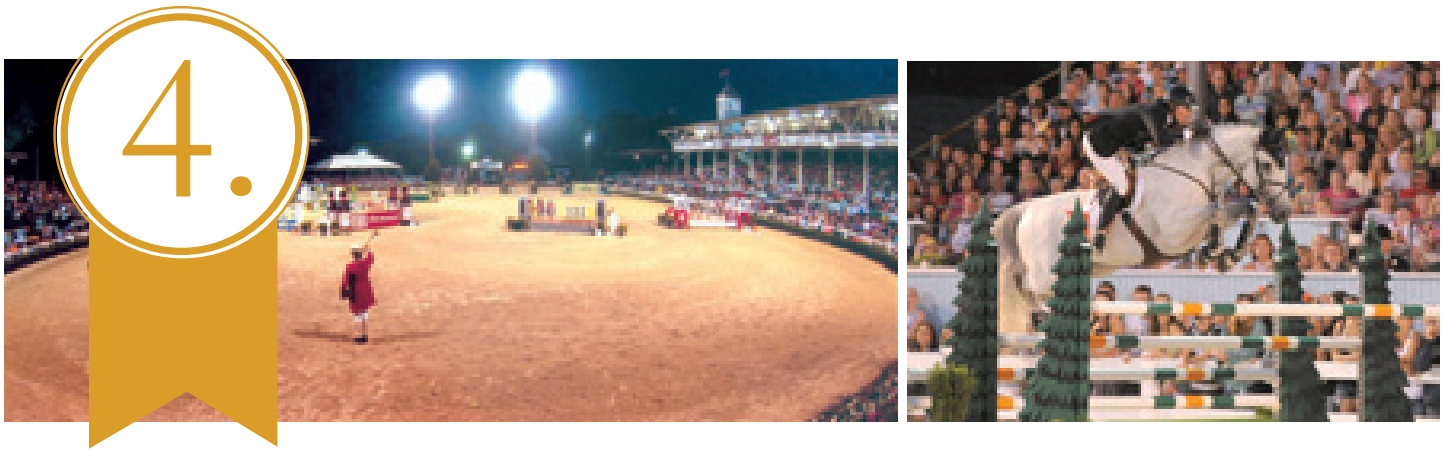
Once one of the nation's most esteemed and celebrated indoor events, The National Horse Show is making a comeback. After leaving Madison Square Garden over a decade ago, the show has had difficulty regaining its panache. With the support of Alltech as well as other sponsors, this year the renowned event relocated to the Kentucky Horse Park in Lexington, KY. It appears the show will remain at this home of the 2010 World Equestrian Games (WEG) indefinitely, with great efforts to return it to its bygone excellence. While it is challenging to establish a show steeped in tradition at a new venue, NARG commends the management team of ANHS for a job well done in year one. Three essential aspects came together to bring about a high score and a solid event. First, a committed management team and Board, with a vision for bringing back what once was. Second, the Kentucky Horse Park has a fabulous new indoor arena. And third Alltech is a strong title sponsor; unlocking possibilities that show managements yearn for. However to truly be a marquee event, it is a priority to get people in the seats. We know management understands this.

KEEPING OUR EYE ON THE PRIZE

Besides the obvious need for spectators, NARG has other recommendations for improvement. Admittedly we are a high performance group, however we feel the Alltech National Horse Show should stand apart in excellence as it did in the past. Possibly combining some of the hunter sections and not offering the 3'3" hunters would help to feature the high performance aspect. We recommend a schedule with afternoon and evening sessions, where you can highlight the most variety and excitement. Along with Saddlebreds and other 'unique' divisions, allow Grand Prix riders to bring a third horse to fill some crowd-pleasing classes, such as a six-bar or gambler's choice. Offer more evening entertainment, expand the award ceremony to the top six finishers, and consider giving fewer speeches. Change the scoreboard's location and have it offer more interesting information, including a countdown clock. The two-tiered VIP system didn't work. Try relocating it to the side of the arena where it would not only be good 'filler' (more people in one area) but less isolating. The VIP food needs to improve. The secondary indoor schooling area was too far; consider putting the tent closer to the outside schooling area near the arena. Access to the stands from the arena floor is an issue and not just for this event. The facility should spend the money to break through the concrete and build an accessible staircase. Exhibitors and trainers would thank you.

THE FUTURE IS BRIGHT

The successful re-birth of the National Horse Show is important for our sport and crucial to the resurgence of this nation's traditionally outstanding Indoor shows. Congratulations on year one's score of 83%. NARG believes this event has a bright future.



A UNIQUE HONOR



There is something special about Devon. The blue and white stabling surrounding the show rings mixed with the country fair gives the venue an old-fashioned intimate feeling. From ice cream and tea sandwiches by day to lit up carnival rides and music by night, people drive great distances to attend this annual event. Year after year hopeful competitors wait with anticipation for the coveted Devon Horse Show acceptance letter. For Amateurs and Juniors competing at Devon is special, a distinctly different experience that keeps them coming back generation after generation. A junior competitor explains: *“Stepping in the ring, I am part of a great tradition, a celebration of showmanship. This was, after all, Devon’s 115th year! The rails are lined with kids in face paint and families in full Devon gear, marveling at the beautiful horses going by. The sign over top of the gate reads, “Devon Horse Show Where Champions Meet.” The statement rings true—I do feel like a champion no matter what prize I win at this horse show so steeped in tradition. To have the opportunity to compete against such great riders and in front of all those spectators, is something I’m not only proud of but I cherish.”*

NO REST

Although Devon moved up six places this year, from tenth to fourth, show management must not rest on these laurels. In 2010 Devon made a significant footing investment in the Dixon Oval, the main ring. The investment continued this year with an upgrade in the secondary Gold Ring. Essential elements for top competition; the final step is the schooling area footing, which we hope receives an upgrade for 2012. The courses were beautiful this year. However a schedule that runs day and night is exhausting for participants. We don’t believe any classes should be eliminated but a more streamlined schedule could really improve the overall feel of the ten days. We would be glad to help with the details of this recommendation. The Carnival style food at the show is fine and there are some healthy choices. But for 10 days and nights it can be expensive, a touch of healthy exhibitor hospitality would be appreciated.

Two factors affect the turnout at this show, especially in the open jumper division and grand prix—no world ranking points and the proximity to the start of Spruce Meadows. While Devon management may feel there isn’t sufficient top rider support to offer world ranking points, it’s a bit of a chicken and egg scenario. We do encourage top athletes to see the wisdom of supporting a Top 25 event like Devon, especially now that the facility is in excellent shape. We also hope that Devon steps up and decides to hold world ranking classes. On another note, a coordinated plan for handling transportation to Calgary from Devon was once provided and could be again.

SHINING STARS

Two distinct additions to the 2012 Devon Horse Show will certainly help it shine—the new Wells Fargo sponsorship and being chosen as an Olympic Observation site. Seems the stars will return to this established event. And deservedly so.



BRAVO

The Hampton Classic prevailed despite Hurricane Irene striking the area as the show was scheduled to begin. If the evaluation form allowed for bonus points this organizing committee would receive every point possible. The Herculean effort it took to re-create this horse show in 48 hours is a true testament to their strength. By the time exhibitors showed up a few days later it was as if nothing had happened. Loyal Hampton Classic exhibitors attended despite the storm, many staying in houses and hotels with no power. To NARG that speaks volumes, with so few special shows left this class act is certainly one of them. The Hampton Classic is another shining example of devotion to continuing a fabulous event for exhibitors, sponsors, vendors and spectators.

AS WE SEE IT

Although we have very few criticisms, those we would like to see addressed are below. No one wants the grass replaced by sand but solving the ongoing issue of grass peeling off easily in the grand prix field needs to be a top priority. The challenges this team overcame to rebuild the entire show post Irene should serve them well in solving this recent 'green' problem. Also, many of the riders were disappointed with the course design in the main ring, even though the show hired a NARG recommended course designer. In previous years the natural obstacles fit beautifully into the courses whereas this year there was limited use of them in the Derby and Jr/AO qualifier. Like Spruce, those natural challenges are one of the reasons why we compete here and we diligently prepare our horses for it. Possibly it was a footing concern, which leads back to our first issue... NARG appreciates the expense invested in the two jumper schooling areas however the secondary schooling areas could use better footing. Grooming of the areas was impeccable but a better product would be a great improvement. This is an elite event and the expense to participate includes paying to be in the Hamptons on one of the busiest weekends of the summer. So although many of the high costs are not related to the show, it would be a plus if the fees in the professional divisions were more reasonable, especially for the young horses. The food is fantastic in the tent, but many do not have access. A concession with healthy options from local restaurants close to the rings and potentially a more inexpensive option, for example a New York City style vendor cart with hot dogs, pretzels and snacks, in the stabling area would be a welcomed reprieve.

HATS OFF

This is a world-class event with loyal sponsors and a remarkable management team. Many organizing committees in North America could learn from this model. Every year, rain or shine, the Hampton Classic team takes a field with some basic infrastructure and transforms it into one of the most prestigious, well-attended, social sporting events in North America. NARG thanks you.



PENN PROUD

In its 65th year as a coveted event on the horse show calendar, the Pennsylvania National Horse Show (PNHS) is an indoor tradition. As stated on their web site: “The goal of the Pennsylvania National Horse Show Association is to keep this show one of the premier national sporting events in the United States, by not just getting bigger, but always getting better and to remain dedicated to the horsemen while engaging and educating the audience.” Both show management and the Board of Directors are clearly committed to this effort with improvements across the board.

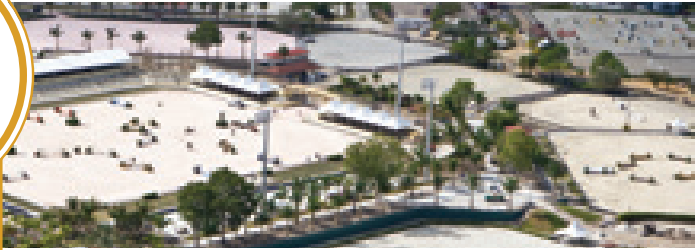
The footing in the main ring as well as the maintenance of that footing was outstanding. A footing expert was on hand conducting a series of analytical measurements to make certain that the footing was prepared and maintained properly. The course design was top notch, which plays a big role in great sport. Certainly engaging, the World Cup Qualifying Grand Prix had the crowd on its feet. Growing that audience through technology, spectators and fans could also watch the live webcast. Unlike some temporary set ups for indoor shows, the Pennsylvania Farm Show Complex and Expo Center is a great facility. The stadium and secondary arena are a good size and the permanent stabling is excellent.

OUR POV

Proud of this show and its history, NARG still has a few constructive comments. Although the footing in the main arena was fabulous, the schooling area got very hard and packed initially. The sand brought in post Junior weekend was a big help. NARG feels that analyzing the quality of the schooling area should be handled before the show begins. Speaking of Juniors, we prefer the World Cup format for the Prix de States. Having to ride aggressively from the beginning teaches young riders to strategize in an international type setting. The ‘rounding’ format changed the results unnecessarily. Of note, the dangerous situation that arose when the lights went out during schooling for the Prix des States made everyone realize that it is essential to have a back up lighting system. We understand it was a broader electrical problem but it was almost a disaster.

SPONSOR SEARCH

With a loyal and supportive audience and superb show jumping, plus the USEF Hunt Seat Equitation Medal Final and Prix de States that attracts hundred of junior riders and the NAL Finals for a variety of Amateur and Children’s divisions, the PNHS deserves some bigger sponsors. The Board and management team are very focused on this goal, with intention to raise the prize money in the Grand Prix and potentially offer another world ranking class to the schedule. NARG stands ready to help in any way we can. Earning a higher score this year, NARG is pleased to see the tradition continue in Harrisburg, PA and commends the continued efforts to make this show a great event.



BUILDING THE DREAM

Since its inception in 2007, WEP (Wellington Equestrian Partners) has invested over 25 million dollars into the facilities and surrounding acreage and it shows. The Winter Equestrian Festival (WEF) boasts the only CSI 5*, the only Nations Cup and more world ranking classes than any other show series in the United States. The fact that they plan to invest another 80 million, including addressing issues we've delineated in our analysis over the last two years is noteworthy. A significant amount of money is directed at attracting spectators and sponsors, an important and often overlooked aspect of the growth of our sport.

The improvements include a new spectator entrance and parking area as well as new visitor and vendor areas. The two new hospitality tents provide appealing options for entertaining while enjoying the equestrian events. The VIP International Club is top notch with excellent presentation and food service. The entire facility has world class Euro footing. A vast improvement was made in the jumping materials used in the hunter rings. The materials also improved over the course of the circuit in the jumper rings. The ambiance of the International ring was phenomenal in the final weeks of 2011. Roads and pathways were added to improve safety. The attempt to make safe passage for horses by manning key intersections during show hours is appreciated. The investment to consolidate the show grounds and eliminate competition at the old "Littlewood" facility to the south was also a significant improvement and helped make the entire event run more smoothly. The nearly \$7 million dollars in prize money offered over the 12-week circuit and the variety of classes for all levels is fantastic.

STILL ISSUES

Given these significant investments and efforts by management, you would think there would be little critique. Unfortunately, as one of the best and lengthiest horse show circuits in North America whose facilities undergo vast changes annually, there are still significant issues. Note that NARG realizes that management is aware and attempts to deal with many of the challenges. We appreciate that the management and owners respected our organization by making the effort to meet with us, listen to our detailed points regarding improvements and responded both verbally and by taking action. As a follow up to our meeting, we developed a list of nine distinct issues for management to address. The full list is available online. But, the easiest one to address that frustrates riders, trainers and owners alike each year is that the property is not ready at the start of the circuit. It often isn't until Week 4 that the facility is cleaned up. We can't emphasize enough that this first-class sporting venue needs to be construction-free, clean and freshly painted on day one of the circuit. Management committed to this for 2012.

WINTER WONDERLAND

As the only U.S. venue to attract a significant number of international competitors, we sincerely commend WEP for its ongoing efforts in becoming the premier equestrian destination in the world. In just a handful of years they've developed and continue to improve on a tremendous infrastructure. As they continue to grow, we encourage WEF to remember to put sport first at what is clearly the best winter circuit in the world.



WHAT A WONDERFUL DAY

The New Albany Classic and Family Day is a fabulous one-day event, chock full of music, carnival rides, entertainment, art and food with an afternoon grand prix. A sold-out tradition in the area, the event attracts thousands of people and raises money for a charitable cause. Add in a \$100k invitational grand prix with the top 30 riders from the computer list and you've got a grand spectator event, plus a nice class for the competitors. That feeling of importance is integral to this event. The team behind it creates a not-to-be-missed schedule of tween music stars and tons of fun. After squealing with delight over hearing and seeing the singing stars up-close, riding rides, painting faces and eating cotton candy, this group is primed for some equestrian entertainment. Peter Doubleday provides color with a non-horse person alongside asking questions that we take for granted, but this crowd loves to hear it all.

The property is immense—the stages, carnival, food booths and much more are set up separately from the gorgeous grand prix field. Thousands of volunteers as well as throngs of people flock the place, yet it is incredibly well-managed. This year the event raised a million dollars. From the equestrian aspect, the stabling entrance is secure and completely removed from the chaos of the crowds. Back at the barns the feeling is intimate and relaxed. Take a ride down the path from the stabling area and enter into a true event—The New Albany Classic and Family Day.

MINOR DRAWBACKS

The challenge of hosting one big class on a grass field one time a year is the footing is unstable and peels up when wet, similar to the Hampton Classic, So if it rains you ride with caution. The warm up area should be redone. The stabling isn't fancy but certainly fine for one day.

PATRONS OF THE SPORT

It may take the commitment of an equestrian family like the Wexners to pull this off. Tremendous in their support of the sport, the size and splendor of their private facility, which they transform for this event, their commitment to their local area and their philanthropic efforts. If there were 10 places and supportive patrons of this nature we could develop a nice tour for the top riders in the North America as well as raise money for charitable causes. The New Albany Classic is a marvelous model for this concept.



PIN OAK PERFECTION

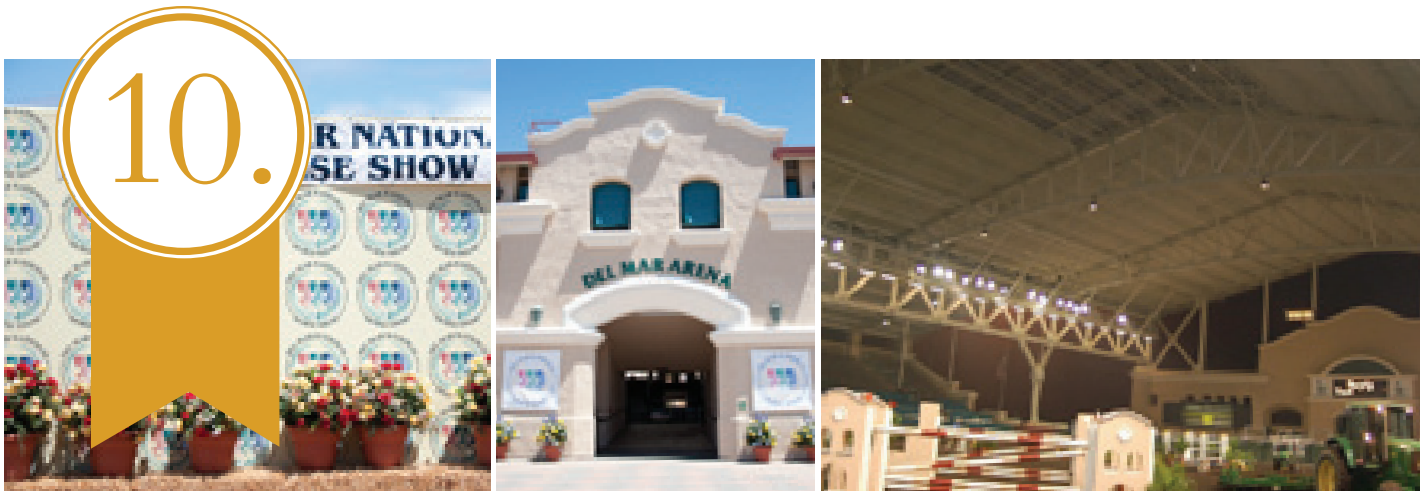
The Pin Oak Charity Horse Show is a Texas tradition. A treasured time on the Houston show and social calendar, the committees and volunteers behind this charity show are committed to producing a glorious event. The management made a tremendous effort to improve over last year. The new owner of the Great Southwest Equestrian Center made substantial investments to the infrastructure, including beautiful new roadways and guard gates, extensive fencing and a considerable amount of trees and landscaping plus new rings with good footing. Nearly every night there's a spirited party for sponsors and/or exhibitors with contests and fun for all. Throughout the week the daily hospitality is much appreciated and spreads feelings of good cheer to the participants. Plus the stabling at the facility is top notch.

The first week hosts extra divisions that include Welsh, Andalusian/Lusitano, Hackney, Saddle Seat Equitation and more special breeds, whereas week two offers higher prize money in the hunter and jumper divisions and is significantly larger. With over 40 perpetual trophies, there is prestige presented throughout the two weeks. Pin Oak goes the extra mile with marketing, from the recent 'High Performance' ad campaign touting over a half a million in prize money over three weeks to a newly released web site with loads of information and content.

PLEASE CONTINUE

The upgrading and expanding of the arenas needs to continue in order to complete what is becoming a top-notch facility. The Jumper Rider Bonus is a perk, but increasing prize money in the grand prix classes combined with the other amazing amenities may draw a larger field of competitors. Since Texas is a bit out of the way for entries from either coast, and dates conflict with both Florida circuits, trainers need to rally clients to attend.

We know that those who make the effort 'ride' away happy. With three weeks of dates (a third week is run by another management group) NARG would like to see some top high performance dollars to entice competitors down to Texas from Gulfport, Thermal and potentially as an alternative to finishing in Florida. It should also be noted that this long-standing show (over fifty years and still going) is a benefit for child-oriented charities and donated \$125,000 in 2011 alone. Absolutely the best little horse show in Texas, The Pin Oak Charity is worth the effort.



DEL MAR DOES

This west coast horse show has the right atmosphere, reputation and venue to be a World Class event. Essentially the score and the comments are almost identical from 2010 to 2011, so what Del Mar National does well they still do well and what they don't didn't improve. Show management does a nice job but they need to be innovative and bring back the excitement.

For several decades this show was considered the 'Devon' of the west coast. Same time of year, only a limited number of entries could get in – you didn't have to qualify, but the best were competing. Beautiful trophies, presentation, special classes and the \$100,000 Del Mar International Grand Prix with a sold out crowd were strong reasons to attend in years past. The economy potentially played a role over the last several years – even though this group treats the sponsors they have well and creates meaningful presentations for the competitors – there is a lack, it seems that the show's panache is past. It is noteworthy that this show offers one of the least expensive permanent stabling fees in North America.

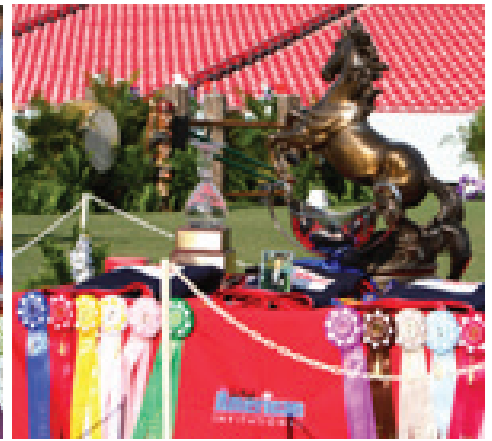
AND DEL MAR DOESN'T

The footing is a significant impediment to achieving a top score. The beautiful new covered arena suffers from an old fashioned surface that borders on unacceptable given today's standards. The other rings are only fair. The racetrack footing is unpredictable in adverse conditions. The scoreboard was not in place this year and it was certainly missed.

The distance between the main ring and schooling area prevents riders from watching before preparing to compete. A monitor in the schooling area would be a great addition, so riders could watch as needed. If proper wash racks were installed the large aisles between the stables would not only be more presentable but less muddy. The Equitation Classic format change did not go over well and should be reconsidered for next year. Additional hospitality would be great, more effort than coffee and bagels throughout the day.

Del Mar is a great area for family fun with SeaWorld, great restaurants, wonderful resorts and the ocean nearby. The weather is almost always ideal. This venue has incredible potential and the consistent local support is a great plus. Sold out crowds are exciting for the sport, the athletes and the local economy and not easy to come by. With that foundation in place this show has the potential to be an international event that could only improve our sport for the future. Similar to Devon, Del Mar National was also chosen as a 2012 Olympic Observation site. With this distinction, we hope that the show organizers can see our vision and will take the steps required. The Del Mar National should, and we hope will, shine bright once again.

11.



THIS IS SHOW JUMPING

We applaud Stadium Jumping for producing and continuing a tradition in North America, the American Invitational. In its 39th year, twenty-nine riders and almost 10,000 spectators attended the 2011 \$200,000 Gene Mische American Invitational. Mische created and ran not only this spectacular event, but was the original mastermind behind the Winter Equestrian Festival in Wellington.

The class stands alone, which NARG feels is essential to top sport. Held on a large grass field in a major sports arena, the Raymond James Stadium in Tampa, Florida, the class has an aura we don't often find at horse shows with nine show rings and a full six-day schedule of classes. Truly a sporting event, the stadium has two jumbotrons, ample seating and skyboxes. The course was absolutely beautiful. Superb ceremony and podium presentation, plus the riders were handed their winnings on site. Truly appreciated. As indicated by the term 'Invitational', the entry fees and stalls are free. Food was provided as well as a nice after event party.

STADIUM CHALLENGES

The schooling area is not ideal. Since a major upgrade is not applicable, management needs to find a way to prepare and groom the area better. The ring needs to be properly watered. The glamour of hosting the event at a stadium also brings the not so glamorous trash aspect. It is inexcusable and potentially dangerous to find glass and other debris in the schooling area. This is easily remedied. The non-descript stabling area with small stalls isn't fabulous but adequate for one night.

WITH SINCERE APPRECIATION

NARG supports and commends the strong production and sponsorship efforts of the team behind the American Invitational. For years riders have aspired to compete in this class. We all want to see it continue. Thank you for believing as we do, that the tradition of an event like the American Invitational in North America should live on. It should also be noted that over 30 non-profit organizations, such as Just World International and the Make a Wish Foundation, get free tickets each year.



12.

Pfizer Animal Health
**\$1 MILLION
 GRAND PRIX**

SHOWING US THE MONEY IN STYLE

The million-dollar weekend in Saugerties in September increased this year. Not only did they host the second annual Pfizer Million Grand Prix but also the first annual \$500,000 Diamond Mills Hunter Derby. This is the stuff that excellent events are made of—great prize money, superior course design, plus an equestrian event—full weekend including a concert. This year the Pfizer Million attracted a broader group of competitors, a nice evolution for year two. Although an International rider stole the spotlight, it was exciting to see a more solid mix of contenders, including both coasts and Europe. Events such as this improve the sport of show jumping in North America, illustrate to sponsors that ‘big time’ is possible and attract spectators as well as entry level participants to the sport, which is truly awesome. The main arena was well dressed, the course looked beautiful, the footing held up in rainy conditions, the VIP area was full and the spectator berm had a nice crowd. For those who weren’t present, HITS offered a free live webcast and a later rebroadcast on RFD-TV. The availability of the sport online and post the event is commendable, leading to increased promotion for all involved.

HIGHS & LOWS

We also commend HITS for showcasing the hunters. Though we would rather see high performance hunters (3’6”-4’) jump for this kind of money, we recognize that offering the class at 3’3” is good for business. The overall response was positive and even with the rain the event was a success. Seems you can’t avoid higher level hunters from competing in this class, which is the double-edge sword of the lower height – potentially in future years, the top twenty-five horses would be asked some high performance type questions such as higher jump options and handiness. This not only separates top performers but makes the event more exciting to watch.

We also noticed there have been improvements to the footing in a few rings and the big schooling area since our spring Saugerties evaluation. Judging by the exhibitor comments the efforts were appreciated, so thank you for making that investment. This event would score higher if it were a stand-alone weekend. Since it is run along with a multi-ring schedule and includes the entire facility, the typical horse show aspects that aren’t a part of ‘big event’ production water down the scores. Again HITS knows their business and have created a product that seems to work well for their customers.

HITTING THE MARK

All in all the experienced HITS management is doing a nice job of creating a special equestrian weekend in Saugerties. It is encouraging to see the momentum for this event in North America and the impending expansion of our sport.

13.



KENTUCKY HORSE SHOWS, LLC.

BLUEGRASS BRILLIANCE

With the space and amenities to host some of the world's best outdoor and indoor events, including the World Equestrian Games, the Rolex Three-Day Event, the National Horse Show, USHJA Hunter Derby Finals, North American Young Rider Championships and more, the Kentucky Horse Park is hands down one of the top venues in North America. NARG gives management credit for addressing the FEI stabling and practice arena. Previously too far away from the stadium, the relocated stabling pad and ring with nice Euro footing right next to the outdoor stadium are excellent improvements. As a result, Kentucky's score improved by five percentage points this year. Nice work, literally.

DRESS IT UP

The Kentucky Spring Shows offer world ranking classes, a Hunter Derby as well as a full schedule. The course design in the main jumper ring is excellent. On the downside, while a quality event, it does not feel "important enough" to justify choosing this event over other quality horse shows offered throughout the country at this time. Although the FEI classes and the Hagyard Challenge Series are nice incentives, the lack of top prize money and strong sponsors relegates the series to just another horse show series that happens to be at a beautiful facility. After traveling for winter circuits and for those heading to Europe, it can be difficult to justify the expense of traveling to Kentucky without stronger reasons to attend.

The management certainly knows how to run a top horse show, so it seems they have a choice. The Kentucky Spring Shows can remain a high quality spring start up series, in which some years attendance will be better than others, or they can decide to try and step up the sponsor support, the prize money and ceremony to make this a "must attend" rather than "nice to attend" horse show from both exhibitor and spectator perspectives. This horse show series is not alone in this challenging choice, it is pervasive throughout the country. Although we know it is possible to create an important event, there are several examples illustrated in this booklet, we understand the investment in both time and money can present questions that some horse show management companies have a difficult time answering successfully. We feel strongly that through the right combination of efforts, over time there will be more top-level, "must-attend" events in North America.

WORTH THE TRIP?

Since we need solid CSI** events in this country possibly the place for this series is right where it is. Note, this is the only event with world ranking classes in the U.S. during May. Currently with an A+ facility and the ranking classes offered, the Kentucky Spring Horse Shows remains firmly in the NARG Top 25.

14.



NURTURING OUR YOUNG

The goal of The Adequan FEI North American Junior and Young Rider Championships (NAJYRC) is to highlight the future North American stars in the FEI disciplines of Show Jumping, Dressage, Eventing and Reining in a challenging Nations Cup format. By inviting qualified young riders from the US, Canada, Bermuda, Puerto Rico, Mexico and the Caribbean Islands to participate in high-level sport, the NAJYRC stands alone as the only FEI championship in North America and has been an important stepping stone for developing young riders. For many, simply landing in Lexington, KY is an experience in itself. Acres of bluegrass and beautiful barns span the roads to the Kentucky Horse Park. As we've noted the KHP is a fantastic place to host a championship competition, with 1,200 acres, multiple arenas and fantastic footing. Aside from some very hot and humid summer weather, it is a magnificent setting and a treasured time for those who have worked hard to earn the chance to compete at NAJYRC.

TROUBLING

The stabling was rocky and rather hot with no fans. The food options were weak at best. In order to get decent food you had to take a golf cart over to the 'other' show. The fact that the first day the Junior class was set at the wrong height and no one seemed to know the correct specs was disturbing. This set an unfortunate tone for the rest of the week and may have affected the outcome of the event.

WE WANT MORE

There were some improvements over last year. The classes ran during the day and there were plenty of schooling areas. However we strongly believe there needs to be more. More importance, more ceremony, more exposure—essentially more reason to come. As the only event at this level on the continent, the NAJYRC should stand-alone literally. Currently it is runs at the same time as another horse show, which doesn't draw more riders or spectators nor enhance the event but waters it down. Potentially if the week were devoted to young riders, with a young rider derby, equitation classes and special classes in the other disciplines, then it would have a nuance of highlighting this key group in our sport. Bring in a clinician and some educational opportunities for young riders, creating a great opportunity for sponsors as well as for attendees. It could once again become one of the sought-after events for top young riders in North America. And a good reason to attend for those aspiring or admiring these top young athletes. Though we have some strong criticisms NARG strongly supports the NAJYRC. We believe it is essential for the development of future talent in our sport. Over the years many young riders have set their sights on the honor of earning a medal at NAJYRC. Several of today's top riders excelled at this event. As we seek to improve our sport, this event should rise to the top as a pinnacle for young riders.

15.



OH GLORIOUS WASHINGTON

The Washington International Horse Show team and President, Juliet Reid, are determined to host both a fabulous indoor horse show and spectator event. From the excitement of watching great sport on the large jumbotrons to hearing the exuberant cheers of large crowds during the jump-offs to experiencing a standing ovation for the winner of the Puissance, the importance aspect is apparent. Also notable are the fabulous ceremony, innovative jumps, great hospitality, nice exhibitor parties, strong sponsorships and efforts to attract spectators.

As one of the few stadium venues left in the United States, NARG still maintains that it is essential, albeit challenging, for this horse show to stay at the Verizon Center in downtown Washington, DC. We also believe the WIHS team took the 2010 NARG comments to heart and addressed them where they could. Talked about for years, the WIHS team had a platform built at the end of the arena that served as the “Fidelity Club”. First class and a great fundraiser, this gallant effort resulted in a wonderful VIP component. They solved the problems of the last two years with the Puissance and the crowd was entertained with a great class. Plus the addition of “free” live webcasts during the entire event attracted over 120,000 viewers, which certainly expanded the exposure.

THE CHALLENGES

We do see areas for improvement. First, a plea from the professionals. Unlike many Junior and Amateurs, a number of professionals count on prize money to pay their expenses. At Washington (and the other US indoor shows as well), full entry and stall fees are required weeks in advance, yet prize money checks don't come for weeks after the event. Other major events in the U.S. and Europe make this a one-stop process. Arrive at the show, compete, and settle up at checkout. We realize this may not be possible for all divisions, but we hope it can be considered for the Open Division. The other major area of concern is FEI security. The building security is solid, but is not compliant with FEI rules. Non-FEI animals are led freely through FEI restricted areas and, in fact, there is no restriction to access once you are in the building, which raises concern with the threat of contamination by unauthorized access. Our final suggestion is to create a secondary place to ride. There used to be a small schooling area outside at the top of the ramp. We know this may seem next to impossible, but it seemed that getting the VIP facility would be as well and that obstacle was surmounted. So for 2012 we present this new challenge.

THE SHOW MUST GO ON

All in all, we believe Washington is moving in the right direction under President Juliet Reid. This is an important and prestigious indoor event and one worth supporting.



ANOTHER CAPITAL EFFORT

This little boutique show caught our eye this year and ranked quite well. Sacramento, the capital of California, isn't the most exciting place, but the horse show management works hard to make this a nice experience. They made great efforts to attract a crowd each evening with an opening event, entertainment and fun-to-watch classes like a Ride & Drive. They also offered clinics throughout the week. Saturday night was sold-out with full stands for the World Cup Qualifier as well as a live band after the class. The course for the World Cup was challenging, which is good for the sport and the spectators. With well-dressed courses, a large scoreboard, a nice VIP and an intimate vendor row, the main arena looks and feels special. The ceremony is excellent; sponsors are present while the staff literally rolls out the red carpet for presentations. A live webcast of the WCQ was available free online. Although they run a full horse show the week before, the Sacramento International Horse Show is a jumper only event and the stalls were sold out.

SOME ISSUES TO ADDRESS

As much as we recognize the good parts of the show, we have some recommendations to help improve the event for future years. The floors in all the barns, FEI included, need maintenance and the drainage needs to improve to avoid flooding. The cost to compete is another subject worth addressing. The entries are high especially for the FEI horses. The lower divisions might be okay with the add-back money, but that is always an unknown. Possibly this is a drawback of limited entries. The show footing was good enough, but the schooling area footing was a bit hard. However management made excellent efforts to keep the area dragged. The prize money is at the minimum for FEI world ranking, which seems to be across the board in California. It would be nice to find some solid sponsors for these top west coast shows. We know that is an ongoing challenge.

APPLAUSE

We applaud any management who is this committed to both the exhibitors and spectators at their event. All in all, we like the spirit of the show and we would like to see more events with similar goals toward great sport. Thank you Sacramento for your enthusiasm and we hope it continues to keep this boutique show on the NARG Top 25 list.

17.



TREMENDOUS TORONTO

We could essentially deliver the same write-up for 2011 as we did in 2010 for The Royal Winter Fair. Fundamentally it is a world-class event. Several aspects are simply wonderful—the crowds, the classes, the tradition. Toronto is a terrific city and the logistics of horses downtown works smoothly. The show is a year-end final for many different breeds and disciplines, including Canada’s National Talent Squad Finals and the Canadian Championships. Plus there’s an International Jumper Division with a World Cup Qualifier, some solid prize money and gratis accommodations for the riders. Since it is connected with the fair, The Royal has a unique draw that combines agriculture and farm animals with the elite equestrian events in the main arena. The result is a great audience, loyal patrons and tremendous tradition. It is a special experience.

ONE MAJOR ISSUE

There is one important detail that if addressed would change the NARG score, the riders support, the safety—essentially the show would rise above. The management team and decision makers behind The Royal Agricultural Winter Fair need to address the footing issue. The poor footing lowers the quality of sport at this venue in multiple ways—the courses cannot be built to top specs and the athletes cannot go all out. Although studs are not usually required in an indoor setting, many horses wore them to have any traction. This year the quality of athletes was varied, possibly due to the Pan-American Games but we feel also a result of the footing. Despite the excellent prize money and abundance of classes offered, many riders did not bring extra horses. These high-level equine athletes are too valuable to risk one week of showing on substandard footing.

If footing improves, we have a few suggestions that may encourage top athletes to bring their best horses to this fall indoor event. Possibly inviting the top 30 riders would help fill the classes and create more crowd excitement. Stationing a steward or assistant at the ramp from the FEI barns to the schooling area would alleviate the safety concern of the general public mingling with the horses. It would be helpful to offer a shuttle service from the hotel to the show.

BRING IT BACK

NARG supports a renewed enthusiasm for the North American fall indoor circuit. This renowned trio of shows once attracted the best International riders, had Nations Cup classes, essentially showcased equestrian sport in three metropolitan settings—New York, Washington and Toronto. We hope the Organizing Committee not only considers the footing issue but also continues their endeavor to have one of the best shows in North America.

18.



XALAPA HAIL XALAPA



A beautiful setting, ideal footing, great courses, satisfied sponsors and an enthusiastic crowd—Xalapa has all the ingredients for grand sport. The Chedraui family takes great care to be certain everything is done right for both the competitor and spectator. The atmosphere is warm and welcoming with a European feel. The footing in the main arenas is excellent and the top area is a grass ring comparable to Spruce Meadows but the schooling rings can be hard. They offer the best prize money in Mexico and the show is completely full every year. Award presentation is well done, although more sponsors could present instead of show staff. The permanent stabling is clean with water and electric and very close to the rings. Every year they continue to build more stabling so fewer horses are stabled in tents. This effort is appreciated.

AS WE HAVE SAID

There are very few shows like Xalapa in North America. The Coapexpan Club Hipico is a nice place to compete with high-end hotels and resorts within a 20-minute drive. An event of this quality could draw international competitors with increased prize money and a top sponsor. Although there is an intimate European feel, the management has not embraced modern media. This is our only top 25 show without a web presence. We continue to recommend a simple and sophisticated multi-lingual website to expand international appeal for potential competitors, spectators and sponsors. The web, including social media, is essential to success for not only a top-level event but for our sport. We maintain that the Chedraui family and staff are very welcoming and willing to assist with arrangements for those who would like to experience a little bit of Europe south of the border.

With a group of strong supporters of good sport in Mexico, we do see tremendous potential for an international event in this country. The Pan American Games in Guadalajara set a solid example of how the world can come to Mexico for medals and more. We encourage their exuberance.

19.



OUI OUI MERCI

Located outside of Montreal at the site of the 1976 Olympics, this French-Canadian show's tagline is "We set the bar high". With a great crowd, a large grass field, a nice VIP area and a World Cup Qualifier, Bromont has a very European feel. Even the prize list encompasses that Euro aspect, with French/English throughout and advertisements in French. The town is a popular ski vacation area so there are plenty of great hotels, with fabulous French names such as Domaine Chateau as well as condos and homes to rent. The locals are thrilled to have tourists in the summer and the scenery is magnificent. Montreal is a great city and is less than an hour away. The main ring is quite large, the footing and courses were both good. It takes a special talent to utilize the space and still create nice courses. The fanfare is well done with local and national sponsors and a nice prize-giving ceremony for the Grand Prix; even the Mayor participated. One note, we believe amateurs deserve recognition and strongly encourage shows to make prize-giving ceremonies important for all divisions.

S'IL VOUS PLAÎT...

All the French loveliness aside, there are areas that need to be enhanced. Most importantly, the food service must improve. The food is the worst our evaluators had all year and that is saying a lot. A few healthier choices, faster service and something that tastes good would be a major improvement to the entire event. The footing in the other show rings could be better, but the schooling area really needs work—it had standing water when it rained and was not good at any point. The crew would drag the schooling ring during a class, which is very disruptive, something easily remedied. Infrastructure in the stabling area could be better. We hear they are working on repairing the barns, which are serviceable and the rest of the stabling is in tents. The main ring tends to look sparse. More filler and decoration might help create sections of the field and make it more attractive. The overall feel of the show is laid back and though that can be nice the mornings started slow which made the day run long.

We know the management has plans to continue to improve the venue and invest in the future of the event. Already a nice venue and a beautiful area, it's not too far and yet it feels "International". Next year the prize money in the Grand Prix is increasing to \$100,000 both weeks, they are adding a Hunter Derby and have plans to add a rider's lounge. We look forward to the improvements and hope this show continues to grow and prosper. Merci Bromont!



SHOWCATION

Attending Horse Shows By The Bay is like going on a vacation with a horse show. The schedule allows for family fun and the show's customer service is simply fabulous. The greeter knows who you are when you drive in, has your packet and information in hand, directs you to your stables, camper spot or wherever you need to go. As you arrive at the barn, all your supplies are waiting, another nice perk. Although there is no permanent stabling the 'wedding' tents have wide aisles with great drainage and excellent pads, as well as permanent wash stalls. The facility is beautiful, the security is excellent and the tent stalls are pristine. Outside the Flintridge Horse Park gates is a terrific tourist town, Traverse City. The townspeople are welcoming and the visiting tourists are well-aware of the event nearby. They often include the weekend events in their plans. The overall experience could not be more enjoyable. Not many shows have an atmosphere like this inside and out.

REWARDS ALL THE WAY AROUND

Unfortunately the main ring footing was an issue again this year. Not for lack of trying but inclement weather put them behind schedule for the install and management did not have time to work the footing before the shows began. With lots of work each day it did significantly improve mid-way through the show circuit. The footing should be excellent next year. We certainly hope it is for their sake as well as the competitors, as over the last two years a lot of effort has been placed on getting this right without a clear reward to date. The other rings are just fine. The food is excellent but expensive, a more reasonable option on site, maybe a hot dog or taco stand, would be a nice addition. The fees are a little on the high end of the scale, but somehow that seems less important when the environment is so wonderful. However, it would be nice to offer an affordable stabling package for loyal supporters.

Truly a great show and a tremendous venue, we would like to see a title sponsor come in to help elevate the prize money and the show jumping. Possibly offer an invitational to top riders, an appropriate addition to an exhibitor-oriented event such as Horse Shows By the Bay. Horse Shows By The Bay has the makings of the ideal place to showcase the top of the sport. Let's make it happen.



21.

OLD SALEM FARM

MOVING UP

Old Salem Farm is also a high-end equestrian facility on 120 acres in North Salem, New York. The amenities include numerous indoor and outdoor arenas, a grand prix field, access to trails, a renovated barn and a lounge for boarders. Celebrating its 29th year, Old Salem earned our second most improved award in 2011, with a 9% score increase and a jump in ranking. The management hosts two prestigious horse shows in May that feature several grand prix classes, a speed derby and a hunter derby. These spring shows have blossomed from nice regional events to National level competitions in just a few years. An increase in prize money would elevate this event squarely into that arena. The recent investments in the infrastructure illustrate a commitment to improvement as well as to our sport.

The footing in the sand rings is excellent even in adverse conditions. By NARG suggestion, management made the sand schooling area adjacent to the field large enough to accommodate the Grand Prix or any other classes that might need to be moved from the field in inclement weather. They used the alternative arena a lot this year as May inevitably gets plenty of spring showers. The most attractive feature at Old Salem is the beautiful grass field, at the bottom of the hill, but the rain tends to collect at this low point and does not drain quickly. It was a disappointment that the VIP tent that sits next to the field went unused this year due to the weather. Old Salem would like to hold a nice 'AA' show in July but the mileage rule restricts this option. This is very disappointing.

OVERHAUL

The added classes were appreciated yet the overall biggest complaint is the schedule. Needing a complete overhaul, the days are long and late with conflicts occurring throughout. We know scheduling is difficult but this matter needs to be addressed. Since Old Salem hosts many shows throughout the year, the jumps in the secondary arenas look well-used. Adding some new jump material exclusively for use at the bigger shows would help this issue. That said, the main ring looked great and had good course designers. However, during week one the course design in the secondary arenas was substandard. We suggest choosing designers from the NARG recommended list. The stabling area has improved, the next step would be to build more permanent stabling, expand the size of the stalls or alternatively lower the price.

The management could work a bit harder to attract spectators. The venue is in a horse-dense location with a potential draw from many surrounding areas. When making a decision on where to compete on the east coast in the spring it's nice to have a charming choice like Old Salem. If the weather is good competing in the field is a spectacular experience for both the competitor and the spectator. NARG recognizes and applauds the efforts made at this facility and encourages continued improvement for these marvelous May shows.



DESTINATION LOCATION

A tradition for over 40 years, Lake Placid is a great two-week destination for the entire family. When you arrive the horse show grounds are pristine, with a coat of fresh paint and freshly mowed grass. The facility has a spectacular grass ring, which all riders treasure. The schedule offers something for everyone and includes a well-funded Open Division.

Making the two shows, I Love New York and Lake Placid, memorable is a passion for Chairman Richard Feldman and you can feel it when you're there. He takes great care to escort the sponsors out to the award ceremonies. Impressively, each year he invites the larger barns to dinner. Details like this, combined with the wonders of Lake Placid and the beautiful scenery, certainly create exhibitor loyalty. We notice and appreciate the strong and sincere commitment to continuously making this a great event. This year the entries were lighter so the show ended earlier, like it did in the old days, which was a nice surprise. In the recent past the schedule made the days quite long. This year we had time enjoy the fabulous Lake Placid environment.

ALTHOUGH...

We also noticed the management took extra steps to improve the footing through maintenance upgrades, but the truth is the material is not up to today's standards. Consensus on perfect footing is difficult to achieve but consensus on poor footing is not and we all agree that the sand rings at Lake Placid are not good. Since Lake Placid is only two weeks long, with extra care most horses can hold up on poor footing for a short period but they shouldn't have to.

The food offered on the grounds could improve. Healthier choices, more variety and lower cost would make this aspect easier to swallow. A lounge with some free exhibitor hospitality would be a super addition. Also, July is a good time of the season for a young horse division. This along with better footing in the secondary arenas might encourage professionals to bring more horses.

A special ambiance and life long memories continue to make the I Love New York and Lake Placid Horse Shows a summer show destination. Ideally we would like to see the opulence of yesteryear return with a major sponsor, increased prize money, world ranking classes and more spectator attendance. But most importantly we feel strongly that an investment in footing would be a worthwhile expenditure. We love Lake Placid, what we don't love is the sand footing.

23.



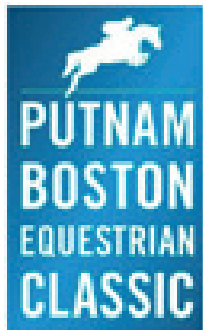
SUPERB SOCAL

Blenheim EquiSports offers ten weeks of 'AA' competition at the Rancho Mission Viejo Riding Park in San Juan Capistrano, CA. The season begins in April, continues with four shows in June, two in August and finishes with a FEI World Cup Qualifier in September. Each of the ten weeks offers a grand prix, ranging from \$25k to \$60k in prize money, plus hunter derbies, Young Rider qualifiers and more. The facility features well-maintained grass fields, beautiful southern California weather, convenient lodging options as well as restaurants, shopping, entertainment and the ocean within 30 minutes or less. The management keeps the show running on schedule, so you often have time to enjoy superb SoCal. They also produce fantastic exhibitor parties. Almost every week there is an on-site or off-site gala with delicious catered food and dancing. Each party has a theme, for example Mardi Gras, Casino Night, and The Great Train Robbery. In July of 2011, Blenheim offered the Surf & Turf, a new weekend jumper show. With great food and classes at Blenheim Farms, the private facility next to the park, the event was well done. These are certainly commendable efforts for the exhibitors and appreciated.

The VIP area allows members to see three competition arenas and serves breakfast and lunch. With couches, television and computer stations it is a welcome reprieve. However there is only one other food vendor on the property, which is expensive and not conveniently located to the sand show arenas. Possibly a golf cart offering water and snacks would be a boost to those spending long days on that side of the property. Exhibitors who compete multiple weeks at this venue would love to see some variety in course design for the secondary rings, both hunter and jumper.

PROMOTE LOCALLY AND GLOBALLY

It seems that more involvement from the San Juan Capistrano horse community shouldn't be too difficult. The management already hosts several Kids Days but without much draw. If these could expand into summer 'attractions', a series of well-promoted Equestrian Community Days for example, the local spectator base would improve. Offering a free webcast of the main events would enhance the experience for both the sponsors and the spectators. This option increases the value for several shows by creating excitement and expanding the audience. This same property and management team once hosted Olympic Trials as well as a CSI-A International. Although we understand that producing events at that level is a substantial undertaking, knowing that this management team is capable makes NARG, considering our mission, want more. A Pfizer Million with a SoCal flair. This nation needs a select group of out-of-the-box exciting events supporting top sport and the Blenheim team can do it.



BRAVO BOSTON

Talk about a star-studded line-up. The organizers behind the Putnam Boston Equestrian Classic arranged for a group of well-known riders, including Peter Wylde who flew in from Germany, Charlie Jacobs, Leslie Howard and several more, to give a pre-show demonstration at the beautiful Boston Common in the center of the city. Jacobs made history when he jumped the 118-year-old Stanley Cup. The mayor and many Bostonians (~1,500) watched in awe as the equestrians performed. Following the event was a private reception at the fabulous Taj Boston hotel.

That was just the preview. Saturday was Jet Blue Family Day at the horse show, with NHL Stanley Cup winners Adam McQuaid and Tyler Seguin of the Boston Bruins signing autographs, plus pony rides, dog agility and more family fun. On the horse show side was a \$15,000 qualifier for the Sunday Grand Prix and a \$10,000 Hunter Derby. The Sunday September 11th finale ceremonies included a 9/11 Memorial with Mounted Police and Uniformed Firefighters, demonstrations by the Myopia Huntsman with hounds, Sky Divers and Medieval Jousts. Next, forty qualified show jumpers competed in the \$50,000 Putnam Investments Grand Prix in front of several thousand spectators, including those who attended the lovely VIP 5-star champagne brunch. The prize money increased by \$20,000 this year, as event originator Don Little has a clear understanding of what today's top professionals seek and what top events need to create a buzz about our sport. The events benefited Fisher House Boston and the Boston Park Rangers Mounted Unit, also admirable.

SIMPLY WELL DONE

The Putnam Boston Equestrian Classic takes place on a large grass field at a beautiful farm in Massachusetts hunt country, which dresses up well for the occasion. Tropical Storm Lee dumped record amounts of rain in the northeast right before the show began. Management worked hard to make it acceptable, including cancelling classes the first day, moving the “rings” to save the grass. By Friday the ground was excellent. The wet grounds did force them to change plans for the Hunter Derby, which originally included actual “hunt” obstacles. Imagine that—true hunt fences in a Hunter Derby. Hopefully the weather will cooperate this coming September.

The management goes out of its way to accommodate the riders, which is truly appreciated. Fantastic rider hospitality included a tent with beverages, breakfast, lunch as well as wine and cheese. The pole tent stalls are clean and the isles are wide. With coverage in several local Boston publications, the combined events in Boston and Hamilton created interest and publicity. What an innovative way to introduce the public to show jumping. NARG would like to see more impressive events such as the Putnam Boston Equestrian Classic in North America.

25.



KUDOS

The HITS Desert Circuit management continues to make improvements to this relatively new and expansive venue each year and they are complete when the customers arrive, which is appreciated. We hope the management continues to mold this desert location into a world-class facility to serve the large base of winter circuit customers. With horses staying up to two months or more, the facility requires a good infrastructure and amenities. The permanent stabling is nice and the tents also offer a reasonably priced stabling option. Turnout is available for a fee. Numerous participants own facilities as well as condominiums off-property. Good restaurants, shopping, accommodations and plenty of conveniences are within thirty minutes.

NARG praises HITS for lowering fees overall. The stabling costs are fair as is the nominating fee. The office fee is on the high end but it does include in-house horse watch. We applaud a management that is responsive to their customers needs. The property is large so it can house plenty of horses and arenas with ample schooling areas, an indoor arena, a large restaurant, VIP berm and extensive vendor space. Although a bit stark, management has worked hard to beautify the area and added a VIP lounge between the hunter rings.

WHAT WE SUGGEST

Although our evaluators noted improvements, the scores for footing indicate there are still issues that need to be addressed. The schooling areas need the most attention, however all the secondary arenas could improve. Hiring top judges to cover and rotate through your rated divisions, Derbies and special classes will notably create a positive learning and rewarding experience for your clients. We realize this is a challenge for all long circuits as many of the best judges are also active competitors. We also recommend considering course designers from the NARG recommended list for your main arenas, indoor and outdoor.

The concessions at this location are acceptable, and the VIP areas are nice enough, but not convenient for busy trainers and riders who are running from ring to ring. Nothing says thanks for coming more than good replenishment when you need it most, like healthy choices easily available near the rings, water, and free ringside pizza when the days run late. By nature the location of this circuit doesn't draw a huge spectator crowd, but the stands are full for the indoor World Cup qualifiers and there's often a crowd scattered about the outdoor arena on grand prix day. With a solid group of sponsors, we hope that the HITS Desert Circuit attempts to create increased fanfare around the big events. We need managements like this to recognize the significance of not only making its clients feel important but to raise the level of sport across the board.

PHOTO CREDITS

pg. 6, from top to bottom: Jennifer Wood Media, Spruce Meadows Media
pg. 8: Steve Charles, Kenneth Kraus
pg. 9: Kenneth Kraus
pg. 10: Kenneth Kraus, James Leslie Parker
pg. 11: Jen Markee, Jennifer Thomas
pg. 12: Kenneth Kraus, PANational.com
pg. 13: Kenneth Kraus, PhelpsSports.com
pg. 14: EquestriSol
pg. 15: PinOak.org
pg. 16: ChevalPhotos.com, Chloe McFarland
pg. 17: Kenneth Kraus
pg. 18: HelenMcNaught.com
pg. 19: Alexandra Pingree, EquestriSol
pg. 20: Kenneth Kraus,
pg. 21: Jennifer Wood Media
pg. 22: ChevalPhotos.com
pg. 23: RoyalFair.org
pg. 24: Anwar Esquivel
pg. 25: InternationalBromont.org, RedRibbonPhotography.com
pg. 26: Horse Shows By The Bay
pg. 27: OldSalemFarm.net
pg. 28: LakePlacidHorseShow.com
pg. 29: CapturedMomentPhoto.com, HorseInSport.com
pg. 30: BostonEquestriaClassic.com
pg. 31: ChevalPhotos.com

PRODUCED BY



OUR SPONSORS





NARG MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION & RENEWAL

Thank you for joining the North American Riders Group. The purpose of the group is to improve the quality of competitive equestrian events. With your participation, the NARG will be recognized as the clear strong voice of North American riders and the supporting personnel directly involved with show jumping.

The mission of the North American Riders Group is to effectively represent the varied interests of active riders and all those associated trainers, coaches, horse owners and corporate sponsors and others involved in show jumping.

We hope you will consider making an additional contribution to help the organization. Membership fees cover a calendar year and are non refundable.

I acknowledge that I am in good standing with the National Federation that governs show jumping in my country.

SIGNATURE _____ DATE _____

Please print clearly.

We will confirm we have the proper information on file by sending a confirmation within 30 days.

Contact Information

Name _____

Street Address _____

City, ST/ZIP/Country _____

Home Phone _____

Mobile Phone _____

E-Mail Address _____

Active participation offers you the opportunity to shape our organization and influence equestrian sport. We all know there is strength in numbers. Another way to participate is through providing financial support beyond the dues. We welcome both contributions and corporate sponsorships. We are gaining momentum but need your help. Join us now and help us grow by encouraging others to join and get involved.

Senior Membership Initial	\$250	Senior Membership Renewal	\$125
Junior* Memberships Initial	\$175	Junior* Membership Renewal	\$75
Founding Member	\$2500	Supporting Contribution	\$_____

Check or Credit Card Accepted

Name as it appears on card _____

(Circle one) Mastercard, Visa

CC# _____

Expiration and code _____

Billing Zip code _____

SIGNATURE _____

Mail or Fax application to:
 North American Riders Group
 11924 Forest Hill Boulevard
 Suite 22 Box #117
 Wellington, FL 33414

Phone 561.386.4525 | Fax: 561.753.2278 | www.NARG.org

*NARG reserves the right to reject applications for membership, as written in the rules.
 as stipulated by the USEF

www.NARG.org

President

Chris Kappler

Vice President

McLain Ward

Secretary

Beezie Madden

Treasurer

Kent Farrington

Board Members

Will Simpson

Jimmy Torano

Andre Dignelli

Murray Kessler

Norman Dello Joio

Enrique Gonzales

Mark Samuel

Executive Director

Jen Markee

**NORTH AMERICAN
RIDERS GROUP
TOP 25 OF 2011**

Look for the
NARG Seal
and support the
Top 25 Shows in
North America.

