

Galway Downs Equestrian News

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Come Horse Around!

Galway Downs welcomes all to enjoy top equestrian sport March 29-31.

March 7, 2019, Temecula, California: Hobbit Houses. Knight's Tables. Bunkers...

These are just a few of the immovable obstacles horses and riders will fly over during the next major equestrian competition at Galway Downs in Temecula. Set for March 29-31, the officially titled "International Horse Trials" attracts contenders from throughout the West Coast and far beyond for three days of thrilling sport that makes for great family entertainment.

The March 29-31 weekend's uniquely demanding form of equestrian sport is known as "eventing" and is often described as "equestrian triathlon" because it involves three phases.

It begins Friday with dressage, an exhibition of athletic elegance that – when done right – looks easy but is anything but. In this phase, horse and rider perform a prescribed "test," as figure skaters do, including at the higher levels a "freestyle" component in which pirouettes, elevated steps and floating stride extensions are sequenced to a soundtrack of the rider's choice. They're strutting their stuff!

Saturday is show jumping day, in an arena now filled with a sea of brightly colored jumps, positioned to require pinpoint control and clear communication. For a shot at the top prizes, pairs must navigate the course with minimum penalties for knock-downs or exceeding the time allowed.

Finally, on Sunday, it's cross-country jumping. Pairs tackle 30-plus obstacles like those named above and including water complexes into which they leap, gallop and splash through, then jump out of and speed away from. These solid fences can reach 3'11" in height – some with natural brush that extends much higher. "Optimum time" requirements leave no room for hesitation or debate while running distances up to 2.4 miles.

Competition is tense for the riders. This Galway Downs competition offers qualifying points for national and international tournaments. Plus, the US Equestrian Team's captain is expected to be scouting contenders for this year's Pan American Games in Peru and next year's Olympic Games in Tokyo.

For spectators, it's pure fun and exhilaration. One of the country's premier equestrian venues, Galway Downs sits on 242 lovely and lushly landscaped acres. Shady spots to watch the action are plentiful and close enough to hear hooves pound by and see the intense focus in riders' faces as they dash or dance their way to hoped-for wins.

Action unfolds all day in several areas. The cross-country course weaves around Galway's one-mile racetrack and 5/8-mile training track, both nods to Galway's 51 year past

and active present as a Thoroughbred racehorse training facility. Several spots around the course afford a great view of the action.

A Friendly Lot

Eventing riders are a famously friendly lot and usually happy to meet with fans when time allows. Horses, however, should be approached only with their handler's advance OK. Most are friendly, too, and sometimes happy to plant a wet kiss or snuffle a pocket for treats under their handler's close supervision.

Food trucks offer tasty lunches and snacks throughout the weekend and the vendor village has shopping opportunities for serious equestrians and new fans alike.

Temecula Valley is earning its stripes as a wine destination, but the region has an equally well-earned and fast-growing reputation as an equestrian sport mecca. Many of the International Horse Trial's contenders are based in Temecula or close by, and some form of horse sport takes place at Galway Downs nearly every weekend of the year.

Spectator admission for the Galway Downs International Horse Trials is free with a \$10 parking fee. Tented, ringside VIP seating is \$75 per day.

Galway Downs Equestrian is one of the premiere equestrian competition venues in the country. It is located at 38801 Los Corralitos Road in Temecula. For more information, visit www.galwaydowns.net and follow Galway Downs on Facebook (@GalwayDownsInternational) Instagram (@GalwayDownsEquestrian) and Twitter (@GalwayDowns)

Media members are encouraged to come out any or all days of the Horse Trials. For questions or credentials, please e-mail press officer Kim F Miller at kimfmiller1@mac.com. Tally Ho!