



Organizing the Rolex Kentucky Three-Day Event



Preparation for each year's Rolex Kentucky Three-Day Event Presented by Land Rover, part of the FEI Classics™ Series, begins by organizer Equestrian Events, Inc. even before the last horse completes the last fence on the Jumping course on the last day of the previous year's competition.

Because the Rolex Kentucky Three-Day Event is an international competition, it is governed by the rules of the Fédération Equestre Internationale (FEI, International Equestrian Federation), which governs all Olympic-level equestrian sports. Eventing is one of three equestrian sports in the Olympic Games and one of the eight governed by the FEI.

In addition to recognition by the FEI, the Rolex Kentucky Three-Day Event is also a recognized event of the U.S. Equestrian Federation (USEF), the National Equestrian Federation of the U.S., and this country's representative to the FEI as well as the United States Eventing Association (USEA) and the regional Mid-South Eventing and Dressage Association (MSEDA). Recognition by these associations allows competitors to receive points toward each association's respective year-end awards.

As both a Qualifying Competition and Selection Trial for World Championships or Olympic Games, as well as the U.S. Equestrian Federation Four Star Championship for the U.S. Equestrian Team Foundation Pinnacle Cup, activities are also coordinated with representatives of the U.S. Equestrian Federation.

A recognized international Course Designer designs the Cross-Country Course and construction work begins in the early summer under the direction of a professional Course Builder. Cross-Country Course construction is the most expensive part of staging a Three-Day Event. While a certain number of obstacles may be able to be used for two to three years as originally constructed, it is necessary to change the design of the course and the demand of the obstacles and the course as a whole each year in order to provide a true and appropriate test.

In 1993, Rolex Kentucky contracted with Course Designer Michael Etherington-Smith of Great Britain to renovate and upgrade the Cross-Country at Kentucky. The Cross-Country at Rolex Kentucky quickly became one of the best in the world. Rolex Kentucky was awarded Four Star status in 1998 and the course that year was Mike's first at this level of difficulty.

Mike retired as the course designer at Rolex Kentucky, after serving as the Course Designer for the 2000 and 2008 Olympic Games and the 2010 Alltech FEI World Equestrian Games at the Kentucky Horse Park. As the Rolex Kentucky designer, Mike's courses provided riders and horses from throughout the U.S., and increasing numbers from abroad, the unique opportunity to compete over a Four Star course that is recognized as the most horse-friendly in the world.

Mike's successor as Rolex Kentucky course designer is veteran international competitor and course designer Derek di Grazia of the United States. Derek, who won the Rolex Kentucky championship in 1985 on Sasquatch, competed at the sport's highest level for many years and has been course designer at such top events as DeBroke, Essex, and The Fair Hill International. He worked closely with Mike Etherington-Smith before Mike's retirement, ensuring a smooth transition. In the years since he became course designer for Rolex Kentucky Derek has established himself as one of the world's best with courses that have received rave reviews from riders around the world.

At the same time that construction of the Cross-Country Course is progressing, the monumental task of securing the more than 2,000 volunteers who are the core of the successful running of The Event begins. Chief Stewards, Coordinators and Committee Chairs for each day and each segment of this extravaganza are contacted. These key workers then secure their volunteers and submit the names and addresses to the Equestrian Events, Inc. office. The office then records the workers on computer for use in preparing the acknowledgments in the Official Program and allotting identification materials.

Rolex Kentucky is fortunate to have volunteers who return year after year and to have individuals contact the EEI office offering their services. Aside from the fact that being a part of the Rolex Kentucky Three-Day Event is exciting and satisfying for volunteers, the organizers recognize the vital importance of these workers and provide each free admission, grandstand seating and special parking for all days of the competition regardless of the number of days working; lunch is provided on the day a person works; mounted

stewards who must use their own horses on Cross-Country Day are provided a night's stabling at the Horse Park; workers are treated to snacks and refreshments on Saturday after the Cross-Country Test is completed; and each receives an Official Event Pin, a one-of-a-kind Volunteer T-Shirt and a Commemorative Cup as a small thank you. Shortly after the Event, each worker receives an individual thank you letter from the Director of Competition on behalf of the Board of Directors of Equestrian Events.

In mid-summer, admission options and prices for the next year are determined and design of ticket information and order forms is accomplished; a working budget is prepared and contracts for the Catering, Tent, Sanitation, and other needs of the next year's Event are prepared. Information and application forms for the Trade Fair are prepared and mailed to EEI's list of merchants. Advertising and publicity programs are developed and by December ads begin appearing in equine trade publications. Tickets, identification materials and parking passes are ordered so that they will arrive in plenty of time to prepare packets for the workers and to mail tickets to subscribers. The sponsorship invitation is prepared and mailed to past and potential sponsors. In October, emphasis is shifted from the current year to the next year on the Rolex Kentucky Three-Day Event Website (www.rk3de.org).

Ticket sales open on the Event Website November 1 and a printed ticket brochure and order form are mailed at the same time to past subscribers and in response to inquiries. Processing of Trade Fair applications and Ticket Orders, and attending to all the minute details that ensure a smooth-running competition, make the months leading up to the event extremely busy. Not least among the activities is developing and printing all the news releases and informational materials for the media as well as the hundreds of sets of competitor and worker information and directions.

Officials arrive in March to inspect the facilities for the competition. Necessary changes are accomplished between that time and the actual start of the competition six weeks later.

Eight weeks before the first day of the competition, entry forms begin to arrive from the competitors. These are processed and recorded on computer.

Maps are prepared to illustrate the layout of the Trade Fair and Sponsor Village areas and the entire Event Complex within the Kentucky Horse Park. A Security Passboard is developed and photographed to provide a visual replica and check of ticket and parking access identification.

With the size of the Park and the scope of the areas utilized for the Cross-Country Test on Saturday, 18 distinct radio networks, composed of almost 250 two-way radios, are necessary to maintain constant and complete communication among the administration, the controller, officials, timers, scorers, announcers, medical personnel, veterinarians and those who report the progress of each rider at each obstacle.

The Control Center of a Three-Day Event on Cross-Country Day is as vital as NASA's Houston Control Center. It receives information from myriad areas, ensures its dissemination to critical personnel as well as spectators and controls the entire competition from a tent that, even with closed-circuit television, affords views of only a few of the people and horses the personnel are directing and following. And yet, the volunteers in the Control Center know exactly what is happening on every square foot of the Cross-Country Course and are able to dispatch emergency personnel, hold up the next horse or sound the all clear for a go-ahead within minutes of any occurrence.

In like manner, the Announcer receives information on the progress of each horse through radio communication and closed-circuit television and reports it over the PA system.

Coordination with the Kentucky Horse Park is an ongoing activity, but the real push for both Horse Park and Event personnel begins when the grass begins to grow in the spring. Not only must the 4-mile track of the Cross-Country Course be mowed on a schedule that ensures the grass will be perfect on Saturday, but so also must the areas surrounding the course, practice areas and the Trade Fair area be manicured and prepared for more than 50-100,000 spectators during the four-day run of the competition.

The two weeks before the competition are a bustle of activity. Competitor packets are prepared, stalls are readied for competitors and mounted personnel, competition and practice Dressage arenas are set up, the obstacles on the Cross-Country Courses are flagged, numbered and decorated with masses of flowers and shrubs, the track of the course is roped to provide an unencumbered galloping lane for competitors, the jumps for Show Jumping are set, numbered and flagged.

More than 100 tents of varying sizes are set up to house the Trade Fair, Sponsor Village, Media Center and First Aid central locations, Disabled Services and Spectator Shuttles, Patron Plus and Patron Club, Concessions and the Event Office and Ticket Sales, which move almost totally to the center of the Event Complex the Tuesday of Event Week.

Temporary grandstands are set up, parking areas are roped and fenced and identifying signs set in place. Security personnel, parking attendants and ticket takers are briefed on their responsibilities during The Event as are the competition volunteers.

Horses begin arriving Monday of Event Week and the Stable Manager and Stable Office Staff are kept busy directing competitors to their stalls, providing for their feed and bedding needs, and distributing competitor packets of information and identifying materials.

On Tuesday and Wednesday, food vendors, merchants and corporate sponsors set up and the Trade Fair and Sponsor Village begin to come alive.

The Competitor Briefing, followed by the Official Course Walk, is held Wednesday morning. The Competitor Briefing introduces the officials and competitors and outlines special rules that must be followed on the grounds as well as important information for competitors to know. After the briefing, the competitors walk the Cross-Country Course for the first time to become acquainted with the obstacles and the terrain. Following the formal opening of the Cross-Country Course, competitors will walk the course three, four, even five times to be sure that they have determined the best way to take the obstacles.

The Horse Inspection area is set up and decorated for the First Horse Inspection Wednesday afternoon. The order of go is set after the First Horse Inspection and this order will be followed for both the Dressage and Cross-Country tests. The order of go for the Jumping Test is in reverse order of standing.

Ride Times (Orders of Go) are printed in the thousands for the Dressage and Cross-Country Tests for competitors, officials, workers, press and spectators and for the Jumping Test after the Third Horse Inspection. At the conclusion of each day's competition, the copiers run constantly as Results are also printed by the thousands.

Thursday morning, a Test Ride is performed before the panel of three judges so that they can discuss and compare how they judged the ride in order to assure that the judges' marks for each rider are as uniform as possible. When the first horse enters the arena to perform the Dressage Test, the competition has officially begun, culminating at the end of The Event with a new Rolex Champion and a new USEF Four Star Champion.