



Aiken Eventing 2012

Plenty of Competition

Aiken was once again the premier destination for event riders on the East Coast this winter. There were riding and training opportunities galore, including a six-week-long series of United States Equestrian Federation/United States Eventing Association recognized horse trials. There were also schooling events, combined trials, dressage shows, and clinics from some of the most illustrious clinicians in the eventing world. These included the official pre-Olympic training sessions for riders hoping to earn a spot on the U.S. eventing team that will compete in London in the fall. Training sessions took place at Ilene Boorman's Bridle Creek Farm, which now boasts world-class dressage and jumping arenas as well as a cross country schooling course designed by Eric Bull.

Competitors in Aiken ran the gamut from first timers to seasoned veterans who will soon represent their country. Competition in Aiken itself started out at the very lowest levels for the greenest horses, and went up through Intermediate. Those who wanted to go Advanced trucked their horses about an hour to compete at the Pine Top Horse Trials in Thomson, Ga.

Aiken's high season got its start on February 1 with the Full Gallop USEF/USEA recognized horse trial at Full Gallop Farm on route 302. This year, the unofficial end to the season could be pinpointed to March 23, when most Olympic hopefuls packed up for the Southern Pines Horse Trials in Raeford, N.C. Although the international crowd is gone, Aiken's eventers are training and competing all year long, and the calendar here offers four seasons of both recognized and schooling competitions.

The top tier eventing circuit has now moved northward. The next big event, and the first of four official Olympic selection trials, is the Rolex Kentucky CCI four star held at the Kentucky Horse Park from April 25-29. The other two selection events for the 2012 team include Jersey Fresh (May 9-13), and, for those who have already flown their horses across the Atlantic, Badminton in England and Saumur in France.

Turn the page for a selection of pictures showing a small sample of Aiken's eventing season, 2012.



PHOTOGRAPHY BY GARY KNOLL

