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Dressage at Devon Adds Pro-Am Challenge and Young Horse Championship

Devon, PA—In celebration of its 35th anniversary, September 28-October 3, 2010, Dressage at Devon is adding two exciting new championship programs—the Pro-Am Challenge and the Young Performance Horse Championship. The goal of both awards is to identify success in two important groups of competitors—amateur riders and young horses.

“We always strive to find new ways to recognize greatness at Dressage at Devon,” says Lori Kaminski, President and CEO of the event. “This fall, while some of the world’s stars will be shining in Kentucky, Dressage at Devon will be building the next generation of world-class competitors.”

The Intermediaire I/Grand Prix Freestyle Pro-Am Challenge Championship will be awarded to the team consisting of one amateur rider and one professional rider with the highest percentage scores from either the Intermediaire I Freestyle and/or the Grand Prix Freestyle. The second highest scoring team will be named Reserve Champion. Teams should sign up with the performance show secretary by noon on Saturday September 25.

Kaminski continues, “The Pro-Am Challenge is a fun way to encourage camaraderie among amateur and professional riders competing at the highest levels of the sport.

International Grand Prix rider Susie Dutta, of Wellington, FL, agrees. “The Pro-Am Challenge is going to give a lot of people a great goal. It’s a really fun, wonderful idea and I think it will be the highlight of everyone’s year.” Dutta has competed at Dressage at Devon for years and considers the freestyle one of the most fun tests to ride.

Susan Springsteen, an amateur rider from Chester County, PA, has attended Dressage at Devon since she was a teenager. She has competed in the breed show and the performance show through the FEI levels. In 2010 she hopes to make her DAD Grand Prix debut and intends to participate in the Pro-Am Challenge. "I think it is wonderful that the Dressage at Devon Committee is thinking outside the box," she says. "The Challenge shines a spotlight on adult amateurs, who are the backbone of our sport." Springsteen believes that not only will the award showcase top talent and encourage amateur riders, but also will have tremendous audience appeal. "Spectators can appreciate and identify with amateur riders," she says.

From the grand prix ring to the young horse classes, Dressage at Devon is the place to see world-class talent. As the young horse classes have grown, a championship recognizing these future stars was the next logical step. Kaminski explains, "The Young Horse Championship is a reflection of the growth and importance of the young horse division."

Scores from Thursday's 4, 5 and 6 year old tests will be combined with Friday's scores from the same classes. The horse/rider combination with the highest total score will be named Champion Young Performance Horse. The horse/rider combination with the second highest score will be named Reserve Champion Young Performance Horse.

"I think the Young Horse Championship is a great idea," says Mikala Gundersen, of Wellington, FL. With Horses Unlimited's Hanoverian stallion Pikko del Cerro HU, Gundersen has won six young horse classes from 2007-2009, and is the current Markel/USEF National Young Horse Six Year Old Champion. Gundersen continues, "This is something the riders can look forward to and prepare for. You have to have your horse ready early in the season to qualify for the Markel Young Horse Championships. The Championship at Dressage at Devon gives us another chance to ride for a championship a little later in the season. The atmosphere at Devon is exciting and it gives riders an idea of how their horses will handle the big horse shows later in their career."

Chris Hickey has also had tremendous success at Devon. With Hilltop Farm's Cabana Boy, Hickey won numerous young horse classes. The pair continued on to win national championships in the 5 and 6 year-old divisions. "I think naming a Young Horse Champion is a wonderful thing to add," Hickey states. "There is always so much going on with the CDI and the in-hand classes, it is great to add this type of championship for the young horses. Hilltop Farm always looks forward to Devon, and it is such a big piece of the year-end for us and our clients. As stallion owners, going to Devon is important for the competition and also for the additional advertising it gives us."

New Footing in the Dixon Oval

In addition to these new championship programs, riders will also find new footing. As reported in the February 5, 2010 edition of *The Chronicle of the Horse*, the Dixon Oval at the Devon Horse Show Grounds is having its footing refurbished. The Devon Horse Show decided on the surface developed by Bart Poels for his Equestrian Services International. The footing will be the same as that used in the ring at the 2008 Olympic Games in Hong Kong and the recently redone rings at the Palm Beach International Equestrian Center, home of the FTI Winter Equestrian Festival in Wellington, FL.

To learn more about Dressage at Devon, visit www.dressageatdevon.org.

About Dressage at Devon

Dressage at Devon is a 501 (c) (3) PA non-profit organization. Founded by the Delaware Valley Combined Training Association in 1975, Dressage at Devon became a separate organization in 2006. The six-day event attracts more than 700 horses and 35,000 spectators each year. Dressage at Devon benefits Thorncroft Therapeutic Horseback Riding Inc., the oldest and largest therapeutic riding program in the nation.

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