

The Young Horse Show Series: The Year in Review By Lisa Lourie and Jean-Yves Tola

2011 marked the inaugural year of The Spy Coast Farm Young Horse Show Series presented by The FTI Winter Equestrian Festival in cooperation with The North American Studbook. The three WEF qualifier shows and the final offered a total of over 40 thousand dollars in prize money and were judged by a line-up of top quality international judges. Additional qualifiers were held in Ocala, FL and Lexington, KY and offered three thousand dollars each in prize money.

Jos Sevriens did a terrific job of officiating at each of the shows. He was accompanied by Hilda Gurney (January), Jayne Ayers and David Distler (February), Peter Hansen (March) and Merijane Malouin (May/KY). Jan Olof Wannius joined Jos in the ring for the December finals. Mr. Wannius is the director of the celebrated Falsterbo Horse Show and was very impressed with the “international quality of the horses” presented at our first ever final.

Each of the shows had a social or educational component. The January show boasted a meet and greet where exhibitors got to hear about what professionals from different disciplines look for in a young sport horse. Margie Engle (jumpers), Jimmy Torano (hunters) and Chris Hickey (dressage) were on hand to give their opinions and to answer questions.

Conformation: What to look for in a Sporthorse, was Jos Sevriens’ lunchtime topic for February’s exhibitor’s and March offered a post show social at the White Horse Tavern. The Kentucky show offered a presentation on breeding and embryo transfer by Dr. Etta Bradecamp DVM/ACT of Rood and Riddle. Ocala’s show hosted a Q and A with local professionals. Exhibitors at the December final at WEF had the option to

purchase VIP seating complete with Moet Hennessey Champagne and a delicious buffet.

Professional handlers were required and provided by show management. The efforts of the handlers contributed to the safety of the exhibitors and were appreciated more and more with each show. They were unfailingly patient with their young charges, often provided helpful tips to the owners and they served to level the playing field of competition. Our sincere thanks go out to Silvio Wolf Busch, Klaus Schengber, Phil Silva and Brandon Curtis for all of their help.

The unsung heroes of the WEF shows are Leanne and Liz in the exhibitor's office, David Burton Jr., his grounds and jump crews and Meg Kreuger and her team. These folks cheerfully accepted the additional chores that this show series required and were very responsive to our evolving needs and concerns. We also wish to thank the folks at Spy Coast Farm, Cav-i Farm and Sakura Hill Farm for their grass roots commitment to the Young Horse Show program and for all of the hard work that went into hosting their own terrific shows

This year has been one of learning and growth for the people involved in the Young Horse Shows. We have had many successes and have tried to learn from our mistakes. As with any new endeavor, there have been bumps in the road. Our loyal exhibitors have been very forgiving of these growing pains. They have provided us with constructive feedback, which we have always taken to heart.

A surprise of the series was how many dressage people and their horses participated. These folks taught us that scheduling a show time is possible and desirable. We are still working on putting it into practice. The inter-disciplinary

cooperation between hunters, jumpers, dressage and eventers has been encouraging and exhilarating.

One of the most rewarding aspects of the series was to watch how the young horses evolved over the course of the year. They became more confident and their skill sets improved. Very few of them were concerned about the lights in the main ring at the finals. They had been handled and prepared well at home and it showed. The dressage horses under saddle had moved up more levels than we were even prepared for. We will adjust for that next year.

There is a lot of buzz about these shows. More and more professional riders are asking about them and hopefully more will participate. Several top professionals attended the finals and were impressed with the quality level of the horses shown. This bodes well for the potential of these shows to serve as a marketplace for young prospects.

We have launched a Facebook page and a YHS website www.younghorseshow.com. We are looking into new and improved ways to advertise our events and to promote the horses that show with us. We have attracted new sponsors and will continue to work closely with them to enhance their markets. Several shows are in the works along the East coast and we are talking with people across the country about how they can offer shows like ours.

We thank The FTI Winter Equestrian Festival for investing in our concept and we thank all of the exhibitors who came out to support the shows. We hope to see you again!