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## **California Riders Show Why They Are "Best in the Country" at Mid-Winter Dressage Fair & CDI\*/Y/J**

*By Yellow Horse Marketing for Cornerstone Event Management*

BURBANK, CA - Riders who dream of competing at the Pan American Games began their quest at the Mid-Winter Dressage Fair CDI\*/Y/J in Burbank, CA, February 24 - 27, 2011. As the first official qualifying competition on the West Coast, horses and riders vied for scores in front of FEI judges Jayne Ayers ("I" USA), Natalie Lamping ("I" USA), and Lorraine MacDonald ("I" CAN). In addition, this competition served as an early-season qualifier for the Collecting Gaits Farm/USEF Festival of Champions (Pony Rider, Junior, Young Rider, and Brentina Cup divisions); NAJYRC; Markel/USEF Young Horse Dressage Program; and the USEF Developing Horse division (sponsored by Dutta & PSI). Despite the unusually cold and wet weather, competitors braved the elements and did not disappoint in providing exceptional performances.

In the CDI Prix St. Georges class, two California riders proved they will be a force to be reckoned with in Pan Am Games team selection. "Today's class was fun to judge," said Jayne Ayers. "We saw so many good horses, and they were very well ridden." Steffen Peters of San Diego, CA rode Jen Hlavacek's nine-year-old Westfalen gelding "Weltino's Magic" to an impressive score of 76.272%. Riding through a rain shower to place second with a score of 72.719% was Marisa Festerling of Moorpark, CA with her own ten-year-old Belgian Warmblood gelding "Big Tyme". "For me, from what I saw here, these two horses are the best in the country in this division," stated Lorraine MacDonald, who served as President of the Ground Jury. Both horses are graduates of the Markel/USEF Young Horse Dressage Program.

Despite rainy weather, CDI classes continued in relative comfort on Saturday thanks to the covered "Equidome", which allows for two full-size dressage arenas in addition to warm-up areas to all be held under one roof. Peters and "Weltino's Magic" once again dominated the field in the second leg of the small tour, earning a score of 76.404% in the FEI Intermediaire I Test which was generously sponsored by LA Saddlery. Canada's Karen Pavicic rode her own nine-year-old Oldenburg gelding "Don Daiquiri" to second with 71.974%, and also claimed the blue ribbon in the Intermediaire I Freestyle with a solid score of 72.417%.

Another highlight of the competition was the participation of Steffen Peters and "Ravel" in the national Grand Prix class, scoring a 75.532% from judge Sandra Hotz. In their first outing since winning two individual bronze medals at the Alltech/FEI World Equestrian Games last fall, this pair utilized the opportunity to get into the ring as a final preparation for the World Dressage Masters in Florida. "I was really happy with my ride today. He's been feeling great," noted Peters. "Sometimes after a big event, you want to relax for a while, but it wasn't like that for me. I was itching to get back to it." Peters and "Ravel" leave on Thursday for the Masters, which will be held March 9 - 11.

In the Young Rider division, a strong field of veteran performers fought for the blue ribbons. "These young riders have learned from their past experiences, and there are future stars here," noted judge

Jayne Ayers. In the CDI Young Rider Team Test, Mackinzie Pooley of Coto de Caza, CA rode "Jonkara" to a winning score of 70.877% in the Team Test, while Morgan Heinrichs of Longmont, CO rode "Orlando" to a winning score of 67.675% in the Individual Test. Catherine Chamberlain traveled from Chandler, AZ to ride her own "Verdicci" to a freestyle victory with a score of 66.250% to close out the Young Rider division. In the CDI Junior classes, Taylor Lindsten from Cave Creek, AZ and her mount "Raoul" swept the Team and Individual Tests.

Markel/Cornerstone High Point Winners were once again presented in four divisions. In the FEI ranks, Steffen Peters and "Weltino's Magic" were presented with the winning dress sheet, while in the Open division Sabine Schut-Kery of Thousand Oaks CA rode Alice Womble-Heitman's Hanoverian stallion "Sanceo" to victory. For Adult Amateurs, Emily Tears of Coto de Caza, CA rode Karen Ball's "Absolute Zephyr" to claim the title, and Mackinzie Pooley with "Jonkara" won the Junior/Young Rider division.

With the generous support of sponsor Lisa Seger Equine Insurance Agency, a new hospitality area called "The Retreat" was premiered during the show, and quickly became a big hit with competitors. "Thanks to Lisa Seger, this was a place for exhibitors to enjoy themselves and relax during the show, have refreshments, check scores, and socialize," explained competition manager Glenda McElroy.

The next competition will be the Festival of the Horse CDI-W/Y/J, March 31 - April 3, featuring both FEI World Cup and Pan American Games qualifying classes. Entries close Friday, March 11.

*Cornerstone Event Management is the leading resource for premier dressage events in California. For more information, including news, show calendars, prize lists, entry forms, schedules, and results, visit Cornerstone Event Management on Facebook or [www.cornerstonedressage.com](http://www.cornerstonedressage.com).*

**PHOTO ATTACHED:** CAPTION -California's Steffen Peters with his new star "Weltino's Magic" owned by Jen Hlavacek.

**PHOTO CREDIT: JENNIFER M. KEELER - PHOTO MAY ONLY BE USED IN CONJUNCTION WITH THIS PRESS RELEASE.**

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