# EQUESTRIAN SPORT PRODUCTIONS HOSTS VIRTUAL OPENING PRESS CONFERENCE FOR 2021 WINTER EQUESTRIAN FESTIVAL AND ADEQUAN® GLOBAL DRESSAGE FESTIVAL



Lucy Deslauriers, Havens Schatt, Steffen Peters, Michael Stone, and Thomas Baur were panelists for the 2021 WEF/AGDF Virtual Opening Press Conference. Photos © Elena Lusenti.

Wellington, FL - January 4, 2021 - Equestrian Sport Productions (ESP) welcomed media to the first-ever virtual opening press conference for the 2021 show season on Monday, January 4. The press conference was held via Zoom and included panelists representing both the Winter Equestrian Festival (WEF) and the Adequan® Global Dressage Festival (AGDF).

WEF, held at the Palm Beach International Equestrian Center (PBIEC), will offer 13 weeks of top hunter, jumper, and equitation competition, beginning on January 6 and continuing through April 4. Elite dressage competition will take place at Equestrian Village at PBIEC for AGDF, starting on January 13 and running through April 4.

The panel at the opening press conference consisted of ESP President Michael Stone, AGDF Director of Sport Thomas Baur, U.S. Show Jumping Pan American Games team bronze medalist Lucy Deslauriers, U.S. Dressage Olympic team bronze medalist Steffen Peters, and top hunter rider and trainer Havens Schatt.

Although this year will look different due to COVID rules and guidelines, Stone is confident that it will be a successful season of competition. "There will be no spectators at WEF or AGDF this year, which is going to be very different for the competitors because the atmosphere in the past for the night classes was fantastic and unfortunately, we are not going to be able to do that," Stone said. "While we are maintaining no public spectators and limited guests at the facility, we

do look forward to hosting all of our usual top sport."

ESP will offer fully-produced live streams for "Saturday Night Lights," grand prix classes, and major events free of charge for people watching from home. "We are going to work with Olympic and World Equestrian Games announcer Steven Wilde to make it a full presentation," he said, "with interviews and more to make the live stream fun and interesting to watch."

Show jumping riders will have 12 weeks of FEI competition, including four CSI5\* events taking place weeks 5, 7, 9, and 11. WEF 11

will feature the highlight class, the \$500,000 Rolex Grand Prix CSI5\*. The FEI Nations Cup CSIO4\*, presented by Premier Equestrian will take place on Friday evening, March 5, 2021, during WEF 8.

Jumper riders can look forward to more opportunities to show on the Derby Field this season. The \$401,000 Fidelity Investments® Grand Prix CSI5\* during WEF 9 will be held on Sunday, March 14, on the grass Derby Field at Equestrian Village along with all other FEI jumper classes, while the other three five-star grand prix classes will be held under the lights on Saturday evenings on the main show grounds. "The grass was such a success during the summertime that we have actually put the WEF 9 five-star show out there on the grass, which will be a first," Stone explained. "We also added a grass week for the jumpers during week 2."

Deslauriers is excited to have the opportunity to spend the whole season at WEF while her classes through the University of Pennsylvania are still online. She is aiming to gear up her top horse, Hester, for the fourstar and five-star events taking place this season.

"I'm really looking forward to using the time to establish a bit of a routine centered around riding in a way that I haven't ever really been able to do before, so that's super exciting for me," said the 21-year-old Deslauriers of her schedule for the upcoming season. "I feel really fortunate that we all are in an industry that is still running right now, and we are able to do what we

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# WELCOME TO THE 2021 WINTER EQUESTRIAN FESTIVAL!



Mark Bellissimo

On behalf of Equestrian Sport Productions and Wellington Equestrian Partners, welcome to the 2021 Winter Equestrian Festival (WEF). We know that this year looks very different than the past 41 years of WEF. While it is disappointing that the local community and spectators won't be able to attend, we are proud to be able to still safely host one of the world's top equestrian competitions and provide a way for those in the sport to continue their livelihood. With competitors and their families and teams returning to Wellington, WEF will continue to have a substantial economic impact on the Village of Wellington and Palm Beach County.

Our team has been working hard in order to make the in-person and virtual experience safe and special for WEF, whether you are at Palm Beach International Equestrian Center or will be joining us remotely. As an industry leader, we brought horse shows back in June with comprehensive COVID-19 guidelines, and those competitions paved the way for others to follow around the country.

Knowing that spectators and fans would not be able to attend in person, we worked with the Village of Wellington and the Wellington Chamber of Commerce to offer our live streaming and online production of the shows available for anyone to watch, either at our website at PBIEC.com or through the Village's public television station. Through the Chamber, we have teamed up with

local restaurants that will show our equestrian events to their patrons.

The 2021 season will once again offer lots of competitive highlights. We plan to hold at least six evening events in our "Saturday Night Lights" series, including The Great Charity Challenge (GCC), presented by Fidelity Investments® on February 6 at 7 p.m. In its 12-year history, the GCC has raised and distributed \$14.8 million to 256 charities. It is the hallmark and enduring legacy of the Winter Equestrian Festival.

Based on a community needs assessment with the county, in partnership with local agencies and in direct response to the unique setting

surrounding the pandemic, this year's edition of GCC committed to shifting a majority of its funding priorities towards local non-profits who are directly supporting and assisting the most vulnerable and affected populations in Palm Beach County.

Experts in all fields agree that the lasting effects of COVID-19 will be felt for months and years to come. We are in a unique and privileged position to be able to host the Winter Equestrian Festival safely here in Wellington. We thank our returning donors and sponsors for pledging their support to the event and responding to the GCC's approach of focusing on COVID-19 relief and recovery. Donations of all levels are welcome, and we hope you can find a way to help support our local charities that are assisting those who need it most in our community.

Hunter events will be as competitive as ever this year and some of the highlights include the USHJA/WCHR Peter Wetherill Palm Beach Hunter Spectacular in the International Arena on February 20 and the \$50,000 USHJA International Hunter Derby on April 4 on the grass derby field at Equestrian Village

The best of the best in show jumping will go head-to-head in four weeks of CSI5\* competitions, and selectors from around the globe will be watching results from WEF while they plan their teams for the

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Rider Injuries Costs Covered

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### 2021 VENDORS

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## **PLACES TO EAT**

BJ's Greek Food (Ring 10) Burgess & Clark Coffee (Corner of Barn 4) Don Chepo's (International Arena)

Harry's Lemonade (Vendor Village)

Loopy's Crepes (Vendor Village)

Magdalena's Mexican Food (Ring 10)

Meraki (Farm Stand)

Muddy Paw Coffee & Ice Cream (Ring 9)

Nathalie's Café (Ring 9)

Oasis (Vendor Village)

Pump House Coffee (Farm Stand)

Silva's Mexican Food (Pony Island)

Tess & Co (Farm Stand)

Tiki Hut (International Arena)



# 2020-2021 Holiday Circuit Winners



# **HOLIDAY & HORSES**

**DERBY** 



Geoffrey Hesslink and Small Occasion were victorious in the \$10,000 USHJA National Hunter Derby, presented by Bainbridge. ©Anne Gittins Photography

# **HOLIDAY & HORSES**

**GRAND PRIX** 



Lucy Deslauriers and Hester won the \$214,000 Holiday & Horses Grand Prix CSI4\*, presented by Palm Beach County Sports Commission ©Anne Gittins Photography

# **HOLIDAY & HORSES**

**GRAND PRIX** 



Molly Ashe Cawley and Berdien won the \$25,000 Holiday & Horses National Grand Prix, sponsored by Omega Alpha ©Anne Gittins Photography

# YEAR END AWARDS

**GRAND PRIX** 



Darragh Kenny and Belo Horizonte won the \$25,000 Year End National Grand Prix, presented by #1 Education Place. ©Anne Gittins Photography

# YEAR END AWARDS

**DERBY** 



Geoffrey Hesslink and Luminosity, pictured with Eleanor Hellman, won the \$1,000 USHJA National Hunter Derby, sponsored by Gold Coast Feed ©Anne Gittins Photography

# **HOLIDAY II**

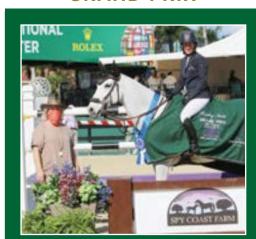
**DERBY** 



Keri Kampsen and Ocean Road, pictured with Kaitlin Porath on behalf of Equiline, won the \$10,000 USHJA National Hunter Derby, Presented by Equiline

©Anne Gittins Photography

# HOLIDAY II GRAND PRIX



Laura Kraut and Confu, pictured with Lisa Lourie of Spy Coast Farm, won the \$214,000 Spy Coast Farm Holiday II Grand Prix CSI4\*. ©Carly Nasznic Photography

# **HOLIDAY II**

**GRAND PRIX** 



Daniel Bluman and Ubiluc, pictured with Buondy Milazzo on behalf of Resilient Fitness, won the \$25,000 Holiday II National Grand Prix, presented by Resilient Fitness. ©Carly Nasznic Photography

# HOLIDAY III

GRAND PRIX



Erynn Ballard and Classic Penny, pictured with Jeff Fosenburg, Feed Sales Consultant for Cargill Feed and Nutrition, topped the \$25,000 ProElite National Grand Prix.

©Anne Gittins Photography

# HOLIDAY III DERBY



Jennifer Bliss and Sugarman won the \$2,500 USHJA National Hunter Derby, presented by Wanderers Club. ©Anne Gittins Photography

# **NEW YEAR'S**

**GRAND PRIX** 



Darragh Kenny and Scarlett Du Sart Z claimed victory in the \$25,000 New Year's Grand Prix, presented by Vita Flex. ©Anne Gittins Photography

# NEW YEAR'S DERBY



Alliy Moyer and Hero won the \$2,500 National Hunter Derby, presented by Pilates Rocks. ©Anne Gittins Photography

# **HOLIDAY FINALE**

**GRAND PRIX** 



Matthew Sampson and Paul Walker, pictured with Kelly Molinari, Managing Director of Equiline America, claimed top honors in the \$50,000 Equiline Holiday Finale Grand Prix.

©Anne Gittins Photography

# HOLIDAY FINALE DERBY



pictured with Craig. T Roberts, DVM, Veterinary Director of Noltrex®Vet, won the \$10,000 USHJA National Hunter Derby, Sponsored by Noltrex®Vet. ©Anne Gittins Photography



# PRESS CONFERENCE Continued from Page 1

love and compete, so that's the basis for what the next few months look like because so much is unknown right now for everyone."

For the 12th year in a row, WEF 4 will showcase the Great Charity Challenge, presented by Fidelity Investments®. In the past 11 years, this event has distributed \$14.8 million to 256 Palm Beach County non-profit organizations.

"We are continuing to host the Great Charity Challenge even though we won't be able to have crowds. It's just such a major fundraiser for the community," Stone said of the relay-style event where riders are put in teams and dress in costume. "There's a huge problem nationwide on food shortages so we are going to concentrate on that area and helping people who are suffering because of COVID. We thought this would not be the year to cancel; this is the year we should double down and raise even more money for people who are less

Hunter riders also have several important classes to count on during WEF, including five USHJA International Hunter Derbies, two USHJA National Hunter Derbies, a USHJA Pony Hunter Derby, 12 weeks of USHJA incentive programs for the 3'-3'9" Green Hunters, and 13 weeks of Hunter Classics for the Small, Medium, and Large pony divisions. The sixth week will continue to be a WCHR (World Championship Hunter Rider) qualifying week and highlight the \$50,000 USHJA/ WCHR Peter Wetherill Palm Beach Hunter Spectacular. New this year is a second week of WCHR qualifying during WEF 12.

Well-known hunter rider Schatt is happy to be back competing at PBIEC and has already noticed some of the improvements done to hunter rings for the 2021 WFF season.

"One thing is we got new footing in the Grand and the Rost hunter rings and that seems to be amazing," Schatt commented. "They have added a few derbies this year which is great. It's just so nice to be in Florida, the weather [and] the facility is so nice, and you can get into a consistent routine with all of your horses. We have young horses, adult hunters, and derby horses, so there's a path for everybody here."

AGDF is looking forward to opening competition for both national and international dressage riders. The season will showcase two "Friday Night Stars" freestyle events during AGDF 7 and 10, for the Grand Prix Freestyle CDI5\* and Stillpoint Farm FEI Nations Cup Grand Prix Freestyle and Intermediaire-1

Freestyle CDIO3\*; the 2021 Lövsta Future Challenge/Young Horse Grand Prix Series; the Florida International Youth Dressage Championships in AGDF 8; as well as three World Cup Qualifiers. Five-star competition will take place AGDF 7, starting February 24. AGDF 1 will highlight the 2020 Lövsta Future Challenge Finals, which was canceled last March.

Live streaming of major events from AGDF will also be available free of charge

"The finals of the 2020 Summit Farm Future Challenge/Young Horse Prix St. Georges Series and the Lövsta Future Challenge/Young Horse Grand Prix Series will take place in AGDF 1. Then we start with the 2021 season in AGDF 3, and the final will be in AGDF 12. We have 11 of the 16 qualified in the Prix St. Georges and eight of the 10 qualified in the Grand Prix [returning this year for the Finals], so it looks quite promising," said Baur.

Olympic dressage rider Peters is ready to return to AGDF after a summer of light competition. Peters plans to bring three horses: Suppenkasper, Boreas FRF, and a client's horse

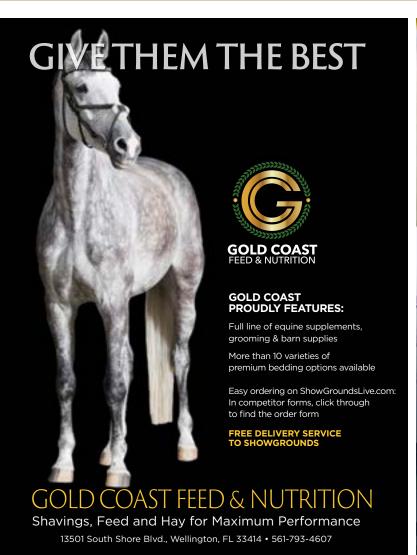
"Our first CDI will probably be early February, the five-star, maybe another one the middle of February, and then the last one, the CDIO, in early March," Steffen commented of his plan for the season. "The goal is to requalify and hopefully get a spot on the team for the Olympics that hopefully will happen this year."

After a full 2020 winter circuit with Suppenkasper, Peters rested his top horse. "It was, for me, really good because it was the first time in 26 years that we didn't go to Europe, and I enjoyed the heck out of the summer," said Peters.

After Suppenkasper's training resumed in October, Peters competed in California in November and hopes to continue that level into the 2021 winter

The team at Equestrian Sport Productions looks forward to welcoming the best in equestrian sport to both the 2021 Winter Equestrian Festival and 2021 Adequan® Global Dressage Festival. For more information and a full schedule of events, please visit www.PBIEC.com and www.GlobalDressageFestival.com.

Sabrina Brashares





# 1 NIGHT - 1 COMMUNITY \$1+ MILLION TO NON-PROFITS

Through the support of the equestrian industry and the local community, the Great Charity Challenge presented by Fidelity Investments® has acted as a catalyst for charitable giving over the last 11 years. Impact to date: \$14.9 million distributed to 256 Palm Beach County non-profit organizations.



Saturday, February 6, 2021

### ~ COVID-19 RELIEF & RECOVERY EDITION ~

Based on a community needs assessment with the county, in partnership with local agencies and in direct response to the unique setting surrounding COVID-19, the event's 12th edition is committed to shifting a majority of its funding priorities towards local non-profits who are directly supporting and assisting the most vulnerable and affected populations in Palm Beach County.

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To view a list of benefiting non-profit organizations and for additional information, please visit







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# **WELCOME LETTER Continued from Page 1**

postponed 2021 Tokyo Olympic Games. The Nations Cup returns during the eighth week of WEF with nations vying for the gold medal position on the

While the top of the sport on our broadcasts and schedule are very important, we also want to acknowledge all of the exhibitors who compete at every level that join us in Wellington each year. Every ring from WEF will be live streamed so that family and friends can watch you compete, and we thank you for joining us after such a challenging 2020 season.

The Winter Equestrian Festival wouldn't be possible without the support and dedication of our sponsors, who help us keep WEF as one of the foremost equestrian competitions in the world. We hope that all of the athletes, sponsors, and partners have a successful, safe, and wonderful show season this year at the Palm Beach International Equestrian Center.

# Sincerely.

**FOR** 

Mark Bellissimo and the Wellington Equestrian Partners: Georgina Bloomberg, David Burton, Jr. and Julie Burton, Marsha Dammerman, Howard Dvorkin and Gwen Dvorkin, S. Craig Lindner and Frances Lindner, Lisa Lourie, Caroline Moran, Justin Sadrian and Lee Kellogg Sadrian, Ludwig Sollak and Carol Sollak, and Kimberly van Kampen.



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# 2020 ESP Holiday Circuit Photo Gallery

©ESP/Carly Nasznic















# **Q&A with Grace Debney**



Grace Debney and In The Know at the 2020 Capital Challenge Horse Show. © Jump Media

# Q: How did you start riding?

**A:** I began riding when I was two because my mom rode dressage. I was obsessed with horses right from the start and always followed her to the barn even though she was scared I would get hurt at such a young age!

### Q: What is your favorite division?

**A:** My favorite division is definitely the jumpers! I love the feeling of the jumper ring, and I think it's the most fun and low pressure of the three divisions.

# Q: Who is the biggest influence on your riding career?

A: The biggest influences on my riding career have definitely been Kate Conover and Samantha Schaefer. I have been training with them since I was doing the small ponies and ever since then they have worked tirelessly to get me to where I am today. I love working with both of them because I feel like they both bring a different style of teaching to the show ring that all boils down to the same strategies. I am so grateful for everything they have done for me and my horses these past couple years!

## Q: What is your favorite part about being at WEF?

**A:** My favorite aspect of competing at WEF is how nice the venue is here. There is always something to do or watch which is nice to have at a horse show. I love being able to compete at such a beautiful venue while we are in Florida for the winter!

### Q: What is your goal for the winter circuit?

**A:** My goals for this WEF season are to continue being consistent in the National Grand Prix [classes] and to start the U25 Grand Prix [Series] and [two-star shows].

### Q: What is something people don't know about you?

**A:** Something people don't know about me is that my mom and I run a 30-stall barn at my home in Massachusetts, where I also take lessons with my home trainer Dee Dee Hopper when I'm not showing. I am so grateful to Dee Dee who works so hard every week to challenge me into becoming the best rider I can possibly be!

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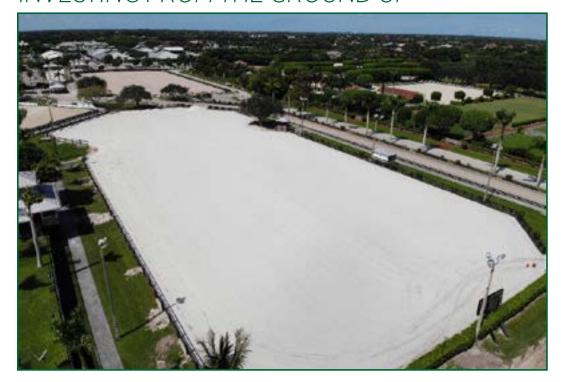
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Equestrian Sport Productions (ESP) made it clear that their commitment to provide the best footing in the world would continue in 2021, with a complete re-engineering and construction of three very important arenas at Palm Beach International Equestrian Center (PBIEC).

The Grand Hunter Arena, the Rost Arena, and the DeNemethy Ring were all 100% re-engineered and constructed for the 2021 Winter Equestrian Festival. These three arenas are the next step in ESP's strategic decision to use data engineering to produce arenas, which are safer and kinder to the horse while providing the very top level of international performance. The engineering and construction of the new International Arena for the 2020 circuit was the first step on that strategic journey.

"ESP very successfully demonstrated last year that it is committed to being a leader in the industry by using engineering and science to move the bar forward for all of our riding surfaces," said ESP CEO Mark Bellissimo. "Our strategic vision is to provide the very best competition environment for all horses and their riders at PBIEC."

PBIEC is one of the premier equestrian venues in the world, hosting 36 weeks of competition throughout the year, including the internationally acclaimed 12-week Winter Equestrian Festival (WEF). WEF is the longest-running and largest horse show in the world and boasts 12 weeks of FEI Show Jumping competition and 13 weeks of Premier "AA" hunter competition with the addition of the new Premiere week at the start of WEF. During the 2019 season alone, more than 51 countries and each of the 50 states were represented throughout the duration of the circuit.

PBIEC exhibitors rode on the new surfaces for the first time on October 29 at the ESP Fall Series, well ahead of the 2021 WEF season.

At the 2020 WEF, ESP demonstrated to the world that data engineering could be used to reimagine an Ultra-Competition riding surface which meets the top international levels of performance yet remains kind to the horse. This season that very same strategic engineering process is being applied to the Grand Hunter Arena, the Rost Arena, and the DeNemethy Ring.

Michael Stone, President of ESP, remarked, "As

we demonstrated last year, ESP set in motion a multi-year project to use science and analytics to assure the footing in all its arenas is the very best. To achieve that vision, we are committed to using the proven data engineering process of our strategic partners, JTWG All Equestrian Surfaces and iEquiTek, LLC."

Last year a series of performance specifications, called WEF Hi-Pro™, were developed in the process of engineering the new Ultra-Competition level International arena. This season JTWG and iEquiTek have designed and engineered surfaces optimized uniquely for the hunter and jumper rounds in the Grand Hunter Arena, the Rost Arena, and the DeNemethy Ring. Part of that process involved designing the footing and complete arena system so that its performance for jumpers would mirror that created last season in the new International Arena. And, another part of the process involved optimizing surfaces specifically for the hunters.

Travis Gould, President of JTWG, said, "The remarkable thing about the strategic plan which ESP set forth last year is how totally committed they are to building the very best arenas in the world. Last year we built the very best Ultra-Competition arena in the world. This meant taking no short cuts and using data and modeling to guide the process. It's clear that our views on this match perfectly with ESP. We are very excited to continue as their strategic partner to implement this vision by bringing WEF Hi-Pro™ performance to these three arenas."

Bill Hawe, Manager of iEquiTek said, "ESP has shown they are conceptually ahead in conceiving the best riding surface designs. They really understand how to use our data analytics to engineer outcomes which are kind to the horse while achieving the very best performance. This year we have been able to help them with completely new designs for the hunters and for the jumpers outside of the International. As it was last year, the modeled and measured data allows them to know the result before the arena is constructed."

A breakthrough last year in the engineering process to construct the new Ultra-Competition International arena was the definition of WEF Hi-Pro™ performance standards. These performance

levels for riding surfaces have now allowed ESP to align the performance of other arenas, such as the DeNemethy Ring, the Rost Arena, and the Grand Hunter Arena with the proven results from last season.

Rather than simply copying an arena design, ESP can now engineer the performance outcome ahead of time. ESP can design and construct these arenas using a differing set of components such as mats, fiber, sands, etc. while still knowing and controlling the performance outcome ahead of time. In this way ESP maintains their performance standards. The DeNemethy Ring is being constructed with a drainage base layer using ProEquus OT-40 concussion mats. In the iEquiTek lab, JTWG and iEquiTek designed new custom footing mixes for all the arenas. Premier Equestrian ProTex geotechnical amendment was used in the footing mixes. JTWG completely removed the materials from the old arenas, and all-new arenas were constructed in the same footprints.

JTWG All Equestrian Surfaces is a strategic partner of ESP. JTWG is one of the world's leading designers and constructors of equestrian riding surfaces. Their construction of the new PBIEC International arena and the new Tryon Stadium Arena have demonstrated their leadership in Ultra-Competition arena construction.

iEquiTek, LLC is a strategic partner of ESP. iEquiTek is a high technology company providing design and measurement services using patent-pending technologies, to the equestrian sport industry, including competition venues, training facilities, high performance riders, arena/farm owners, and footing surface and component manufacturers. The iEquiTek database enables rapid comparisons to many arenas, allowing fast design iteration and optimization for performance and maintenance.

ProEquus is a world-renowned European company providing components for equestrian riding surface construction, such as the OT-40 concussion mats. Their products have been widely used in top competition and training arenas around the world.

Premier Equestrian, Inc. is a leading provider of arena footing textile products, arena base mats, and arena grooming equipment. Established in 2000, Premier has helped thousands of riders improve their arena surfaces. Premier develops and manufactures their own proprietary footing products, dressage arenas and innovative arena groomer.

