

## The Internationals

# Behind the Scenes with Maryland Officials

By Katherine O. Rizzo

Often while spectating at large international competitions such as the Washington International Horse Show (October 24-30 at Prince George's Equestrian Center, Upper Marlboro) and the Maryland 5 Star at Fair Hill (October 13-16 at Fair Hill Special Events Zone, Fair Hill), one can be so impressed with watching the elite horses and riders that it is easy to forget there is a crew of equally elite officials working behind the scenes to make sure the competition runs smoothly. From judges to course designers to stewards, Maryland has produced a slew of international level officials that can be seen at this year's competitions.

### Linda Andrisani, Horse Show Judge

Linda Andrisani has been judging horse shows for 40 years and has USEF "R" judging licenses in hunters, hunter breeding and hunter equitation. This year, she will be judging the hunter classes at the Washington International Horse Show. "I showed the first time [at WIHS] at The National Guard Armory in Washington, D.C. in 1965 and was an exhibitor for many years after that until the late 80s when I was asked to judge the horse show," she said.

Andrisani, who moved from Maryland to Florida in 2014, is excited to be coming back to Maryland to judge this year's show. "It is an honor to judge at WIHS," she said. "I judged the first year that the horse show moved to downtown Washington, D.C., and now I will be judging as it moves back to a Maryland location."

At WIHS, there will be two judges for all the hunter classes and Andrisani explained it can be a long process to become licensed by USEF to judge at this caliber of competition. "At the time when I received my license, you needed 10 professionals to sign a letter saying you were qualified to be a judge," she said. "Then you judged five horse shows alongside a USEF 'R' judge. They either passed or failed you."

Today, Andrisani stated that there are two processes to becoming a USEF "R" judge of hunters. "A mentor program is for professionals who have been actively training or riding within the last five years," she said. "It is a quick stepping stone to judging and takes two to four years depending on the time an individual has to devote to getting their license while running their training and riding business." The other program is the "open" program, which Andrisani explained, "is open to people over the age of 25 and must have some background history in the horse industry." The open program can

take anywhere from three to six years to complete. "Both processes are quite expensive and involve education at horse shows, clinics, traveling out of one's area, and apprenticeships," she added.

Now, 40 years later, Andrisani is ready to return to Maryland stating, "WIHS is a very special horse show and I will be enjoying all parts of it!"

### Gretchen Butts, FEI Technical Delegate & FEI Judge

Gretchen Butts has been an FEI Level 3 Technical Delegate (TD) for over 30 years and an FEI Level 3 Judge for over 20 years. She has officiated all over the world including the Atlanta and Beijing Olympic Games. Based in Laytonsville, Butts is a member of the Ground Jury for the CCI5\*-L division at the Maryland 5 Star at Fair Hill this year. She was a member of the Ground Jury for the CCI3\*-L at the same location last year and also happens to be the only

American to have been a competitor, a TD and a judge at the Land Rover Kentucky Three-Day Event CCI5\*.

In order to achieve FEI status as an official Butts said, "you need to have a solid experience as a USEF National official with a strong background in many aspects of the sport... i.e., official, rider, organizer, volunteer and so on."

Over the years, Butts has served in practically every capacity in a three-day event you can think of. She is also no stranger to the Fair Hill venue as she stated, "I grew up at Fair Hill. From riding Western at the Cecil County Fair to Pony Club stuff as a kid." She was also an early board member of the Fair Hill International and was volunteer chair for the cross-country phase of the annual fall CCIs for many years. In addition,

Butts competed up through four-star (then three-star) on the Fair Hill grounds many times.

Butts pointed out that being an FEI judge is not a one-person job. "It is a collaborative effort with the course designer, medical staff, veterinarians, stewards, TDs, organizing staff and more," she explained, adding, "as a team we assess everything about the competition and must be comfortable with the risk management and safety for the horse and riders." This assessment begins with a prearrival inspection a day or two before the competitors see the course. It is the responsibility of the ground jury to

inspect the cross-country course with the TD and Course Designer (CD). "This is when, if we are uncertain about something on course, we discuss together if a modification needs to be made," she said. "We also make sure the course is fair, safe and up to the standards of the level of competition."

Once competitors arrive, the judges (there is a team of three judges for the five-star level) join with the FEI Veterinarian Delegate to inspect the horses at the first "jog." Then there are typically two days of dressage before cross-country

on Saturday. "A lot of people think we just walk the course once but we keep checking on it throughout the week to make sure the footing is acceptable, roping is all in place, decorations to fences are appropriate, etc.," Butts explained.

While the cross-country phase is underway, the judges are at the control area watching the action on televisions along with the TD and CD, but all are flexible and able to be mobile depending on whatever circumstances may develop. "It's all about safety. It's all about fairness and managing risk as best we can," she said, adding, "the ground jury is under constant pressure to make decisions quickly."

Once cross-country concludes, the judges will inspect the show jump course before the final phase of competition and approve it for competition. They then oversee the final horse inspection before judging the show jumping phase. "The sense of teamwork prevails. Each official has their own responsibilities throughout the competition," Butts noted.

### Tom Coulter, Medical Services

Tom Coulter is Maryland-bred and Maryland-raised having spent his entire life in Maryland and active in the horse industry. As a kid he started mucking stalls in exchange for lessons and as a teen, worked at local racetracks. "When I was 16, I moved to Cecil County and took a job at Windfields Farm," he said. There he worked with yearlings preparing them for sales. "We sold around \$95 million in yearlings over the years with all those Northern Dancer foals," Coulter added, joking that his photo ended up on more magazines than the U.S. President at times.

When Windfields shut down, Coulter continued in the horse industry, working a variety of jobs including vet tech and working sales for Fastig-Tipton. At one point he volunteered at the local fire house, which ultimately led to his current career as a licensed paramedic.

In the role of Medical Services director,

Coulter coordinates the team that will care for human life at the event. This includes both

Although he is still a big horse enthusiast, Coulter, who will arrive on the grounds on Saturday or Sunday ahead of time, jokes that he hopes to meet all the riders in a social setting, not professionally!



MD 5 Star Medical Services coordinator Tom Coulter

of people! "On cross-country day we will have six advanced life support teams on gators, three ambulances for the riders and more ambulances for spectators," Coulter explained. There will also be several first aid stations throughout the grounds. "On dressage and show jumping days we won't need as many ambulances since everything is centrally located at the arenas," he added.

Coulter is very familiar with the Fair Hill property as he was a pony club dad when the late Bodgie Read took him under her wing. "She sort of put two and two together... paramedic... horse person... and hooked me up with the Fair Hill International folks to start working their shows," he said. That was in 1999. Since then, Coulter has worked all the competitions at Fair Hill from starter horse trials to the Foxcatcher Endurance Ride to the Maryland 5 Star and everything in between. He has also worked events in nearby states such as the Essex Horse Trials in New Jersey.

He also pointed out that although one does not need horse experience to be part of his medical team, it really does help, and he makes sure to instruct his team on basic horse safety too.

### Jen Glass, Director of Awards

We all know that riding is not all about the ribbons, however, being able to hang a ribbon from the prestigious Washington International Horse Show in your home or barn is a big deal! At a big week-long show like WIHS, there are a lot of ribbons and awards that need to be purchased ahead of time as well as coordinating who gets what during the show and Jen Glass is the person behind the scenes making it all happen.

"My first job at WIHS was managing the rider lounge," Glass stated. "I've been coordinating the awards for 22 years and in the last two years, I also do all the ordering of the coolers, ribbons and trophy engraving." Glass has

always loved horses and rode as a young girl but never competitively. Although Glass now lives in Bokeelia, FL, she grew up in Catonsville and then at her family's farm in Sykesville where she kept her first horse, Lady.

"My dad took me to WIHS and I remember looking up at the production area and seeing all the men in tuxedos," she said, adding, "Back then, staff, including producers, were dressed formally." She ultimately married WIHS production coordinator Billy Glass, who also worked in show management for other competitions.

Before WIHS, Jen Glass worked as a fundraiser for student scholarships at Howard Community College in Columbia. As part of her role there, she helped put on the Howard Community College Columbia Classic Grand Prix. "That is where I met Billy, who was managing the show with Oliver Kennedy," she said. "After we got married, we traveled all over the country working [horse shows] and ended our seasons at the Capital Challenge Horse Show and WIHS, which was the highlight of each year."

At WIHS, for which riders must qualify by earning points throughout the year, there are approximately 92 trophies, many made of silver and bronze. "We have a perpetual trophy for almost every class," Glass explained. "We have one really special trophy made of gold for the winner of the Grand Prix that is called 'The President

continued...



WIHS judge Linda Andrisani



MD 5 Star CCI5\* Judge Gretchen Butts

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of the United States Perpetual Cup, which was donated by First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy.”

Although Glass has worked horse shows all over the country, WIHS still holds a special place in her heart. “WIHS is one of the most exciting horse shows that I have ever been involved with in my career,” she said. “You see the best horses and riders from all over the country compete against each other at the same venue.” In addition, Glass said, “I think walking in the ring with a ribbon to present to a winner... it’s exhilarating and the riders are so appreciative.”

Glass is also the Executive Director of the Capital Challenge Horse Show, which has been running at the Prince George’s Equestrian Center for 29 years.

### Kenny Krome, FEI & USEF Course Designer

Kenny Krome of K2 Show Stables in Westminster knew early on in his career as a top hunter and jumper rider that designing courses was something that interested him. “It really was as a rider that I started noticing that not all courses were at the same standards and it made me start paying attention to how courses were made,” Krome said.

He then was able to apprentice for the great international course designer Richard Jefferies. “He really took me under his wing and was so generous with his time. He taught me that you really need to use your horsemanship and horse knowledge to build your courses,” Krome said, adding, “You don’t have to be a rider to be a course designer but it really does help!”

Krome, who continues to ride, teach, train and judge, is now an FEI 3\* and USEF “R” level course designer. “The FEI three-star level is the highest level of course designers you can be until the Olympic and World Finals level,” he explained. Krome has designed courses for hunters, jumpers and eventing all over the U.S. as well as in Canada and South America. He recently returned from Aachen, Germany, where he was furthering his education. “It really is important to go to these big shows and work with course designers to bounce ideas off each other,” Krome added.

This year Krome is the FEI show jump course designer for the five-star and three-star levels at the Maryland 5 Star at Fair Hill. This is his second year as their show jump course designer. “Typically, venues hire designers for two years in a row

and then they will rotate in another designer to bring in a different point of view and keep things fresh,” he stated. Krome has previously been a course designer (and judge!) at the Washington International Horse Show which means he has the unique privilege of designing international level hunter, jumper and eventing courses!



WIHS Director of Awards Jen Glass

“For the hunter ring, we really want to make the courses as perfect as possible for the horses so then the riders can just show off their horses,” Krome explained. “For the jumper ring we are testing the horses’ and riders’ skill level in a subtle way. The eventers are real jumper style courses but we take into account that the horses may be a bit tired and not as rideable after running cross-country the day before.” No matter what type of course he is designing, Krome says safety comes first. “Safety is the number one thing we need to think about no matter what level, from the beginners through elite riders. We need to make the courses successful for the horses at any level.”

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### Valerie Pride, FEI Judge

Valerie Pride is no stranger to the sport of eventing, having competed through the CCI5\* level with her current equine partner Favian. But did you know that Pride is also a licensed FEI official through the five-star level as well?

Pride, who is based out of Harwood, first became an FEI judge about seven years ago and served several years as a USEF National Official before moving up to the FEI level. Officially, her license is called a Level 3 Eventing Judge and this year, she is part of the CCI3\*-L Ground Jury at the Maryland 5 Star at Fair Hill. “I count my lucky stars that I got to judge the three-star at its older location [the Fair Hill International] and now I’ve been asked to judge the three-star on the new side!” Pride said. “[The Maryland 5 Star] is such a destination event for riders from both coasts and my five-star horse had a great go around the new track last year.”



MD 5 Star show jump course designer Kenny Krome

Pride spent much of the spring and summer competing in England and had already made plans to end her season with the Blenheim Palace CCI4\*-L and knew she would not be riding at the Maryland

5 Star this year. “Saying yes to the invite [to be a judge] was a no brainer,” she said. “It is so inspiring to be part of an event like the Maryland 5 Star.”

As an Eventing Judge, Pride’s role is not only to judge the dressage portion of the event, but also to be part of the Ground Jury that evaluates horses for soundness at both the preliminary and final horse inspections. In addition, Pride will be part of the team that inspects both the cross-country and show jumping courses to be sure they meet all standards. On cross-country day, Pride explains, “we have to watch videos from all around the course all day long to help judge any and all rule infractions from disobedience to dangerous riding and everything in between.”

### Eileen Pritchard-Bryan, FEI Steward

While a five-star event ground jury is made up of three members, and a three-star ground jury has two, the team of stewards at an event like the Maryland 5 Star at Fair Hill includes nine! One of these FEI stewards this year (and in 2021) is Eileen Pritchard-Bryan of Jarrettsville. Pritchard-Bryan has been an FEI steward since 2010 and became a Level 3 steward (highest level) in 2019. “Being a steward is a way for me to give back to the sport I am so passionate about,” she said.



MD 5 Star CCI3\* judge Valerie Pride

Pritchard-Bryan was a competitor herself, riding up through the Advanced level of the sport. She has also bred event horses and is a USEF licensed TD and Eventing Judge. “It was Sally O’Connor who really hooked me into becoming a steward,” she said with a chuckle. But what exactly is a steward?

“We are responsible for three main things: the welfare of the horse, fair play, and helping the riders understand the rules,” Pritchard-Bryan explained.

In order to achieve these, the team of stewards are literally everywhere at the event! “We are the first ones there and the last ones to leave,” she said. “they are long but gratifying days.” Pritchard-Bryan explained that the stewards arrive when the competitors do, days before the actual competition, and have eyes on them anytime the horses are being ridden or are in training. “We make sure the riders are staying within the rules in terms of what equipment they use and such,” she added.

Like many of the other officials, to become a steward at the top levels of the sport, Pritchard-Bryan said, “one must have a good working knowledge of eventing and also a good horsemanship background.” Potential stewards attend FEI seminars that are offered around the

*continued...*