

Weather or Not

The British & Irish Invasion Brings Fall Eventing to Kennewick, WA

Carol Curry

When Tulipsprings Eventing opened 7 years ago, the plan was to run a few clinics and hope that a few people would come over the mountains to school on the professional course. Exceeding all expectations, and thanks to enthusiastic Area VII eventers, Tulipsprings has found a unique niche in the NW. This fantastic facility enables early spring schooling on good dry footing. Kennewick has now become the *Spring Training Headquarters* for hundreds of Area VII riders.

But what about Fall? It can be difficult to run Area VII activities after September. People are broke and/or horses are broken, and if all is well they are in California! But in Fall 2014 we had great success, with two full clinics in October; both provided training by British and Irish Olympians!

Eric Smiley

First up was Eric Smiley, the smiling Irishman who now returns to Tulipsprings twice a year to a growing fan club of repeat attendees. Eric had the luck of the Irish with him, enjoying four excellent days of sunny, calm, 80 degree weather. He delivered what his fans expected; enthusiastic, correct, and fun education covering dressage, stadium, and cross country. Eric always visits for 3-4 days, first providing a two day clinic and then the opportunity for attendees to add extra lessons in any of the three disciplines, either as private lesson or group training.

Eric's clinics fill with more than 75% of repeat customers, proving his ongoing ability to deliver value to the riders. One new rider to Area VII attended because she used to ride regularly with Eric on the East Coast. She took full advantage of the weekend with 2 rides every day! Area VII was a different experience for her compared to her former home, and she enjoyed Eric's consistent teaching and getting to know more of the Area VII riders, too.

Leslie Law

Three weeks later, Leslie Law, a British Gold Medalist, came to Tulipsprings. Leslie also has a very strong following in Area VII. Unfortunately Leslie had not been back to Tulipsprings in about 4 years. But we finally scheduled a date that worked and had a full clinic, with a successful

new format. This new approach included a *Derby Day* on Saturday, focusing on stadium, plus cross country for 2 hour sessions in very small groups (3-4 riders per group). Riders also had time for a good flat lesson, followed by grids to sharpen up the horses, then some stadium course work to bring all that work together. And finally, in the last hour, there was time to tackle banks, ditches, and water. On Sunday larger groups went back out and completed 2 more hours of cross country. Even though the groups were larger on Sunday, Leslie was able to get everyone through what they wanted to work on. The course at Tulipsprings is arranged with similar jumps at different levels clustered together, which greatly helped everyone to achieve their goals. The riders were invited at the beginning of their session to speak up about what they wanted to jump and were given additional time at the end to ask again. Each group did have extra requests that were answered and everyone went away smiling.

But what a difference three weeks made in the weather! The *Derby format* turned out to be fortuitous. On Saturday, the small groups were dodging a bit of drizzle, broken by tantalizing sunshine that never quite stuck around. Thank goodness the wind was calm even though, at the same time, it was blowing at record forces in Seattle and Portland. The groups all got through fine with no major rainfall and all were done before sunset. While we were all out for a fun dinner, the storm found its way to Kennewick and blew hard all night. On Sunday, we finished up on the cross country in the wind, which worked out fine because those jumps don't blow over. So we had every possible weather condition, but managed to dodge the worst of it and came out feeling great.

The best thing about the new Derby format was that everyone was done by midday, so everyone could head back to Seattle, Portland, Montana, etc., in good daylight hours.

2015 Calendar

Fall 2014 was great fun at Tulipsprings and we are already focused on the Spring 2015 Calendar. I hope to see enthusiastic riders back in droves to start their 2015 training in Kennewick!

