



Equestrian Connect

by Michele Agopian

Equestrian Connect is the new entry system that has set the equestrians of the West Coast all a twitter.

Surprisingly it is the first completely technologically developed entry system ever to be made in the horse world. It was designed and developed by Barbara Phillips (Woodside, CA) and Simone Coxe (Palo Alto, CA). Both of these women have been riding all their lives, have families, and live in the bay area of Northern California. Between them they manage several other businesses and consider horseback riding to be a hobby of theirs as well as a personal passion.

These highly successful women have always desired to contribute to an industry they love and appreciate and, quite by accident, they saw a problem and realized there was a need in the industry. When they started showing more horses at several shows they found that writing in entry forms each time, and sending them EACH TIME, became a painstaking process. While trainers usually have to spend hours, or even days (usually their days off), writing entry forms, due to their amount of clientele it is a tedious but necessary endeavor.

The ladies first thought of the project in March of 2009 and began the work to have a fully developed prod-

uct by August. Knowing they wanted this program to be available and based online, they started testing it with several major trainers. The trainers they chose represented a wide cross section of the industry, Gry McFarland of Windfall Farm, Butch and Lou Thomas of Willow Tree, Helen McNaught of Out Wood Farms, and Rachel York of Sand Haven.

To help promote this program they specifically launched it before Hits 2010 Desert Series Thermal, since it is a very highly rated and quality show with large numbers to test the process. With this special program you don't have to re-enter your information in each time, ONLY once, and the web-based program is available at anytime, anywhere. One of the trainers even did their entries on their Smartphone.

Simone explained that the options they found, while researching this product and making sure it wasn't already available, were there but you had to enter your information every time, print out, and make each form individually. Their vision was to be able to do multiple horses going to multiple horse shows all at once.

They also included a "Facebook like" feature where you can view other riders, trainers, and owners on the website. So if your going to ride

multiple horses at a show, and your trainer was as well, you wouldn't have to re-enter that information in multiple times, just once!

Currently this is a free service program, and it is all done online, but they eventually intend to charge for this system. They funded the development from their own means; it is purely for the sport, but it is a business.

A lot of people have asked why this hasn't been done sooner? Barbara and Simone simply replied with, "Well it's easier to solve problems nowadays with technology being so much more advanced than in past years."

In the long run they hope that show managers will start accepting entry forms online and this website could cut out FedEx-ing last minute entries if the trainer and owners have changes, late additions or just simply don't have the time to do them. It will also assist in making the show offices more efficient by getting the information to them quicker.

Equestrian Connect will surely revolutionize the horse industry by making information more accessible and well organized. The value that this service provides for riders, owners, and trainers is a private entry system that's quick, easy, and painless....and show managers especially like that!!! ♦