

# 45th Washington International Horse Show “Where the World Comes To Ride”



The largest crowds in history at a hunter/jumper show in the United States packed the MCI Center in Washington, DC for the Friday and Saturday evening performances of the Washington International Horse Show, October 24 and 25.

Thrilling exhibitions and competitions including the Puissance and President's Cup Grand Prix, terrier races, bull riding, barrel racing, and trick riding (including jumping over fire) kept the spectators cheering and the atmosphere in the MCI Center electric.

Ticket sales were up 33% over last year, and the show, a charitable non-profit organization, gave \$150,000 to the Christopher Reeve Paralysis Foundation and will donate the remainder of its proceeds to other worthy local and national charities.

Christopher Reeve received the donation check from Show President Dr. Sheila Johnson on Saturday evening. Before he could begin to speak, he was given a 6-minute standing ovation. "This is one happening horse show," Reeve told the thousands of spectators. "Rock on!" "Johnson has turned the show into an A-list celebration of all people and things equine," wrote the Washington Post. Johnson hosted an invitation-only party in the café overlooking the arena attended by key sponsors, participants, and VIPs including Bruce Springsteen and his wife Patti Scialfa, who were there to cheer on their daughter who qualified for the prestigious WIHS Equitation Finals. Johnson also arranged for singers Patti Austin and Peabo Bryson to perform during course builds.

"This show has just been unbelievable. I've never seen so many spectators at a horse show. It's great to ride out there and have so many people cheering," commented Aaron Vale, who won the \$100,000 President's Cup for the second time in 3 years. "There's nothing else like this in the United States," said McLain Ward, who won the Leading Jumper Rider award. Course designer Richard Jeffery stated, "There was a fabulous audience here this week. The audience here was the biggest I have ever seen at a horse show, and the audience seems to be getting more educated about the different equestrian competitions each year."

Extensive media coverage of the show, including all the NBC's Today Show, all local television networks and the Washington Post, Washington Times, and many top radio stations helped achieve records crowds. The Friday and Saturday evening performances were designed for spectators, complete with pyrotechnics, acrobats from France who jumped the courses on foot, and Kiss Cam and Fan Cam.

Johnson commented on next year's plans which are already underway, "My only problem now is figuring out what can we do next year to top this!" ■



## South Africa bans British rider!!

By: Carol Phillips

The BSJA is investigating allegations of equine abuse surrounding British showjumper David McPherson, who has been banned from competing in South Africa

British show jumper **David McPherson** has been banned from taking part in any future jumping competitions in South Africa following allegations of equine abuse, which are currently being investigated by the BSJA. In a circular sent to South African National Equestrian Federation members, the federation says it received "numerous complaints, video tapes and photographs" following the South African Derby in Johannesburg last month, relating to the abuse of horses and involving a number of its own riders as well as David.

The federation has said it "will leave no stone unturned in order to deal with the guilty parties in the strongest terms" and has passed the complaints and supporting evidence relating to David to the BEF, which in turn has passed it on to the BSJA. The BSJA would not confirm the details of the allegations but said that it is undertaking its own investigating at present and will pass the matter on to the stewards if necessary.

BSJA spokeswoman Jackie Knightly says: "Incidents like this are damaging for all concerned - for the sport, the rider and ultimately and most importantly, the horse. The BSJA does not condone anything that has a negative impact on horses' welfare and will do our utmost to prevent it from happening." The BSJA is aware that, historically, there have been horse welfare issues relating to performance enhancement and believes it is mainly a commercial problem.

"The more money that is available, the more competitive people become and, in some unacceptable cases, it is the horses that suffer. This is not just applicable to show jumping, it is relevant to every sport," explains Jackie. The association has been extremely active in promoting equine welfare within show jumping, with initiatives introduced to stamp out unsuitable behaviour including the stipendiary stewards scheme.

"The stipendiary stewards are in the collecting rings at shows to ensure every horse competing is comfortable and able to enjoy the sport. They can advise members on issues such as biting and ill-fitting tack, and also have the power to check the inside of boots and bandages, to ensure the horse is comfortable. "If, for example, any foreign objects were found inside a boot or bandage it would be viewed extremely seriously by the stewards." David McPherson has strongly denied the allegations ■