

## MAUI JIM EVENTING DERBY SERIES

written by Katie Lindsay

When it became evident late last year that the Maui Jim Horse Trials were destined to become a thing of the past, Mike Dalton, the CEO of Maui Jim, Inc., asked what we could do to keep the tradition of the event going given its new legally imposed constraints. He generously agreed to continue his company's support of a competition designed to include both experienced riders and riders new to the sport. Thus the Eventing Derby Series was created that would take place entirely on the landscaped grounds of Lamplight Equestrian Center in July and in August.

Never being one to overtrain for anything, I dove head first into running the Derbies even though I had never seen one. In late March, a friend in Tucson had invited me out to see the Derby that was scheduled to run at Grass Ridge. I jumped at the chance to escape from the Chicago winter for a weekend never dreaming that it would snow in Tucson and the Derby would be cancelled. Best laid plans and all that!

My theory of organizing is to hire the very best possible professionals I can afford so I hired Jon Wells to do the courses with some building additions by an up and coming local builder, Joel Nielsen. Having worked with Rick Dunkerton and evententries.com for the past four Maui Jim's and AEC's. I whined pitifully to him, and he agreed to come and score and work his scheduling and secretarial magic. (I expect he capitulated to shut me up. Wise choice!) Cyndi Kurth from Florida came on board to announce the first one, (giving a whole new meaning to the word FISH), along with Cindy de Porter who is a crackerjack and fun official, and who agreed to be head judge and do a half day's "Ride a Test" prior to the start of the actual competition. This great nucleus was bolstered by the hard working, enthusiastic and experienced core of volunteers who had made Maui and the Illinois AEC's run like clockwork.

While designing the prize list and schedule, a wonderful new feeling of freedom descended upon me. Mind you, my organizing experience had always been within the confines of USEF and FEI rules as well as USEA "recommendations." All of a sudden, I realized that there were no rules in this venture so consequently, with a ton of consulting with Rick, we made up our own. I felt like a kid who'd been let out of boarding school!

Basically, we ran in three parts over two and a half days – a shortish jumping test, dressage, and a longer jumping test. The courses combined show jumps and some newly built cross country portables. The levels offered were Starter, Beginner Novice, Novice and Training. Preliminary will be offered in August. Horses could enter two consecutive levels, and two riders could compete the same horse. We geared it toward riders who may never otherwise have the chance to compete at a "big time" facility like Lamplight, and we kept the entry fees low. Following the National trend, entries were late coming in which is understandable, albeit a bit hairy in terms of planning. Dress code was minimal - boots and helmets being required.

A marvelous collection of over a hundred horses competed. One young lady was riding a paint who started out life as a circus horse. The winner of the Master (40 and over) Amateur on an Off The Track Thoroughbred award (which was donated by Seema Sonnad, a generous supporter of our efforts), was a 23 year old who raced until he was 8 and had carried his former owners through a couple of NAYRC's. There was every breed imaginable – a Fresian cross, some POA's, a Shetland cross, a saddlebred, a few Arabians, a pair of Selle Francais and a few warmbloods in addition to Thoroughbreds, quarter horses and asundry color breeds.

A couple of days to recover from a blow out dinner a friend gave on Sunday night, (in retrospect, doing Kalashnikov shooters after dinner is not exactly a great idea!), and we'll all be gearing up for the August Derby on the 13th, 14th and 15th. We will be tweaking some of the rules, but intend to maintain the same relaxed and low key atmosphere in a big time environment that marked the maiden effort. I'm happy that thanks to Maui Jim, Inc., we were able to put some of the fun back in eventing! (I just got a call from Mike Dalton who was in Sardinia at the time (!). I had sent him a quick report/thank you e mail about the weekend, and he was very excited about its success. What a class act!)