

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

*(Note: This release is time-sensitive as it pertains to an event with an application deadline of **February 15th**.)*

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Great photos available!

Equine Affaire's Versatile Horse & Rider Competition Will

Feature \$5500 in Prize Money and the *Ultimate* Test of Horsemanship This April

LONDON, OH, December 20, 2011— Riders and horses with the “right stuff” will compete for \$5500 in cash and the coveted title of Champion at the 2012 Versatile Horse & Rider Competition at Equine Affaire on April 12th-15th at the Ohio Expo Center in Columbus. The Versatile Horse & Rider Competition—aka “VHRC”—will be a timed and judged race through an obstacle course created to test communication between horse and rider as well as each competitor’s horsemanship skills and athletic abilities. The competition will take place in the coliseum at the Ohio Expo Center, so there will be plenty of room to set up the course—and plenty of seating from which fans can watch all of the action. Champion reiner and popular trainer, Aaron Ralston, will add plenty of personality and entertaining, obstacle-by-obstacle commentary as the official “ringmaster” for this year’s event.

Throughout both the qualifying rounds and finals of the competition, VHRC attendees will cheer on their favorite contestants as they negotiate the challenging obstacle course at top speeds and are pushed out of their “comfort zones.” Admission to both the qualifying rounds and the finals of the 2012 Versatile Horse & Rider Competition is included in general admission to Equine Affaire—so it’s not

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only a great show to watch, but a great deal, too! Plan to get there early to get a good seat—and hold on to the edge of that seat—you’ll be in for quite a ride.

To eliminate the need to choose between attending a favorite clinic at Equine Affaire *or* the Versatile Horse & Rider Competition, all of the qualifying rounds for this year’s competition will be held on Thursday evening after all Equine Affaire clinics, seminars, and demos have concluded for the day. The top 10 horse and rider teams will advance to the Versatile Horse & Rider Competition Finals which will take place on Sunday morning during Equine Affaire.

“The Versatile Horse & Rider Competition has gained incredible popularity among both competitors and spectators since we introduced it at our Massachusetts Equine Affaire in 2007,” explained Eugenia Snyder, President of Equine Affaire. “It’s a true test of horsemanship for those who are willing to put their riding skills on the line—and a whole lot of fun for horse people in the audience who mentally work through the course with each team—thinking about the best approach to an obstacle and empathizing with the contestants as their horses succeed at some obstacles and fall short at others. In reality, the VHRC is not only an exciting competition to watch, but also a valuable learning experience. You get to watch great horses and great riders tackle real riding challenges, and you inevitably learn a lot simply by observing different approaches to the same obstacles and the horsemanship skills of dozens of riders on horses of a wide variety of breeds.”

The competition. The VHRC course will feature a combination of some traditional as well as “not-so-traditional” trail obstacles and riding challenges such as jumping over or through components, backing through a pattern, pole bending and/or roll backs, various gymkhana games, working gates, and riding over or through difficult/spooky objects. “Our team has developed some unique obstacles and devilishly difficult courses for recent competitions—and it has been amazing to watch both horses and riders rise to meet these new challenges,” Snyder continued. “Horse people in the audience are at one moment

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silent and holding their breaths as they watch a horse and rider team strive to master a difficult obstacle within the brief timeframe allowed....and—in the next moment—they’re applauding and yelling at the tops of the voices as contestants successfully work through an obstacle or race to the finish line. There’s plenty of great music during the competition to keep the riders pumped, but audience participation has obviously become an important factor, too.”

How the competition will be judged. Veteran all-breed and multi-discipline judge, Jennifer Moshier, will serve as the judge at this year’s competition. The performance of each horse and rider team will be judged on each obstacle for both quality of horsemanship and timing. Ms. Moshier will award performance points on a scale of 1 to 5 based on the rider’s horsemanship, the horse’s attitude, and the team’s overall performance for each obstacle. Horses and riders will be required to complete the course within a given time. Any contestant who fails to meet this time limit will be disqualified. Ride times will be translated into points, and the team with the highest overall point score will be the 2012 Ohio Versatile Horse & Rider Competition Champion.

Win \$5500 in cash and more! Cash prizes will be awarded to the top four contestants with the first place team receiving \$2,500 and the title of Versatile Horse & Rider Competition Champion and the second, third, and fourth place teams receiving \$1,750, \$1000, and \$250 respectively. Ribbons will be presented to the top 10 teams, and additional awards will be announced prior to the event. All awards will be presented at the conclusion of the Finals on Sunday morning. Of course the greatest “prize” of all will be the bragging rights that go along with earning the title of “2012 Versatile Horse & Rider Champion”—a title that can be earned only by a truly talented horse and rider team.

Who can compete. Equine Affaire’s Versatile Horse & Rider Competition is open to all riders age 18 years and older and horses of all breeds and disciplines. All horse and rider teams will compete against

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each other; there will be no “divisions” based on gender or age. A maximum of 30 horse/rider teams will be pre-selected based on application materials to participate in the Versatile Horse & Rider Competition.

Are you and your horse up the challenge? To obtain all of the details on the VHRC and an entry form, click on the Ohio event and “Participate” links at www.equineaffaire.com or contact Allison McClure at amcclure@equineaffaire.com or by calling (740) 845-0085 ext. 109. The entry fee for each horse/rider team is \$350 and includes stabling on Thursday through Saturday nights and a four-day ticket to Equine Affaire for the rider. Individual riders may compete with more than one horse in the race, but they must submit a separate application, video, and fee for each horse they wish to enter. Applications and support materials will be accepted by Equine Affaire through February 15th. They will be reviewed by the management of Equine Affaire, which will select the final contestants for the competition and notify contestants by March 1st.

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