



November 7-10, 2019 • Kentucky Horse Park

# US Dressage Finals

*presented by Adequan®*

[www.usdressagefinals.com](http://www.usdressagefinals.com)

## PRESS KIT

### **HISTORY and ELIGIBILITY**

At the 2011 Adequan®/USDF Annual Convention, United States Dressage Federation (USDF)'s Board of Governors approved the establishment of the US Dressage Finals. Designed as an extension of the Great American/USDF Regional Championships, the US Dressage Finals presented by Adequan® is a national head-to-head championship that showcases competitors in adult amateur and open divisions, at Training Level through Grand Prix. More than \$100,000 in prize money, great prizes, and national bragging rights will be up for grabs.

The first six years of the competition have been an undisputed success. The 2018 Finals roster included approximately 400 entries gathered in the heart of the Bluegrass for the US Dressage Finals and corresponding open show, USDF Dressage in the Bluegrass. Riders and horses representing all nine USDF regions traveled to Kentucky from 40 states across the country. From the indoor Alltech Arena stadium to the picturesque outdoor Stonelea and Claiborne arenas with their state-of-the-art footing, dressage competition was held across six rings, including four with nonstop championship action. Many of the championship classes were streamed live on the USEF Network, which recorded tens of thousands of views over the course of the four-day competition. For added excitement, the top-scoring riders in various divisions from each of the Great American/USDF Regional Championships also competed on regional teams in the US Dressage Finals "Regions Cup", vying with competitors from across the country for additional awards and bragging rights for their home USDF Region.

The Great American/USDF Regional Dressage Championships program, established in 1994, is designed to promote and recognize the pursuit of excellence by providing a showcase competition that meets established quality standards for riders within each of the nine USDF regions. Riders qualify for the Regional Championships by riding in designated qualifying classes at USDF-recognized competitions.

The US Dressage Finals presented by Adequan® is an invitational competition. Qualifying takes place at each of the nine Great American/USDF Regional Dressage Championships, based on either 1) placing at the Regional Championships in a class in an eligible division, or 2) wild-card eligibility based on a minimum designated score earned.

Automatic invitations will be issued as follows:

1. The top two out of the top five eligible horse/rider combinations who have declared and nominated by the specific deadlines for their Regional Championships will be eligible for invitation.
2. Wild-card eligible horse/rider combinations will be considered invited provided they have nominated by the deadline for their Regional Championship.

The US Dressage Finals will be held in conjunction with USDF Dressage in the Bluegrass offering non-championship classes. All competitors can compete in these classes including those who are competing in the US Dressage Finals presented by Adequan®.



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### SPECTATOR'S GUIDE TO DRESSAGE

Dressage horses can be of any breed, sex, age, color or size. Exceptional basic paces – walk, trot and canter – together with a good temperament and sound conformation are what riders look for in a potential dressage horse. The horse should have athletic paces, be light on its feet and have the scope to take short, springy strides as well as free, long and swinging ones.

Dressage is a sport where competitors pursue the unobtainable 100%; in order to even come close, meticulous attention to detail, in addition to ability, is necessary. Marks may be out of reach because of a lack of talent, experience, or technique, but they should not be thrown away for lack of preparation.

There are different levels of tests in “International” dressage competition. In order of difficulty, they are, the Young Rider Tests, the Prix St. Georges, Intermediare I, Intermediate II and Grand Prix. Within the Grand Prix level are the Grand Prix, the Grand Prix Special, and the Grand Prix Freestyle – a musical ride choreographed by the rider. Although certain movements must be performed and each performance has a time limit, the competitor can create a program which suits his/her horse and is especially pleasing to the eye.

It is these International tests where we see the most spectacular movements: Piaffe, the highly collected, elevated trot in place; Passage, the suspended trot in slow-motion; Pirouette, a rhythmic turning in place at the walk and canter; Half Pass, a forward and sideways movement at the trot or canter where the horse crosses his legs; Flying Change, a skipping type movement at the canter where the horse changes leads every fourth, third, second, and finally at every stride.

It is important to understand that none of these movements are tricks; all are natural and performed by the horse at play. With careful training, the horse learns to duplicate these natural movements, willingly, on command, and with grace, while accommodating the weight of the rider. The trust and harmony which makes this possible are a tribute to the rider's ability and the horse's generosity.

One to five judges, positioned at specific locations around the arena, evaluate the performance from their different perspectives. Scores are awarded on a scale of zero (not executed) to 10 (excellent) for each movement, with some particularly difficult movements earning scores that are multiplied by two.

Spectators tend to base their judgments on general impressions – on how pleasing the performance was as a whole. The judges also take this into consideration when awarding the “collective marks” for paces, impulsion, submission and the rider's position. Scores are tallied and divided by the total possible, and the final score given as a percentage.

These final percentages are somewhat misleading; the winning score may only be a 63%. But keep in mind that the marks are given movement by movement, and are judged against a standard of absolute perfection.

The attention to detail starts with good horsemanship. Quality veterinary care, proper feeding and an ongoing training program are the foundation. Correctly fitted equipment and good grooming are also necessary ingredients. The horse and rider which is turned out immaculately, with everything gleaming and in place, make it hard for the judge not to give the benefit of the doubt to the combination which pleases his eye. Dressage is a performance, and, as such, competitors strive to look as beautiful as nature will allow.

### SPECTATOR POINTERS

- Riding a dressage test requires a great deal of concentration on the part of the horse and rider. The following guidelines will help ensure that all riders have the opportunity to achieve their very best performance.
- Avoid running, shouting, or sudden movements while a horse is in the ring.
- Applaud only after the rider has completed the final salute.
- You may speak in a normal tone, but do not shout or wave.
- Spectators must stay back from the white fence surrounding the competition area.
- It is our wish that you enjoy the competition and our hope that this information gives you some understanding of the dedication needed and the intensive work of horse and rider in providing these performances.

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### VENUE

The Kentucky Horse Park is a working horse farm and an educational theme park opened in 1978 in Lexington, Kentucky. It is located off Kentucky State Highway 1973 (Iron Works Pike) and Interstate 75 in northern Fayette County in the United States. The equestrian facility is a 1,224-acre (4.95 km<sup>2</sup>) park dedicated to “man’s relationship with the horse.” Open to the public, the Park has a twice daily Parade of Breeds, showcasing both common and rare horses from across the globe. The horses are ridden in authentic costume. Each year the park is host to a number of special events and horse shows.

Additionally, the park contains the International Museum of the Horse, which has a permanent collection of horse history and memorabilia, along with a rotating historical collection focused on a particular theme. Past themes include A Gift from the Desert (Arabia), Imperial China, and All the Queen’s Horses (Britain).

On December 6, 2005, it was announced that Lexington and Kentucky Horse Park would host the 2010 Alltech FEI World Equestrian Games in September and October. The 2010 Games marked the first time that the WEG had been held outside of Europe; additionally, the eight Olympic-level world championships had never been held together in a single location within Europe.

Other premiere events held at the horse park include

- Land Rover Kentucky Three Day Event
- CP National Horse Show
- USEF Pony Finals



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### THINGS TO SEE & DO AROUND LEXINGTON, KENTUCKY

As the “Horse Capital of the World,” the Bluegrass Region has no shortage of horse-related activities – from horse farm tours to a day at the races to elegant equestrian events. You are sure to be an “honorary horseman” before your visit to the area ends.

There’s nothing like starting the morning by catching a glimpse of the powerful Thoroughbred horses warming up at sunrise at historic Keeneland Racecourse. Keeneland’s tradition and charm transcend the average Thoroughbred racing experience, with people from around the world visiting Lexington to enjoy the Race Meets in April and October, as well as the various sales throughout the year.

Even if you aren’t into horses, there are plenty of other things to do in Lexington that are fun and won’t break your budget. Kentucky, and more specifically the Bluegrass, has a long tradition when it comes to the production of Bourbon, wines, and beer. The area is loaded with breweries, distilleries, and wineries, where visitors can view the production process first-hand. In fact, CNN International named the Kentucky Bourbon Trail a “Top 10 Classic American Experience.”

There is no shortage of spectator sports in the area, enabling folks to cheer, cheer, cheer for the home team. Whether it’s great Lexington Legends baseball action at Whitaker Bank Ballpark, University of Kentucky football or basketball, the powerful racing at Kentucky Speedway in Sparta, or just up the road in Cincinnati with Major League Baseball’s Cincinnati Reds and the NFL’s Cincinnati Bengals.

Check out the following websites for more about Lexington, Kentucky:

- [commercelexington.com](http://commercelexington.com)
- [tadoo.com](http://tadoo.com)
- [visitlex.com](http://visitlex.com)
- [kentucky.com](http://kentucky.com)
- [lexingtonattractions.com](http://lexingtonattractions.com)
- [kentuckytourism.com/city/lexington](http://kentuckytourism.com/city/lexington)