

Orangeville Show Jumping Tournament celebrates 30th anniversary



By Angela Gismondi

The Orangeville Show Jumping Tournament features fun for the whole family.

The 30th annual horse show, taking place from Aug. 14 to 17, features world-class show jumping in four competition rings – two jumper and two hunter - at the 84-acre Orangeville Agricultural Society (OAS) Event Centre, located minutes from downtown Orangeville.

‘We have everything from Olympic level athletes, to amateur level athletes to kids on ponies and everything in between,’ said event organizer Ainsley Hayes. ‘It’s fun for the whole family, an event that everyone can come and enjoy.’

The Orangeville Show Jumping Tournament is run by the Hayes family, led by two-time Canadian Olympian Jay Hayes and his wife, Shawn, who act as the co-presidents of the tournament. Their three daughters, Lauren, Ainsley and Regan, all play vital roles in the competition's organization and success. The family has been organizing show jumping tournaments in various locations across Ontario for 30 years. Three years ago the Hayes, who own a horse farm in Mono, decided to move the tournament closer to home. The OAS Event Centre was the perfect choice.

‘It’s ideal for our sport,’ said Ainsley. ‘The OAS has great footing naturally; sand over grass. It’s one of my dad’s favourite sayings ‘no foot, no horse.’ No footing, no horse show.’

The tournament began in 1984 when a group of equestrian enthusiasts from all walks of life decided to get together and organize an event to celebrate the sport. The horse show was held in Sutton for two years until organizers decided to move it to Collingwood where it was held for 21 years. There, the event grew and in 1995, it became a two week event.

‘There was a demand for more,’ explained Hayes. ‘People loved the horse show and they didn’t just want to spend one week up there.’

After celebrating 21 years in Collingwood, the Hayes moved their event to Nepean for four years.

‘It was a great event, really well received by the community, but it was never home,’ noted Ainsley, adding the tournament's new home is right in the family's back yard and helps support the community.

‘This area and all the surrounding areas are horse communities,’ Ainsley stated. ‘Being here in this area is really great for our sport. We live in this area and this event brings in a lot of tourism dollars. By bringing it closer to home, we are supporting and engaging our community.’

She pointed out that it has become very expensive to travel in the last few years and bringing the event closer to home makes it more

economical for people to participate and attend.

Friday and Saturday offer the perfect opportunity to enjoy the sport at its best. Friday's 'Derby Day' culminates in the \$5,000 Mitton/Lewtas Canadian Hunter Derby. Pack a picnic and enjoy a Pommies Dry Cider tailgate party while watching the horses and riders test their skills and finesse over natural obstacles on the open grass field. A full schedule of hunter classes are offered in the main hunter grass ring all week long, while on Friday the ponies will compete on natural sand to celebrate 'Pony Day'; including Pony Power Qualifiers.

Saturday night puts show jumping in the spotlight with the main event beginning at 6 p.m., the \$50,000 CSI2* Zucarlos Grand Prix, presented by Kubota Canada and Stewart's Equipment.

Other show jumping highlights include Thursday's \$5,000 Hayes Co. Open Welcome and Friday's Mitton/Lewtas Family Jump Canada Talent Squad. Young Horse classes for five and six-year-olds will be held on Saturday afternoon, as well as the very special seven and eight-year-old class held in memory of Lynn Millar, the late wife of 10-time Canadian Olympian Ian Millar. The Saturday afternoon session wraps up with the \$2,500 Premier Marine 1.40m Junior/Amateur Classic. The event will also include a Kids Zone with activities for children of all ages.

Sunday features the \$10,000 1.35m Highland Meadows Modified Grand Prix while the youngest riders on the show grounds will strut their stuff in the adorable leadline competition. To cap off the week, the Iron Horse Farm Jumper Parade of Champions will recognize all of the outstanding performances at this year's Orangeville Show Jumping Tournament, including the Equifit Inc. Top Trainer Award and the M. Michael Meller Style Award.

Throughout the week, spectators can enjoy the action from the ringside 'Champions Pub', open to all, or purchase seating in the VIP tent. Pommies Dry Cider will be flowing in both locations.

The Hayes family hopes to continue the event for many years to come.

'We hope to expand and keep growing,' said Ainsley. 'It's still a relatively new event in this area.'

For more information on the Orangeville Show Jumping Tournament, including the prize list, entry forms and sponsorship opportunities, please visit

www.hayesco.ca or e-mail info@hayesco.ca.