

Becoming WIHS: HORSES RETURN TO

BY LINDSAY BROCK/JUMP MEDIA

Watching from the stands of the Washington International Horse Show (WIHS), it all looks so easy. The decorated ring overflows with flowers and meticulously crafted jump. The horses jump beautifully from perfect footing, and the show flows seamlessly. It appears effortless, but there's a lot of work that goes into bringing the nation's top hunters and jumpers to the very heart of the capital. Hosting one of the country's most prestigious horse shows in the center of a busy city requires massive planning, creative organization, and a healthy dose of innovation.

An equestrian tradition since 1958, WIHS has stolen the hearts of competitors and horse sport fans alike. Whether it's for the riveting competition, the atmosphere, or even the shopping, a visit to WIHS is a must on anyone's 2019 horse show bucket list.

"There are countless moving parts to any horse show, but an event like WIHS has an added element of planning and preparation because it takes place in the heart of an urban environment," said WIHS horse show manager, David Distler. "What brings it all together are several teams of dedicated staff. From the teams erecting the stall tents and preparing the footing to the teams decorating the platforms and setting up the horse show office, everyone works quickly and efficiently to transform Capital One Arena into the Washington International Horse Show."

Keep in mind, Capital One Arena isn't built for horses. The state-of-the-art arena spends all year as a home for basketball and ice hockey teams like the Washington Capitals (NHL), Washington Wizards (NBA), Washington Valor (AFL), Washington Mystics (WNBA), and Georgetown Hoyas (NCAA) as well as various concerts. Before the horses can arrive for their six days of competition in October, Capital One Arena has to make an identity switch.

Beginning Friday, October 18, with only 81 hours until the first horse enters the ring, the final whistle will sound after the Capitals and New York Rangers game. It's then that the Capital One Arena and WIHS staff shift into

high gear to prepare for the arrival of horses and the start of competition at 7 a.m. on the following Tuesday morning.

The biggest task is melting the hockey-rink ice. With the assistance of climate-controlled flooring, the ice melts throughout the night. Once the ice has melted and the water is drained, the rink walls are packed away. The arena is then ready for its conversion.

At daybreak on Sunday, October 20—48 hours until the first horse trots into the ring—WIHS begins to take shape. Inside the Capital One Arena, staff prepares the facility for horse showing to come indoors. They install carpeting and mats to protect the flooring and provide traction on horse paths and human traffic areas to and from the competition and warm-up rings. Pipe-and-drape curtains and temporary flooring bring the VIP platforms to life, and the satellite horse show office moves into the underground level of Capital One Arena.

Back in the competition ring, the intricate process of installing footing begins. One at a time, 72 dump trucks make their way into the ring to deposit 1,400 tons of lime sand onto the arena floor before four loaders spread the sand. The ground is laser-graded to ensure an even surface, and tractors and drags mix 10,000 pounds of footing fiber into the sand before a liberal watering finishes the installation.

All those horses need somewhere to live during the show, so F and 6th Streets are officially closed to traffic at 10 p.m. on Sunday when stabling tents arrive in the city and are erected.

All horses destined for WIHS gather at Prince George's Equestrian Center in Upper Marlboro, MD, where they wait for their turns to be shuttled into D.C. in shifts based on when they compete. Like a cavalry charge, a tightly coordinated fleet of Johnson Horse Transportation tractor trailers loaded with the future stars of WIHS parades down 6th St. NW and delivers hundreds of horses at a time.

Fencing separates the stabling from the sidewalk and street, but people walking by can easily see into the tent stabling and catch a glimpse of the behind-the-scenes action at a horse show. Horses on the way inside to the schooling area and show ring walk down the sidewalk, and grooms frequently let commuters



ABOVE: HORSES ARRIVING;
BELOW: BEEZIE MADDEN & BREITLING LS.
PHOTOS © JUMP MEDIA.



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and children stop and pet noses. For most city dwellers, it's a rare opportunity to see a horse up close and personal.

A fixture in the Washington, D.C., community, WIHS is not just a visiting event to the city and its residents. The show is dedicated to bringing horse sport to the masses and being a contributing member of D.C.'s special event calendar. As horse fans and D.C. locals looking for a one-of-a-kind experience converge, WIHS thrives on introducing equestrian sport to those who may have never seen a horse, touched a horse, or watched a horse perform.

As the 24-hour countdown to the start of the show starts at 6 a.m. on Monday, October 21, the concourse of Capital One Arena becomes a haven for any equine shopaholic. Vendors offering products that range from designer clothing, tack, homemade fudge, jewelry, and so much more make the concourse their home for the duration of WIHS.

WIHS has always been more than just a horse show. A celebration of many disciplines, WIHS embraces horse sport as a whole and strives to bring together spectators from all avenues of the equestrian world. That dedication is reflected by the celebration of all things horse on the concourse.

On Tuesday, October 22, it's show time! The horses are settled safely in their stalls, the footing is dragged to perfection, and each corner of Capital One Area is ready to welcome thousands of horse sport fans. At 7 a.m., the first horse walks through the in-gate for the first class, and the show has begun.

Tickets for WIHS events and performances start as low as \$15 with free ticket opportunities that offer spectators the opportunity to catch a glimpse of the world's best horses and riders. Whether in the stands, or watching from the comfort of your home thanks to a continuous livestream, share your experience with WIHS on Facebook, Snapchat, Twitter, and Instagram, and join the WIHS conversations by using #WIHS2019, #HorsesintheCity, #FEIWorldCup, #Longines, and #JumpToGreatness when posting.

See our 2019 WIHS Cheat Sheet on the following page and, for more information and a complete schedule of events, visit www.wihs.org.

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YOUR 2019 WIHS CHEAT SHEET

Tuesday, October 22

- **Daytime:** High Performance Conformation Hunter, Green Hunters, Amateur-Owner Working Hunters and \$10,000 WIHS Children's Hunter Championship
- **Evening:** Performance Working Hunter and \$10,000 WIHS Adult Hunter Championship

Wednesday, October 23

- Breakfast with the Mounted Police held in front of Hotel Monaco (700 F Street NW) from 8:00 -10:00am
- **Daytime:** Green Hunters, High Performance Hunter, Regular Conformation Hunter, Amateur-Owner Working Hunters and \$10,000 WIHS Children's Jumper Championship
- **Evening:** \$10,000 WIHS Adult Jumper Championship and the first International show jumpers get to glimpse the competition ring

Thursday, October 24 (WIHS Barn Night)

- **Daytime:** Junior Hunters, Low Junior/Amateur-Owner Jumper, High Junior/Amateur-Owner Jumper, and \$40,000 International Jumper Welcome Stake
 - WIHS Barn Night during evening session
 - Buck Breast Cancer Benefit in Stella Club during evening session to benefit Capital Breast Care Center
- **Evening:** \$40,000 International Jumper Winning Round, WIHS Shetland Pony Steeplechase Championship Series, presented by Charles Owen, and \$35,000 International Jumper Accumulator Costume Class with autograph signing after the class

Friday, October 25 (WIHS Military Night, presented by Caterpillar, Inc.)

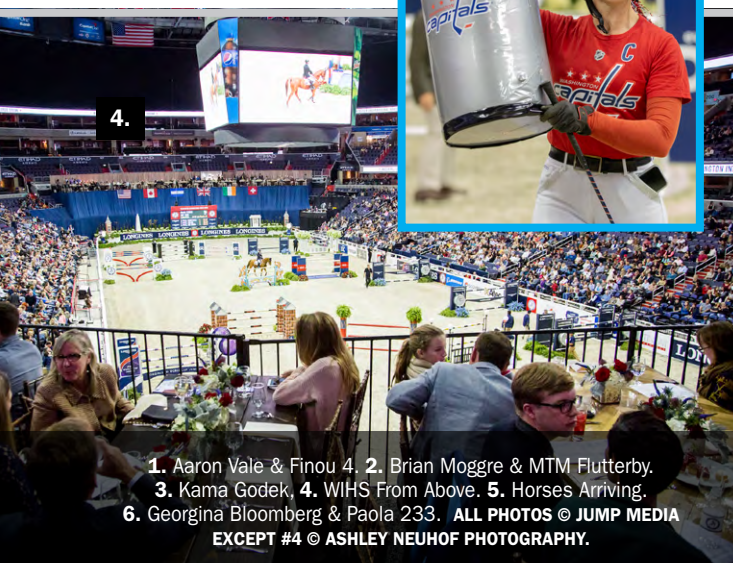
- **Daytime:** Junior Hunters, Hunter Phase of Lindsay Maxwell Charitable Fund WIHS Equitation Final and Junior/Amateur-Owner Jumpers
 - WIHS Military Night during evening session
 - Armed Forces Reception in Stella Club during evening session to benefit TAPS
- **Evening:** \$50,000 International Jumper Speed Final and \$25,000 Land Rover International Jumper Puissance

Saturday, October 26 (WIHS Kids' Day)

- **Daytime:** Pony Hunters, Low and High Junior/Amateur-Owner Jumper Classics, Jumper Phase of Lindsay Maxwell Charitable Fund WIHS Equitation Final
 - WIHS Kids' Day 10am-2pm (Free Event) on the concourse at Capital One Arena and at 700 F Street NW in front of the Hotel Monaco
 - President's Cup Party in Stella Club during evening session to benefit the USET Foundation
 - "Riding for the Team" book launch autograph signing on the concourse during evening session
- **Evening:** Lindsay Maxwell Charitable Fund WIHS Equitation Finals (Work-Off and Championship Presentation), WIHS Shetland Pony Steeplechase Championship Series, presented by Charles Owen, and \$136,300 Longines FEI Jumping World Cup™ Washington for the President's Cup, presented by Events DC

Sunday, October 27

- **Daytime:** Pony Hunters, WIHS Pony Equitation Finals, WIHS Regional Pony Hunter Finals and WIHS Regional Hunter Finals



1. Aaron Vale & Finou 4. 2. Brian Moggre & MTM Flutterby.
3. Kama Godek, 4. WIHS From Above. 5. Horses Arriving.
6. Georgina Bloomberg & Paola 233. ALL PHOTOS © JUMP MEDIA EXCEPT #4 © ASHLEY NEUHOFF PHOTOGRAPHY.



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