



Looking Ahead to Eventing at Woodside in 2023

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By Jonathan Horowitz

Woodside, CA — From carrots for the horses when they arrived and the coffee and donut hospitality cart that created a friendly atmosphere at the Woodside Fall Horse Trials last October, to the community support that raised funds for new show jumps and cross-country fences, to being approved to host three USEA-recognized events in 2023, there is a buzz about what lies ahead for the future of eventing at The Horse Park at Woodside in Northern California.

The Woodside Spring Horse Trials will take place on May 26-28 with national levels through Advanced, followed by the Woodside Summer Horse Trials on August 11-13 up to Advanced/Intermediate, and culminating with the Woodside Fall International on October 6-8 that will return eventing at the FEI levels to Woodside with a CCI4*-S, CCI3*-S, and CCI2*S.

“I’m most excited that the community has come together so beautifully to allow us to purchase all of our own eventing equipment,” said Victoria Klein, who serves on the Board of Governors of The Horse Park at Woodside. “So, we have a new stadium jump course. What’s especially exciting about that is that so many of the local training barns got behind The Horse Park and donated money so that we could get those jumps, and we will be representing their logos on the jumps.”

Among other new developments for events at The Horse Park at Woodside in 2023 will be cross-country courses designed by Derek di Grazia. Di Grazia’s courses have been featured at the Land Rover Kentucky Three-Day Event, Land Rover Burghley Horse Trials, the Tokyo Olympics, Bromont International Horse Trials, and at the Morven Park International Horse Trials. Designing at Woodside reunites him with a venue close to where he resides in Carmel Valley, California, and where he has competed for decades.

“I’ve been working at The Park off and on since the 1990s, and this is actually my third time back as course designer,” di Grazia said. “Obviously, The Horse Park has evolved quite a lot since then, and consequently the cross-country has done the same. It’s seen its fair bit of change over the years and through that time they’ve developed a lot of nice features on the cross-country which has made it good for competitors.”



Derek di Grazia at Woodside in February. Victoria Klein photo

A team that included di Grazia and Bert Wood, who will be cross-country builder and will design courses up to Preliminary, toured Woodside on February 20 to set the course for the horse trials in May. Then, they visited a lumber yard to purchase logs that had been cleared from recent storms and in fuel mitigation projects. These logs will be used to construct new jumps during 20 days of building scheduled for April. “It was really like kids in a candy store,” Klein said.



Logs that will be turned into new jumps at Woodside during 20 days of building scheduled for April. Steve Roon photo

Future plans for horse trials at Woodside include adding a Modified level either in late 2023 or in 2024.

The Horse Park at Woodside has hosted events annually since 2005 on 272 acres as the most northern eventing venue in California, although eventing has taken place since 1981 on what was previously known as Guernsey Field and part of Stanford University.

“There’s quite a lot of interest to compete there,” di Grazia said. “It’s one of the few places in California that actually has terrain, which is very beneficial for the horses and riders competing. Having that

experience of being able to go up and down hills as well as having the terrain be part of the jumping question is quite important in the development of both horses and riders.”

In addition to eventing, Woodside hosts hunter-jumper, dressage, and reining shows, as well as polo and vaulting. There are also approximately 120 horses that are boarded at Woodside year-round.

“The Horse Park was created to be an eventing venue, and we are very unique in a lot of ways because of it,” said Executive Director Steve Roon, who was instrumental in ensuring eventing’s future at The Horse Park. “With all of these various disciplines, we are just so fortunate to have a facility that can accommodate them, and it’s the support of all these disciplines that make eventing possible here.”

Events at The Horse Park at Woodside in 2023 will be organized by Christina Gray and her team that makes up Gray Area Events. Gray grew up in Northern California near Woodside, so it represented a homecoming when she and The Horse Park at Woodside teamed up for their first event, the Woodside Fall Horse Trials, in October 2022.

“Woodside is a special place because I grew up competing there,” Gray said. “It was the closest venue to where I grew up, so it’s exciting to be part of it again. The fall event was our debut of starting things up, and we look forward to continuing things and having a real welcoming atmosphere and making sure things are done to the best possible level.”

All of the hard work is focused on two goals: the enjoyment of the competitors and the safety of their equine partners.

“I have been going to events at The Horse Park for over 30 years and I can say hands and hooves down, this was the BEST organized EVER!!” was a comment posted on Facebook by Olympic medalist Gina Miles based in Templeton, California. “The organizing team that produced Woodside Horse Trials has overcome huge odds and delivered the goods. They had all the major details covered, great courses with the best cross-country footing and multiple drags of show jumping throughout the day, beautiful show jumps and course design, no dust throughout the park, on time rings and pleasant, helpful office staff.”

Added Kassi McMillan, who has competed from Beginner Novice to Preliminary at Woodside since being junior rider in 2006: “The effort put in to all aspects of the show was undeniable; from the gorgeous footing for all the divisions, to the gorgeous competitors dinner and the cold bottle water handed out at the exit to those departing home on Sunday. Count me in for May Woodside 2023!”

That feedback has motivated the organizers for the future of eventing at Woodside.

“We were so incredibly moved by the kind write-ups, the comments, and the people expressing their appreciation of the effort we are putting in to make the Woodside Horse Trials sustainable and to have a future,” Klein said. “We are absolutely clear now that we have a beautiful future for horse trials at Woodside.”

Connect with Woodside

Location: 3674 Sand Hill Road, Woodside, CA 94062

Email: Send message at <http://www.horsepark.org/emailmessage.php>

Website: <http://www.horsepark.org/>

Volunteer: <http://www.horsepark.org/volunteer.php>

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