



DIVAS OF DRESSAGE SET TO DANCE AT THE ROYAL
Canada's top dressage riders aiming for a ticket to the World Cup Final

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TORONTO, ON – Dressage will return to Toronto this November with a bang, as five of Canada's top riders will compete in the first official FEI World Cup Qualifier to be held at The Royal in the show's 86 year history. And it's safe to say the victor will enjoy the fruits of her labours, as all five riders are women at the top of their game.

The Royal has seen many changes to the format of their dressage competition over the past few years, from Canadian League Final to Freestyle Championship and now to a full-fledged FEI World Cup Qualifier for the newly minted North American League. The League now incorporates the United States, Mexico and Canada into one competitive 'melting pot'. And the competition is fierce, as everyone in the League is working toward the same goal: all of North America gets just two tickets to the World Cup Finals, being held in Las Vegas, in April, 2009.

"It is wonderful that dressage is a part of the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair again this year," says Kerri McGregor, Chair of the Dressage Canada Committee. "The Royal offers one of the rare opportunities for high calibre dressage competition inside an electrically charged indoor atmosphere. Plus it is a wonderful opportunity to expose 'city folk' to the art, beauty, grace and power that is dressage."

It will be an all-Canadian challenge at The Royal this year, as the Americans are tied up with a World Cup Qualifier of their own on the other side of the country, the week before The Royal. In future years it is hoped that The Royal will be able to draw top U.S. competitors as well, but for 2008 here is the line-up of ladies set to battle it out (gracefully and to music, of course) at The Royal this year.

Ashley Holzer comes to The Royal hot on the heels of a 13th place finish at this summer's Olympic games, the lone Canadian to qualify for the Freestyle Final. Holzer currently dominates North American dressage with an incredible 14 wins at the Grand Prix level in the last two years. She currently stands seventh in the FEI World Dressage Rankings. She will be bringing her Olympic mount Pop Art to The Royal this year.

Jacqueline Brooks also comes to Toronto via the Olympics this summer. She and her long-time partner Gran Gesto will look to defend their 2007 Royal Title and very

successful 2007/08 campaign, where they scored high marks in Florida, including a win in the Grand Prix Speciale at the Palm Beach Derby CDI-W.

Simone Williams brings her partner Wunder Ein to The Royal for the first time at this top level, having trained him herself since he was two. They are not new to the ring in Toronto though, having won the Grand Prix Speciale at the CDI-W CNE Classic this summer. Williams is an exceptional all-around athlete, having completed the 1998 New York City and 2001 London Marathons.

Tina Busse-Irwin has been competing across Canada and the United States this summer to great results at the Grand Prix level, including wins in the Grand Prix and Grand Prix Freestyle at the CDI-W Blainville this past June. Amicelli is her partner, a 12 year-old Holsteiner gelding she has trained for the past eight years.

Denielle Gallagher competed at her first CDI level Grand Prix this past summer, with her 17 year-old Russian-bred stallion Abrikos. They showed they are a new pair on the rise, riding to scores of 64.083% at the CDI-W Gold Coast Opener in January and 65.250% at the CDI-W/Y Palm Beach Dressage Derby in February, both in Loxahatchee, Florida.

This year's FEI World Cup Qualifier in Dressage will take place in two phases at The Royal. The Grand Prix will run the afternoon of Wednesday, November 12th. But the highlight for Dressage fans in the Greater Toronto Area will once again be the Freestyle to Music, which will headline the evening performance Thursday, November 13th.

"Dressage fans in Toronto, and across Ontario, are tremendously knowledgeable of the intricacies of the sport," says Royal CEO Bill Duron. "Thursday night is usually standing-room-only in the Coliseum and the energy of the crowd is palpable as they get behind their favourites. It is such a thrill to be providing competition of this calibre in 2008. To host an FEI World Cup Dressage Qualifier has been a goal of The Royal for many years and to achieve this following the Olympics, means Dressage at The Royal will be an event not to be missed."

The Royal Horse Show takes place between November 7th to 16th, and in total, over \$795,000 in prize money will be awarded, making it one of the richest and most prestigious events of its kind. For complete schedule, information and to purchase tickets, visit www.royalfair.org.

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ATTACHED PHOTO:

2008 Olympian Ashley Holzer with Pop Art will be competing in the FEI World Cup Qualifier for Dressage at The Royal Horse Show this November. They were Canada's top placed dressage team at the Beijing Olympics, finishing 13th overall. Photo credit © CLiX / Shawn Hamilton. Photo may be used in relation to this press release only. Please advise of links to web postings. Thank you.

