

 making a difference

BACK IN THE SADDLE



PENNING THEM IN

Retired jockey Pat Day, right, makes sorting and penning cattle look easy.



BATTLE IN THE SADDLE CELEBRITY TEAM PENNING EVENT
BENEFITS THE KENTUCKY HORSE PARK FOUNDATION

By Robin Roenker



Anyone who has worked with cattle knows they can be a bit unpredictable. Add tight quarters and timed competition, and you have the recipe for a comedy of errors that makes competition team penning such a fun sport — for participants and spectators alike.

The annual Battle in the Saddle Celebrity Team Penning Event, set this year for Sept. 28 at the Kentucky Horse Park, lets teams — made up of two amateur riders plus one celebrity guest rider — try their skills at sorting and penning three cattle designated from among a larger herd in the fastest time.

Proceeds support the Kentucky Horse Park Foundation (KHPF), which in turn provides funds to enhance and improve the Kentucky Horse Park.

“It’s a lot of fun, but I’m also in it to win it,” said Hall of Fame jockey Chris McCarron, who has been a celebrity rider in the event since its inception in 2013. (In fact, McCarron’s partici-



Day shows his skills in the saddle, albeit a Western one.

pation predates KHPF’s establishment of the Battle in the Saddle, he having been a regular rider in an earlier local charity penning event to benefit the Don MacBeth Memorial Jockey Fund, which he helped establish.)

The premise of the evening is deceptively simple: Farms or companies sponsor teams of riders who compete to pen their three cattle — without herding too many “trash,” or non-target cattle, across the arena’s midline — in the fastest time. Action is fast-

paced; last year’s winning team had their cows cornered in just one minute and 24 seconds. But there’s strategy involved. If teams take too long to signal they’re finished and “bank” any cattle they do pen, they risk coming away with no points at all. (Each team is allowed only four minutes total in the arena.)

“It’s fun and it’s funny,” said Laura Klumb, KHPF executive director. “You just don’t know what these cattle are going to do. You might have the most

2018 BATTLE IN THE SADDLE

What: Celebrity Team Penning event to support the Kentucky Horse Park Foundation

When: Friday, Sept. 28

Where: Kentucky Horse Park, Covered Arena

Cost: General admission \$10 at the door (kids under 12 free with purchase of adult ticket)

VIP dinner tickets: \$100/person

Info: <https://khpfoundation.org>

EVENT SCHEDULE:

5:30 pm: Doors and vendor fair open

6 pm: Dinner and Calcutta auction

7 pm: Battle in the Saddle Competition, with after party immediately following awards ceremony

experienced team in there, but if the cattle don't cooperate, the cattle don't cooperate."

Friendly Competition

In addition to helping raise funds to support the Kentucky Horse Park, the event also serves as a community-building event for the local equestrian community, with teams sponsored by area Thoroughbred farms, equine health care providers, and others.

Some competitors even come from out of state. Orrin and Lee Ann Ingram, owners of Riverview Farm in Franklin, Tennessee, have participated in Battle in the Saddle for the past two years — with winning results. In 2016, Orrin's team came in second overall but snagged the first-place farm team prize. Last year, joined by Mid-



Cabby Boone, immediate past chair of the foundation, encourages local riders to participate, saying the horn of a Western saddle provides a sense of security.



Orrin Ingram, center, congratulates his winning team members.

way trainer Mal McGuire as their celebrity rider, Orrin and Lee Ann's team came out on top overall to take home the event's top prize: a coveted, custom-made silver belt

buckle designed by Montana Silversmiths.

Participation is typically capped at about 20 teams, and friendly rivalries have popped up among them over the years —



PENNING THEM IN

adding to the good-natured competition of the evening. "I think Orrin is going to be more competitive than ever this year. He and the Goodmans [of Mt. Brilliant Farm, who came in second, just 1.3 seconds behind the Ingrams in 2017] have been teasing each other about who will win this year, all season long," said Lee Ann Ingram.

Mt. Brilliant Farm, a longtime championship-level sponsor of Battle in the Saddle, plans to enter three teams in the 2018 event, to be led by owner Greg Goodman's two sons and either his daughter or son-in-law, he said. "It's a really fun evening to

go out there and watch everybody try to pin these cattle," Goodman said. "A few of them do it well, and some of them can't do it at all."

Hands-on fun

This year's celebrity riders include several award-winning jockeys. In addition to McCarron, Pat Day, Rosie Napravnik, and Patti Cooksey are all scheduled to participate. Several local TV personalities are also on the docket, including Fox 56 anchor Marvin Bartlett, WLEX anchor Claire Crouch, WKYT's Andrea Walker, and

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It's a lot of fun but I'm also in it to win it.

—RETIRED
JOCKEY CHRIS
MCCARRON



Patti Cooksey, another former jockey, plans to saddle up again for the 2018 event.

Bluegrass INTERNATIONAL Cup

POLO, ANYONE?

Central Kentucky may be home to some of the world's most famous horse farms, but there's still something novel and magical about the chance to catch a polo match here.

The Bluegrass International Cup (BGIC), set for Friday, Sept. 7 at Mt. Brilliant Farm, offers guests a unique opportunity to enjoy a high-goal polo game — for a good cause. Proceeds from the event benefit the Fayette Alliance, an advocate for sustainable local growth and farmland preservation, and the University of Kentucky Markey Cancer Foundation, which supports cutting-edge research at the UK Markey Cancer Center.

Begun in 2007 and originally held at the Kentucky Horse Park — before Mt. Brilliant's world-class polo fields were available — the Bluegrass International Cup has grown into a much-anticipated charity event that draws more than 600 attendees annually.

The two participating polo teams are part of Mt. Brilliant Farm's annual September Polo in the Park series, and the 14-goal BGIC match counts in their overall tournament standing. Teams from across the country compete, bringing elite-level players who hail from the United States, Chile, Argentina, England, and more, said Greg Goodman,



Winning team members celebrate their victory.



Members of the Black Rock and Dixiana polo teams approach the ball at the 10th annual Bluegrass International Cup high-goal polo match owned by Greg Goodman, owner of Mt. Brilliant Farm and Fayette Alliance board member.

"It's just a fun gathering," said Goodman. "Some people come out to watch the polo, and others come out just for the party. I've had people tell me it's the best charity event they go to all year."

Admission to the polo match, which begins at 5:30 pm, includes open lounge seating, an open bar, and hors d'oeuvres, plus an after-party of live music and dancing.

"It's a night that includes a little bit of everything: polo, cocktails, food, dancing — all in a beautiful atmosphere on a beautiful farm," said Gay Haggin VanMeter, a Fayette Alliance board member and the BGIC chair.

In addition, on Thursday, Sept. 6, Mt. Brilliant Farm will host its seventh annual An Evening in the Gardens, an intimate dinner and live auction for 150 attendees. Proceeds from Thursday's event also support Fayette Alliance and the Markey Cancer Foundation.

Both events coincide nicely with the beginning of the Keeneland September yearling sale on Sept. 10.

"People can have their Julia Roberts moment," said Madeline Vied, director of communications for Fayette Alliance, referencing the iconic scene from "Pretty Woman." "Everyone can stomp the divots at halftime with a glass of champagne."

— By Robin Roenker

Bluegrass International Cup and An Evening in the Gardens

(Two separate, ticketed events)

Where: Mt. Brilliant Farm,
3314 Huffman Mill Pike,
Lexington

Tickets for An Evening in the
Gardens (Thursday, Sept. 6)
are \$300* per person.

Tickets for Bluegrass Inter-
national Cup (Friday, Sept.
7) are \$200* per person or
\$175* if purchasing four or
more.

Call 859-281-1202 or email
info@fayettealliance.com to
order tickets.

Information: <http://fayettealliance.com/bluegrass-international-cup-evening-gardens/>

(*Because of a law passed by the Kentucky legislature, as of July 1, 2018 a 6 percent sales tax applies on the sale of admissions to events hosted by non-profit organizations. The 6 percent sales tax will be directly remitted to the state.)



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WTVQ meteorologist Jason Myers. Even Daniel Boone will make an appearance (played by local actor George Dickson).

Most of the amateur riders rounding out each team are extremely comfortable on horseback, but that doesn't necessarily mean they've had a lot of practice riding around cattle. The key is choosing the right horse, said McCarron. "You need a horse that knows cows, a horse that's not afraid to get up in the herd and move around at will, and who listens to your cues immediately," he said. "If you're on the right horse, the horse knows what the cows are going to do before you do."

Still, the novelty of herding and penning shouldn't scare local riders from participating, said Cabby Boone, owner of Lagniappe Farm, immediate past chair of the Kentucky Horse Park Foundation, and a three-time Battle in the Saddle participant. "I think people shy away from this because they are worried about their level of skill and that of their horse. But to be clear, we can provide horses. I'm no great rider, but as long as I'm behind the horn on the Western saddle, I feel very secure."

This year's presenting sponsor is Boehringer Ingelheim, while Patterson Veterinary will sponsor the after-party event. Proceeds of the evening help "with the upkeep, the grounds, the care of the horses — to fill in the gaps of the needs — at the Kentucky Horse Park," said Boone.

The event also includes a vendor fair and after-party with live music and dancing, open to both general admission attendees and VIP/dinner ticket holders alike. For both spectators and participants, Battle in the Saddle has become a highlight of the year. "We go to many charity events, but this is one of the few where you get to actually participate and challenge yourself while having fun to support a great cause," said Lee Ann Ingram.

McCarron agreed. "The Horse Park is a wonderful facility that I enjoy greatly throughout the year," he said. "It needs our support, and I'm only happy to help." **KM**



Rosie Napravik, one of racing's most successful female jockeys, takes aim on her cow.



Hallway Feeds' Keni Parks and Pat Day enjoy the event's friendly competition.



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