

The US Eventing Association Annual Meeting & Convention brings education, influence opportunities, awards and fun to California in December.

Education and awards presentations highlight the agenda for the US Eventing Association's annual meeting, which comes to California for the first time in a decade, Dec. 7-10 in Long Beach. This being an eventing gathering, however, fun will also play a big part.

USEA CEO Rob Burk encourages everybody to attend. "I remember attending as a kid when the (then) USCTA meeting was in San Diego. It was great to rub elbows with top athletes and officials in the sport and be able to learn more about the direction of the sport and to tell them about the issues I was facing." It's a uniquely friendly atmosphere, he adds. "It's almost like we're all cousins and this is a big family reunion."

California's eventing community is "typically very engaged and interested" in issues affecting the sport, he notes. "I think the biggest issue for them is sometimes feeling detached from the rest of the sport." Having the convention on the West Coast "is an important way for the board to show that our sport is national and that we care about everybody." At presstime, attendance looked to be strong with the host hotel, the Westin Long Beach, filling up quickly.

We asked Rob to share his picks among the four-day event's crammed agenda of good stuff, and added a few of our own. The following highlights are drawn from what was a tentative meeting schedule at press time. Visit www.useventing.com for the latest and to register.

Thursday, Dec. 7

Noon: Eventing Calendar Planning Workshop: Organizers from each of USEA's Areas discuss and explain their competition calendar to help assemble the following year's national calendar. This is when potential conflicts are identified and hopefully resolved. Potential issues include shows that might suffer from drawing on the same participant pool and structures that enable

November 2017 - Come One, Come All

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Monday, 30 October 2017 21:32

competitors to earn qualifying points for various events and levels.

Noon-4:30: USEF rider meetings for High Performance & Open Forum for Eventing Athletes and Developing Riders, plus a Professional Horseman's Council session moderated by Leslie Law. Great chance to see top riders and learn about challenges and realities for those moving up in the sport.

4:30: Making Good Decisions with Max Corcoran. "Max emphasizes the importance of going back to basics of good horsemanship," Rob notes. Safety has always been a priority for the USEA and the sport internationally and especially in the last decade. Good horsemanship, he adds, is the most important component in that.

7 pm: Board of Governors Reception at the Long Beach Aquarium. Sponsored in part by Area VI, cocktails sponsored by Devoucoux. "Great time to catch up with everybody."

Friday, Dec. 8

8:15 am: Wake -up, Warm-Up, Work-Out with Daniel Stewart. "Daniel coached some of our international teams in sports psychology and physical training," Rob says. "His bootcamps will be great."

9 am: Introduction to EquiRatings in America. USEA is in the test phase of having EquiRatings supply it with an analytical approach to evaluating whether a horse and/or rider are prepared to compete at a certain level. The evaluation will be available to all members in the coming year, and the information will be compared to that generated by the USEA's current "mandatory step down" system.

10 am – 1 pm: Area VI Awards and Disaster Preparedness Talk with Chris Bearden.

10 am: Volunteer Incentive Program. The one-year-old VIP is growing by "leaps and bounds," Rob says, with about 70 USEA recognized events using the system for tracking and rewarding volunteer involvement. Several of the current VIP leaderboard toppers are Area VI members.

11 am: USEA Funded Equine Health Research, featuring Katherine Cooper & Dr. Mike Van Noy

1 pm: Plans for the Fair Hill CCI4*. "This East Coast competition has a large effect on the competitions across the country and this session will help competitors prepare for it," Rob explains.

1 pm: Sport is Played with the Body, but Won with the Mind, with Abigail Lufkin, a California native, 4* competitor and sports psychologist.

3 pm: Bridging The Eventing Pipeline with Brian Sabo, former USEA president and longtime eventing luminary and Area VI leader with his wife Lisa Sabo.

4 pm: Rehabilitating Your Sport Horse with Dr. Korin Potenza, DVM, CVA & Dr. Nick Huggons, of San Luis Rey Equine Hospital in San Diego County's Bonsall.

Saturday, Dec. 9

9 am: Amateur & Adult Rider Open Forum, moderated by Area VI's Dawn Robbins and Donna Bottner.

9 am: How Rider Injuries Differ by Gender, with Roy Burek of Charles Owen Helmets. Roy's knowledge of cutting edge research on helmet design includes that used by the National Football League.

10 am: Young Riders Open Forum, moderated by Diane Snow and Vicky Howard Fine.

Noon to 2 pm: USEA Annual Meeting of Members, with keynote speech by Boyd Martin. "He's always fun," says Rob of one of American's leading international riders. "We are both excited and a little worried about what he will say, and I think that's a good thing!"

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2 pm: Preparation for the 2018 World Equestrian Games.

3 pm: No Medals to Gold Medals: How it Happened For Germany, with Peter Thomsen. “He’s the German you haven’t heard of,” says Rob of this member of that country’s gold medal squad. “He has a first-hand account of how Germany did that, which is very relevant for the U.S. in this WEG year.”

6:30: USEA Year-End Awards banquet

Sunday, Dec. 10

9 am – 1 pm: USEA Board of Governors Meetings.