The Hope 4 Hooves Silver State Dispatch

EXTRA-EXTRA READ ALL ABOUT IT!

The Colonel Richard Porter M.D. Memorial Show – November 14–15, 2026

Las Vegas, NV

Story by Valerie Porter

The Show Must Go On!

Show Producer Valerie Porter and the Hope 4 Hooves–Silver State Western Dressage (H4H-SSWD) team had everything in place for what was meant to be a smooth final show of the season at Horseman's Park.

Ring steward Trish Phelps called with the news on that Friday the 13th that the FAA had issued a national ground stop in effect until further notice. The judge, Mary Mahler, was scheduled to fly in from Texas, but her flight had been pushed to the following morning. Show secretary Ebony Clark reached out to USEF for guidance. Show management had already delayed the start time by one hour, to 10 o'clock the next morning, to give the judge every chance to arrive. Then the news arrived that Mary's flight had been canceled. Valerie Porter conferred with Mary Mahler and they agreed the show would still run and Mary would judge via Face Time. However, we still did not know if this would be acceptable to WDAA or USEF. Ebony asked directly whether that solution would be acceptable to USEF. Meanwhile, Valerie Porter reached out to WDAA President Cindy Butler, Executive Director Dini Swanson, and Kathy Newcomb, Director of membership, show recognition, and State Affiliates, to determine if WDAA would honor full points for the Face Time judging of a live show.

WDAA agreed to award full points for the show given the extraordinary circumstances. USEF's answer came back clearly: points would not be awarded for a show judged via Face Time, even though the competition itself remained a live event. Carrie Olson, the C2 steward, confirmed the same and then tried to locate a local judge who could step in. The local judge was unavailable.

The Technology

Valerie helped the judge set up her phone-mirroring capability so the live arena feed would appear on her television in Fort Worth. Volunteer Adam Clark became the cameraman. Scribe Jean Wolff sat at the judges' table and recorded every score and comment in real time over the three-way connection. Kathy Obenhaus, Trish and Shane Phelps kept the grounds and the schedule moving; show runner Jeremiah secured the score sheets with timely trips to the show office; show secretary Ebony Clark validated the score sheets and inputted the data into EZ Entry. EZ Entry staff remained available throughout the weekend in case there were any computer issues.

Exhibitors & Show Staff share their thoughts

Patti Kellerhouse and Angel (owned by Virginia Deleon) – I just wanted to shout out a BIG THANK YOU to Mary Mahler, WDAA and SSWD for doing a fantastic job during our airline debacle on Friday the 13th! We thought for sure the show would be canceled just as the flights. You all came together and created a solution that worked great so the Col. Porter M.D. Memorial show planned for Nov. 14th and 15th could still succeed. The show must go on! I guess COVID has taught us much!

Annette Spinetti – What a way to close out the 2026 show season!

Heading into my final horse show of the year, the pressure was definitely on! I entered the weekend sitting in second place nationally in Fourth Level Open, just 12.5 points behind the first-place rider.

After an entire year of hard work, dedication, and countless hours spent developing this horse, we had worked our way into a position where a year-end championship was within reach.

So, when I received the news that our judge would be unable to attend the show in person, my heart absolutely sank. The possibility of having the show canceled—and potentially losing our final opportunity to earn those much-needed points—was incredibly disappointing.

Fortunately, where there's a will, there's a way!

Thanks to the determination, creativity, and teamwork of some truly remarkable individuals, an alternative plan was put into place, allowing the entire show to proceed successfully!

And now… the waiting game begins!

Did we earn enough points over the past two weekends to close that 12.5-point gap and take over the top spot? Only time will tell, but I couldn't be prouder of how far we've come this season!

Beyond the competition, I want to recognize just how fortunate our small Las Vegas dressage community is to have such an extraordinary group of people dedicated to keeping our shows running.

A very special thank-you to Jean Wolff, whose extensive knowledge and experience in scribing were absolutely invaluable this weekend. And an equally heartfelt thank-you to Adam, a wonderful young man who worked tirelessly handling the videography for every competitor's ride throughout the entire weekend. Without individuals like these, weekends like this simply wouldn't be possible.

It's easy to get caught up in scores, points, and championships, but weekends like this are a wonderful reminder that the people behind the scenes are every bit as important as the competitors in the arena.

Here's to an incredible season, a community that always finds a way, and hopefully one very exciting year-end result!

Lisa Gabaldon – I think it turned out great given the circumstances. I would only suggest it in extreme cases (like ours) because it was basically a virtual show. I think your fantastic staff and Jean made it a pleasant experience.

Shelby Hagenbeek Jr. Rider – I think it worked out fine, considering the circumstances. I believe the judge accurately judged and did not have a problem.

Kathy Obenhaus, Show Manager – A key component is an IT specialist who can communicate with the judge and help set up the technology. Valerie's assistance in helping Mary cast from her phone to her TV was critical for her. Battery life for the videographer is also an important consideration. The use of Air Pods for the scribe was another key component that made everything work so well.

Jean Wolff, Scribe – On Saturday, Nov. 21, 2026, and Sunday, Nov. 22, 2026, I was the scribe for the Silver State Western Dressage show held at Horseman's Park in Las Vegas, NV. Due to the national air grounding of all airlines, our scheduled judge Mary Mahler could not travel to Las Vegas. Show management and Judge Mahler conferred and decided to try the method of scoring described within this note.

Video filming was accomplished via Face Time between the judges' table and the judge physically located in Fort Worth, Texas. Using an iPhone, earpieces were linked to the video feed via Bluetooth. The individual doing the filming followed the rider/horse combination as the test took place, using the zoom feature on the phone. Three-way communication was possible between the judge, myself, and the videographer.

As the scribe, I wrote down all scores and comments relayed to me by the judge. This included the Collectives and Remarks. Errors were noted by the judge as well as any changes in scores or comments.

In my opinion, the two of us worked well together using this method. Under her direction, I feel the horse/rider performances were accurately written on the score sheets. I did not sign the score sheets, but I did sign my initials near the judge signature line to indicate I was the one who completed the score sheet at the direction of the judge. This method of scoring did not seem to affect the time schedule of the show and riders seemed to be comfortable with the change of scoring method. The judge also offered any rider to come forward at the show's end to have a short individual Q/A session using Face Time.

It's a Wrap

Whether the Colonel Richard Porter M.D. Memorial Show set a lasting precedent remains an open question. WDAA granted full points under the extraordinary circumstances of the national ground stop, while USEF did not. The solution was a one-time emergency measure, not a newly approved standard. Still, the weekend demonstrated that live "tele-show" judging is technically possible. With improving video, connectivity, and communication tools, the same approach could one day let experienced officials cover multiple shows across different states in a single weekend. That flexibility might prove especially valuable for smaller or rural competitions that struggle to secure officials and might otherwise have to cancel. For now, it remains an exception reserved for true crises. The larger question is whether governing bodies will eventually formalize clear rules that would allow technology to expand access without compromising the integrity of live competition.

Upcoming Events

All shows are USEF-Lite, WDAA, CAWDA recognized. (Possible NVWDA recognition pending)

The Dakota Girl Be My Valentine Show – February 19–21
Judge Ellie Stine-Masek “R”

February 28, 2027 – 11:00 AM
CAWDA/SSWD Awards Ceremony – Location: TBA

March Madness Show – March 19–20 WD
Judge Kathleen Elliot “R”

March 21 – WE clinic patterns and obstacles with Kathleen Elliot

April Ginger 360-Tombstone Ellie Show – April 16–17 WD
April 18 – WE schooling show

Judge Marie Maloney “R”

May Days Show – May 14–16
Judge Cliff Swanson “R”

October Jodi E. Larsen Memorial Show – October 15–16
Judge Sara Justice “R”

November Colonel R.I. Porter Memorial Show – November 12–13 WD
November 14 – Clinic with Lynn Newton

Judge Lynn Newton “R”

Yeehaw! — Hope 4 Hooves Silver State Dispatch

