

Rolex

Each year, top horse and rider combinations meet in Kentucky for the annual Rolex Three-Day Event.

By Katie Olean

Some equestrians excel in the art of dressage. Many prefer to compete in the jumping arena, while others hone their skills solely over fences in cross country. Then there are those who master all three.

Eventing is a sport for horses and riders to showcase their most extensive abilities. Through three phases of competition, horses must first prove elegance and harmony in the dressage court, then speed and stamina during cross-country competition and finally, athletic ability and training in stadium jumping.

The last weekend of April each year is reserved for a competition that tests these skills at the top level in the world. The Rolex Kentucky Three-Day Event takes place at the Kentucky Horse Park in Lexington. Aside from the prestige of the esteemed win, \$200,000 in prize money and a Rolex watch are awarded to top competitors.

The first day of competition at the Rolex Kentucky Three-Day Event begins with dressage. The purpose of the dressage phase is to show that the proper foundation has been laid for the broader demands of the full competition.

The next phase brings the cross-country jumping course. This test weighs most heavily in points for all of the Three-Day Events. In cross-country, horse and rider must navigate with speed over a course of massive, solid objects, wide ditches and high banks. The test is meant to demonstrate the horse's speed and jumping ability, the rider's skill and knowledge of pace and the overall confidence the two have in each other.

The last day of the event is stadium jumping. Unlike ordinary show jumping, this test exists to prove that, following a day of jumping solid obstacles at speed, the horse can still maintain the necessary obedience to cleanly jump unstable obstacles at a controlled pace. The course is irregular and winding, and any obstacle knocked down is penalized.

The Rolex Kentucky Three-Day Event is one out of five eventing competitions in the world to have a top difficulty rating of four stars, and it is the only one conducted in America. In addition to the glory and prizes of the competition, the Rolex Kentucky Three-Day Event provides an annual opportunity for horse and rider combinations to train for the World Championships and Olympic Games.

For more information, visit www.rk3de.org.