

2007 Rolex FEI World Cup Begins

A list of talented contenders prepare for the competition this weekend in Las Vegas.

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Riders from around the world have gathered to battle it out for the World Cup titles in dressage and show jumping at the 2007 Rolex FEI World Cup Finals in Las Vegas at the Thomas and Mack Center, and they are certainly ready to take to the stage.

There are four Americans who are hoping to stand upon the medal podium when all is said and done. Steffen Peters and 17-year-old Westphalian gelding, Floriano, have high hopes riding on their backs. Other contenders include: Leslie Morse and Tip Top 962; Courtney King and Idocus; and Catherine Haddad aboard Maximus. The first three riders earned their place at the World Cup after a long series of competitions. Haddad, who lives and trains in Germany, received a wild card slot and invitation to represent the United States.

Standing in their way to claiming the championship title is a host of other riders including Germany's Isabell Werth, Sweden's Jan Brink and Holland's Edward Gal.

Top-flight international jumpers also launch into competition. Leading the U.S. team at the World Cup is New York's Beezie Madden and Authentic, a 12-year-old Dutch Warmblood gelding. In the 2006 FEI World Equestrian Games (WEG), they were the top-placing American pair, with an unforgettable string of fault-free rounds coming into the final. Their performance gained them a new legion of worldwide fans and solidified them as serious contenders for the 2007 World Cup title.

Joining Madden in the race for the title is another New Yorker, McLain Ward, and 12-year-old Belgian Warmblood, Sapphire. The duo competed alongside Madden at the 2006 WEG as a part of the U.S. team and put down some serious rounds to challenge the best international riders in the world.

Their competition will be some of the world's best known jumpers. Brazil's Rodrigo Pessoa has brought two mounts to Las Vegas, Oasis and Coeur. Germany's Meredith Michaels-Beerbaum has returned with her 2005 mount, Shutterfly, aboard whom she took the 2005 World Cup title. In addition to these competitors, there is a long list of other standouts.

The 2007 Rolex FEI World cup began April 18 and will continue through April 22.

For up-to-date news and results, visit www.usef.org/worldcupfinals/2007 or www.worldcuplasvegas.com.

Check HorseChannel.com Monday for final results.