

## Video: Express Eventing

The inaugural Express Eventing competition in Cardiff, England, was designed to attract new fans to the sport of eventing. However, the crowd of 13,000 spectators inside Millennium Stadium on Nov. 30, 2008, was struck silent as British Olympian Mary King's mount, Call Again Cavalier, was vanned off and later euthanized by veterinarians after falling at a cross-country fence. King and the 16-year-old gelding helped Great Britain win team bronze at the 2008 Olympics in Hong Kong.

Express Eventing compresses the sport into one day, instead of three or more. Organizers hoped to bring in new fans by holding all three phases of the sport under one roof in one day. First, all of the competitors rode their dressage tests to music. Then show jumping was immediately followed by cross-country, with only a brief "pit stop" to change tack and apparel in between.

International participants included 19 horse-and-rider pairs, but only six completed all three phases of the event. The top three finishers all represented the home team of Great Britain: Oliver Townend took home the £100,000 winner's share of the £250,000 available prize money. American Buck Davidson retired his horse on the cross-country course, while Phillip Dutton, also representing the United States, was eliminated for an error during that phase.

Horse Illustrated asked United States Eventing Association (USEA) CEO Jo Whitehouse whether this abbreviated competition format would be seen stateside in the future.

"The USEA has no plans to explore the type of competition recently showcased in Britain under the title 'Express Eventing,'" Whitehouse says. "Conversely, our focus remains firmly on the traditional format of the sport through our national horse trials and FEI competitions. Even more than that, the leadership of the USEA is committed to the preservation of the classic three-day event long-format competition with steeplechase and roads and tracks."

Will Express Eventing continue on in the UK? Currently, the answer appears to be yes. A series of Express Eventing competitions in international sporting locations has been announced for 2009, where riders can qualify for the International Cup. Organizers have been quoted as saying that the format of the competition will be overhauled to make it friendlier to riders and safer for horses.

Watch William Fox-Pitt compete in the Express Eventing competition.

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