



Try It: You'll Like It!

New sport of indoor eventing staged on Oct. 11 to benefit Thoroughbreds in transition.

Auburn Excell Brady loves promoting eventing almost as much as she loves doing it. The owner and head trainer of Excell Equestrian, LLC, Auburn is spearheading a unique indoor eventing competition Oct. 11, with the goal of igniting new enthusiasm for the sport and raising funds for the TROTT Thoroughbred program. The event, the Pacific Indoor Event Classic, will be staged at Sycamore Trails Stables in Orange County's San Juan Capistrano, where Auburn's training business is based.

Indoor eventing is a relatively new competition that's catching on in popularity, thanks in part to the success it has enjoyed at the Royal Winter Fair Horse Show in Toronto. As the name implies, it's held in an indoor arena, over a course of both solid cross-country obstacles and delicate stadium jumps. The competition is great for eventers of all experience levels and for hunter/jumper riders who want to challenge themselves with a new experience. The Classic will have hunter and jumper derby classes, with ace course designer and eventer James Atkinson serving as a key member of the organizing team.

"We want to introduce a new style of competition and encourage traditional hunter/

jumper riders to participate in the fun and thrill of three-day eventing," Auburn explains. Indoor eventing, she adds, also makes great use of Orange County's limited open equestrian spaces.

"Indoor eventing blends the skill and accuracy of show jumping with the thrill and adventure of cross-country riding," Auburn says. "It skips the dressage and dives right into the good stuff. Arenas can be filled with hedges, walls, banks, logs, water jumps and other spectacular portable terrain obstacles. These natural obstacles are combined with fragile stadium jumps, whose poles and planks are designed to fall at the slightest nudge of a hoof." The end result is exciting action for participants and spectators alike. "For a minute and a half, the audience will get to see the horse and rider take on several types of challenges." In this timed event, six seconds are added if a horse takes down a rail.

"I began brainstorming with some friends about putting on a fundraiser to support TROTT, the Thoroughbred program I have been working with this year. We came up with the idea of having an indoor eventing derby that could include hunter/jumper riders as well as experienced event riders." (See article on TROTT, page XX.)

James Atkinson is a critical member of the planning team. He is an 'S' cross-country course designer, three-time Canadian equestrian team member and is the resident trainer of Copper Meadows Equestrian Center in Ramona. "We are getting so much support already," Auburn notes. "It's really exciting to me the way the local hunter/jumper community responded to the idea. I am hoping that my fellow event riders will rally for the event. I am very excited about including the trainers in the area and I think we will have a great time."

Plans are in the works to bring indoor eventing to other venues in Southern California.

In addition to participants, the event seeks sponsors. All funds received will be divided between prize money and a donation to TROTT.



"Along with the show, we will have a silent auction and raffle and an after-party. Besides the fun time, it's helping to prepare these amazing Thoroughbred athletes for their new jobs."

"I love this sport and cannot imagine what I would rather do for a career," says Auburn. "My passion is, of course, competing and introducing the sport to riders for the first time. It's great to take riders out cross-country schooling and watch them get more confident outside their normal comfort zone."

Mixing It Up

Auburn's passion for reaching out to the hunter/jumper set is partly inspired by how much fun she had delving into their world while competing in the \$5,000 Foxfield Jumping Derby last year. (This year's Derby takes place Oct. 5.)

"I had no idea what I was getting myself into," she explains of her last-minute decision to ride in the famous Foxfield competition. "I was encouraged by an eventing buddy, Gina Economou, who had recently hosted a clinic with Olympic show jumper Greg Best. I was pleasantly surprised to find a wonderful course of show jumps mixed with a field of cross-country obstacles such as a sunken road, Irish bank, logs and an open water. 'Wow,' I thought. 'Yippee, I get to do my two favorite things on one course!'" Auburn had a clean jumping round with time penalties that landed her in an impressive fourth place overall. "Since that experience I have been so excited to return to the venue and bring some of my students to ride." She hopes for a similar reaction from hunter/jumper riders who test the eventing waters at the Sycamore Trails indoor eventing competition.

Auburn has a proven record of success across the equine industry and her ascent includes first hand experience with OTTBs. She took her own Irish Treasure to success at the Two-Star level eventing. "He was literally bound for the dogfood factory when I got him," she recalls. "He had a huge heart and was one of the best horses I've ever had."

The trainer's Level 3 certification from the US Eventing Association's Instructor Certification Program reflects her commitment to the sport and her students and horses. Her horsemanship and coaching expertise is combined with a degree in organizational leadership and business, from Chapman University, to create a highly professional program. She welcomes all riders, from seasoned veterans to first timers and enjoys the process of helping all attain their goals. Along with excellent instruction, Auburn's program is well known for its fun and inviting vibe. She donates many hours to the TROTT horses she works with and is happy to help others get involved in the program.

For more information on Auburn Excell's training program and the indoor event, visit www.excellequestrian.com. To learn more and/or get involved with TROTT, visit www.TrottUSA.org.