



Olympic Designer Stephens to Plan Course for Hartner Memorial Horse Show

BY PATRICIA SMITH: EQUESTRIAN CORRESPONDENT

Show-jumpers will have an opportunity to ride a Steve Stephens-designed course at the upcoming Alex Hartner Memorial Horse Show to be held Oct. 25-26 at the Lake Waccamaw Exhibition Center in Lake Waccamaw, N.C.

The show is being held in memory of equestrian Alex Hartner from Hampstead, N.C., who was killed in a car accident in January 2008.

Eighteen-year-old Hartner was a freshman at St. Andrews College in Laurinburg and was a member of its intercollegiate hunter-seat riding team. She showed in many disciplines including eventing, western gaming, dressage and show-jumpers.

On impulse, Alex's mother Jane contacted Steve Stephens, one of the world's leading designers of jumper courses and fences to see if he would design the show-jumping courses for the horse show. Stephens was moved by Alex's story and agreed to bring the jumps, design the courses, and attend the event.

Stephens is currently in Hong Kong to design the stadium jumper courses for the Equestrian Olympics, along with Leopoldo Palacios of Venezuela.

Besides show-jumping, the Alex Hartner Memorial Show will offer four other divisions: Hunters, Western Pleasure, Dressage and Gaming. Each of the five divisions will offer a Sportsmanship trophy.

"Alex was all about sportsmanship. She was a beautiful girl and an excellent equestrian but the thing I'm most proud of is what a great sport she was," said her mother Jane.

"Recently in Wellington, Fla., Alex bombed in her first jumper class. She came out laughing. She then went on to win her division. I told her trainer, you have to give her credit for being able to blow off the class that didn't go well. Her trainer (Adrian Ford) replied 'Alex has the mind of an athlete like no other I've ever met.'"

The show will benefit the St. Andrews Presbyterian College Equitation Scholarship Fund and the Topsail High School Scholarship Fund. The St. Andrews Equestrian team will attend both days of the show.

"It would be wonderful if we could get a Southern Pines contingent to come to the show," said St. Andrews Equestrian Director Peggy McElveen. "We're going to have a great time

with the horses that we love and that Alex loved. We're going to celebrate her life. Alex was such a vibrant young lady and we miss her."

Stephens, 58, has designed numerous show-jumping courses throughout his career. He was influenced early in his career by Bertalan de Nemethy, the former USET show-jumping coach and a master course designer. Stephens is a partner in Imperial Farms in Palmetto, Fla., with Gene Mische. A former show-jumper rider, Stephens also builds the artistic obstacles seen at the Winter Equestrian Festival, the Budweiser Invitational, the American Gold Cup (which he won in 1971) and the Devon Horse Show. He is married to Grand Prix show-jumper Debbie Stephens.

For more information about the Alex Hartner Memorial Horse Show, go to www.alexhartner.org.a