

## **When Two Worlds Collide**

**By Jenni Autry**

Two worlds are set to collide in September when the mid-Atlantic racing and eventing communities join hands to showcase the versatility of the Thoroughbred breed in idyllic Unionville, Pennsylvania.

Plantation Field International Horse Trials, known colloquially as the “Best Event Ever” thanks to its legendary parties on the grounds, will forego its usual theme weekend to instead devote Sept. 14-17 to honoring the Thoroughbred’s storied role in racing and eventing.

In announcing a multi-year partnership with Retired Racehorse Project, Plantation Field will celebrate excellence in Thoroughbred racing culture and bring together two groups that share the same desire to see Thoroughbreds thrive and flourish, both on the track and after their careers as racehorses are complete.

Steuart Pittman, Retired Racehorse Project’s president, said he hopes the racing community will embrace the concept, venturing from the racetrack to the cross country course in the name of the Thoroughbred.

“We hope this will be a real coming together of the racing world with eventing so we can have a positive impact that will support both sports and ultimately the Thoroughbred in the long run,” Pittman said.

“The goal is to bring the racing community out to enjoy everything Plantation Field has to offer and introduce the Retired Racehorse Project as a resource. We can help owners, trainers and breeders sell their horses through our resource directory. If we work together, we can successfully transition horses to second careers after the track.”

### **Eventing: An Equine Triathlon**

Originally developed as a method for training military horses, eventing ultimately evolved into a sport that first appeared in the Olympic Games in 1912. Eventing is essentially an equine triathlon, combining the three phases of dressage, cross country and show jumping into a sport that demands a well-rounded equine athlete.

Considering the grueling fitness test required in the cross country phase — when horses will gallop and jump for more than 10 minutes over as many as 45 obstacles at the highest level of the sport — the Thoroughbred’s gallop and stamina helped the breed find a stronghold in eventing.

Countless Thoroughbreds have taken top eventing honors in the U.S. and beyond, and the United States Eventing Association’s leaderboard of All-Time High Scoring Horses shows three Thoroughbreds in the top 10.

Phillip Dutton knows all too well how perfectly suited the Thoroughbred is to eventing. Hailed the Angel Cordero of the eventing world by Terry Finley, Dutton won two Olympic team gold medals in 1996 and 2000 for his native Australia — both times riding Thoroughbreds.

Since then Dutton has piloted many Thoroughbreds to top results around the world. He rode TruLuck, purchased off the track in Oklahoma, to team gold and individual silver at the 2007 Pan American Games.

The Foreman came to Dutton from Maryland steeplechase trainer Bruce Fenwick and also went on to have a dominant eventing career, placing second at the prestigious Burghley CCI4\* and Kentucky CCI4\* and sitting 7th on the list of U.S. All-Time High Scoring Horses.

“When it comes to the cross country, no horse will have a better gallop, stamina and natural athletic ability than a Thoroughbred,” Dutton said. “They also have an incredible amount of heart. When other horses will get tired and quit, the Thoroughbred will keep trying and keep going for you.”

### **Icabad Crane**

Considering Dutton’s history of successfully training Thoroughbreds, he became Graham and Anita Motion’s first choice when looking for an eventing trainer to work with their Thoroughbreds.

The Motions first had the idea to send horses to Dutton for a shot at a second career when Icabad Crane retired from the track in 2013. Icabad Crane finished third in the 2008 Preakness Stakes and won or placed in 15 other stakes for owner Earle Mack, earning \$585,980.

When he retired as an 8-year-old, the Motions took on ownership of Icabad Crane and knew the horse didn’t want to stand around in a field. They decided to send him to Dutton for training at True Prospect Farm, about 7 miles from Plantation Field and an hour from the Motions’ base at Fair Hill Training Center in Maryland.

It proved to be a match right from the start, with Dutton seeing Icabad Crane’s innate drive and desire to succeed in everything he did, which made his transition to an eventing career virtually seamless.

“Icabad was always a very willing horse,” Graham said. “It’s one thing to be athletic, but he also always had the right attitude. His disposition absolutely helped in his new career.” Anita added: “Phillip wouldn’t have competed him if we didn’t think the horse had what it takes. Not only was there a real talent there, but Icabad wanted to do it.”

Icabad Crane flourished in his new career, winning his first Beginner Novice event and going on to finish his first eventing season with a win in the \$10,000 America’s Most

Wanted Thoroughbred Contest, hosted by the Retired Racehorse Project at Pimlico Racetrack in 2014.

Icabad Crane continued to rack up top results, culminating in a win in the Plantation Field CIC\* in 2015 in his first start at the one-star level. The Motions proudly held the winner's cooler that day, and since then they have traded roles with the Duttons, who joined the West Point Thoroughbreds partnership for grade I winner Ring Weekend.

Now Motion and Dutton hope the greater mid-Atlantic racing and eventing communities can unite at Plantation Field to build on what they started: joining two worlds that both hold an immense respect for the Thoroughbred.

### **Showcasing Thoroughbreds**

The weekend will be dedicated to showcasing the breed, with the Retired Racehorse Project taking center stage. The timing is ideal, as Plantation Field takes place annually three weeks prior to the \$100,000 Thoroughbred Makeover and National Symposium, which this year will take place Oct. 5-8, 2017 at the Kentucky Horse Park.

With Retired Racehorse Project now on board as Plantation Field's beneficiary, the event will also serve as a preview show for Thoroughbreds that will compete in and ultimately be available for sale at the Makeover.

"That way people can see horses they like at Plantation Field and then go on to the Makeover to shop," Pittman said. "There will be a number of really nice horses ready to start second careers, and we are excited to show them off at Plantation Field."

Beyond that, Pittman said he hopes Plantation Field will serve as an opportunity for the racing world to see Thoroughbreds galloping across an entirely different type of track — one dotted with cross country jumps.

"What we've seen is that racing people love eventing when they take the time to go watch the sport," Pittman said. "They get to see horses galloping on the cross country course, which is something they can get excited about."

In addition to previewing horses that will compete at the Thoroughbred Makeover, the Retired Racehorse Project's demonstration will also feature celebrity Thoroughbreds, including Makeover graduates from prior years. Icabad Crane will also make a special appearance with Dutton.

"Icabad is a perfect example of what Thoroughbreds can do in second careers if given the chance," Dutton said. "We are continually grateful to Graham and Anita for giving him that opportunity. Our hope is that when people see Icabad at Plantation Field they might be inspired to give a Thoroughbred a second career after the track, whether as a rider, owner or trainer."

The highlight of the weekend will be the Real Rider Cup, which will pit some of the biggest names in racing against each other for a show jumping competition in the main arena.

Rodney Jenkins, Rosie Napravnik, Joe Sharp, Sean Clancy, Michael McCarthy, Erin Birkenhauer and Sanna Neilson will all make an appearance at the Real Rider Cup, with more celebrity competitors slated to be unveiled in the countdown to the event.

“The Thoroughbred community are intrigued with the eventing and show jumping world and are totally committed to providing other outlets for our retirees,” Anita said. “The Real Rider Cup event shows a fun side to this endeavor.”

Dutton said he hopes Thoroughbred trainers, owners and breeders will get involved in support of the Retired Racehorse Project and second careers for racehorses.

“Retired Racehorse Project is a perfect example of how we can help the transition from racing to a successful second career,” Dutton said. “By attending Plantation Field and supporting the event, you can bring greater attention, participation and financial support to the successful transition Thoroughbreds can have.”

### **If You Go**

In addition to three days of exhilarating competition, Plantation Field features a country fair atmosphere with a sprawling vendor village, a food court and kid’s corner to provide entertainment for the whole family.

Admission to Plantation Field Horse Trials is free on Friday, Sept. 15, with general admission on Saturday, Sept. 16 and Sunday, Sept. 17 priced at \$20 per carload.

For more information, visit [www.plantationfieldht.com](http://www.plantationfieldht.com). Tickets and tailgate passes can be purchased in advance on the website. Follow Plantation Field on Facebook for news and updates.