



Twin Rivers Fall International Recap: Veterans and Rising Stars Shine

September 22, 2024

By Jonathan Horowitz

Paso Robles, CA — Cora's four-star win with James Alliston in the mare's first event at the level, along with Tamie Smith's victories with her veterans Mai Baum at Intermediate and Kynan in the three-star, were highlights of the 2024 Twin Rivers Fall International in Paso Robles, California. Also, Get Wild and Gabriella Ringer won the CCI2*-S after capturing the CCI2*-L at this year's Twin Rivers Spring International. Lauren Burnell returned to FEI competition with victory in the CCI1*-S aboard Freedom Hill after what she described as "a pretty intense hip surgery last October." And, in the USEA's Young Event Horse (YEH) qualifiers, Andrea Baxter and MBF Dig Deep won the 4-year-old division, and Amber Birtcil was one-two in the 5-year-old division with Zippity Doodah and Orpheus.

In the CCI4*-S, Cora clinched victory with clear jumping and adding 4.4 time penalties on cross-country to finish on a score of 44.8. It's been a quick rise for Alliston and the big 9-year-old bay Oldenburg mare (Commissario x La-Montana) since their first event together at Novice at the 2022 Twin Rivers Fall International. In 2024, they were reserve champion in the CCI3*-L at the Twin Rivers Spring International in April, as well as runner-up in the CCI3*-L at The Event at Rebecca Farm in Montana in July.

"It was awesome," Alliston said. "I'm really thrilled with how it went. She's a nice horse, obviously, but you never know the first time you move up a level how they're going to handle the bigger jumps. Everything is harder and all that, but she did really, really well. I was very impressed."



James Alliston and Cora. Ride On Photo.

Alliston also won the CCI4*-S at this event in 2023 with a 9-year-old bay Oldenburg mare in Karma (Escudo II x Travita). Karma would go on to make her five-star debut at the Defender Kentucky Three-Day Event in 2024 and most recently finished ninth as part of the Defender U.S. Eventing Team at the CHIO Aachen CCIO4*-S in Germany.

“They’re both very careful; that’s the similarity,” Alliston said. “Obviously, Cora is a huge horse, sort of 18 hands, and Karma is more normal-sized, I would say 16.2. Karma is very fast tempo, high activity in the canter, fast tempo. Cora is so big that she has a big, huge stride but a slower tempo. She’s also fast to ride because she’s not strong; she doesn’t pull at the jumps. So, you can kind of not waste much time setting her up. She’s so huge that you can also do a step less in some of the lines in the show jumping and cross-country; you can easily take a stride out. They’re quite different to ride, opposite ends of the spectrum, but both very careful and both good jumpers.”

Alliston said he would point Cora to the Advanced level at Ram Tap in Fresno, California, in October, while Karma would wait to return to competition in 2025 with Kentucky as a five-star goal.

In the CCI3*-S, Smith finished one-two with Kynan (Envoy x Danieta) and Lillet 3 (S.I.E.C. Livello x Princess L), with both recording zero jump penalties and finishing within one point of each other. Kynan’s score was 30.0 in the 9-year-old bay Dutch Warmblood gelding’s first event since May. Lillet 3 finished on a score of 30.9 in the first FEI event for the 8-year-old dark bay Holsteiner mare with Smith. “Lillet” has won FEI events with two other riders—the CCI4*-S at Kristianstad in Sweden with Andreas Dibowski in 2024 and the CCI2*-S at Baborowko in Poland with Maj-Jonna Ziebell in 2023.

Smith also used the Fall International as the comeback event for her 2023 Kentucky five-star winner Mai Baum (Loredano x Ramira), winning the Intermediate level with clear jumping on a score 30.9, as a prep for the CCI5*-L at the Maryland 5 Star at Fair Hill next month.

“I had a super weekend with all of the horses,” Smith said. “The tracks were challenging, and the [Twin Rivers] team did a phenomenal job on the footing. The massive effort to get the footing right was evident, and I know I can speak for all of the competitors how grateful we are for the huge improvement that was made.”



Tamie Smith and Kynan. Ride On Photo.



Tamie Smith and Mai Baum. Ride On Photo.

In the CCI2*-S, Ringer and Get Wild won with a score of 28.6. The 20-year-old rider and 12-year-old bay Dutch Warmblood gelding (Plot Blue x Cantana) have been a team for more than six years since starting at Novice in 2018. They've now collected 18 blue ribbons in 39 events together.

“He made it feel easy out there, and there were plenty of challenging obstacles on this track,” Ringer said. “He was fast and jumped well. Since his win this spring in the CCI2*-L, we have just been trying to keep things consistent. It’s been my mission all season to be the rider he deserves, and we’ve taken big strides in that direction.”



Gabriella Ringer and Get Wild. Ride On Photo.

In the CCI1*-S, Burnell and Freedom Hill, a 14-year-old bay Irish Sport Horse gelding (Fernhill Vriend x Sallymount Clover), finished on their dressage score of 28.8. Burnell returned to competing in USEA-recognized events in March after more than 16 months. This was her first FEI event since 2021.

“I am so lucky to have the partnership that I have with my horse,” Burnell said. “It was tough on me having to take an entire year off figuring out what surgery I needed, so to win my first FEI show back makes me a bit emotional. He’s the best horse ever. He’s so steady and consistent. Just a dream to ride. He’s a true professional.”



Lauren Burnell and Freedom Hill. Ride On Photo.

The Fall International’s YEH competition showcased the next generation of potential FEI stars. In the 4-year-old qualifier, MBF Dig Deep, a bay Dutch Warmblood gelding (Golddigger x Amber) that Andrea Baxter acquired from the 2023 Goresbridge Go For Gold auction in Ireland, posted the best 4-year-old qualifying score in the country with 88.15, according to the USEA’s list of horses qualified for the Dutta Corp. USEA YEH Championships.

“I’ve never been so excited about a horse as I am for Dig Deep,” Baxter said. “He’s a super athlete with all the qualities to be a top horse. I bought him as another ‘easy button’ accident, but this horse is the real deal. I’m so excited.”



Andrea Baxter and MBF Dig Deep. Ride On Photo.

Baxter won the 2023 USEA YEH 5 Year-Old West Coast Championship with Camelot PJ (Colman x Hauptstutbuch Evita), with whom she finished ninth in the CCI2*-S at the 2024 Fall International. She was also sixth in the two-star with The Big Easy (Mr Lincoln B x PLS Hippo Q), the same placing “Yoda” had in last year’s 5-year-old championship, along with winning The Safe Harbor Award given to the 5-year-old with the most graceful and rider friendly performance throughout the competition. Baxter also rode the 7-year-old Adventure (Avos Jordan Z x Rockmount Lillie) in the CCI2*-S, finishing 12th.

“My other three are always battling for ‘which one is the best’ and I still can’t decide,” she said. “They are all so different but so cool.”

Amber Birtcil, who had two of the top-five in the 2023 5-year-old West Coast championship, had the top-two in the 2024 Fall International’s 5-year-old qualifier with Zippity Doodah (Zirocco Blue VDL x Zolga’s Sundae) winning with 86.20 and Orpheus (Gerardus x Hiewitta) second with 86.15.

“They are both lovely great-brained 5-year-olds that I’ve really been enjoying producing,” Birtcil said.

Twin Rivers Ranch will host the Dutta Corp. USEA YEH West Coast Championships on October 25-26, with a Last Chance Qualifier on October 24.

“It’s actually my favorite event all year,” Birtcil said.



Amber Birtcil and Zippity Doodah. Ride On Photo.

The full list of winners from the 2024 Twin Rivers Fall International:

CCI4*-S: James Alliston and Cora (44.8)

CCI3*-S: Tamie Smith and Kynan (28.8)

CCI2*-S: Gabriella Ringer and Get Wild (28.6)

CCI1*-S: Lauren Burnell and Freedom Hill (28.8)

Open Intermediate: Tamie Smith and Mai Baum (30.9)

Open Preliminary: Sophie Tice and Viva La Vida (24.3)

Open Modified: Paige Beauchamp Crandon and Fyfin Ramiro (24.1)

Open Training: Tamie Smith and Kareena K (21.0)

Training Rider: Anna Brostrom and Girl of California (30.7)
Open Novice: Amber Birtcil and Nadeche (29.7)
Sr. Novice Rider: Nicci Guzzetta and Little Richard (23.9)
Jr. Novice Rider: Michaela Smith and Cashmaker (28.3)
Novice Amateur: Michlynn Sterling and Crockanboy Dancer (31.7)
Open Beginner Novice: Lauren Billys Shady and Dicaprio Z (30.0)
Sr. Beginner Novice Rider: Caroline Sanoner and Fast In Love (30.6)
Jr. Beginner Novice Rider: Ella Smith and Bittersweet 2 (29.4)
Open Starter A: Mia Budelli and Armani (31.8)
Open Starter B: Gina Miles and Lightning (28.3)
YEH-4: Andrea Baxter and MBF Dig Deep (88.15)
YEH-5: Amber Birtcil and Zippity Doodah (86.20)

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