



## ***TWIN RIVERS WINTER HORSE TRIALS RECAP***

### **A Look into the Crystal Ball of West Coast Eventing at Twin Rivers**

March 2, 2024

By Jonathan Horowitz

*Paso Robles, CA* — The 2024 Twin Rivers Winter Horse Trials in Paso Robles, California, showed how much there is to be excited about for the future of West Coast eventing.

Molly Duda and Disco Traveler moved up to the Advanced level for the first time and won—setting the horse and young rider up to make their four-star debut this year.

James Alliston, who campaigned Karma to be the 2023 Bates USEA Mare of the Year, showcased another speedy bay mare in Cora for her first victory at the Intermediate level.

At the Preliminary level, Tamie Smith won the Open division with Sumas Tina Turner in the U.S. debut for the Irish Sport Horse mare that previously competed up to the three-star level with Australian Olympian Kevin McNab in Great Britain. In the Preliminary Rider division, Lex D ridden by Audrey Sanborn won his first blue ribbon since capturing the 2021 Dutta Corp. USEA Young Event Horse West Coast Championship for 5-year-olds, and it was Sanborn's first victory at the upper levels in a USEA-recognized event.



*Molly Duda and Disco Traveler. Ride On Photo.*

Duda, who moved up to and won her three-star debut at the 2023 Twin Rivers Spring International for her first FEI victory at the age of 18, took the next step in her promising young career at Twin Rivers' first recognized event of 2024.

“The weekend was absolutely surreal,” she said. “It was both my and Disco’s first Advanced, so my goal was just to finish on a number, but taking the win was beyond what I ever imagined. It is truly a testament to the partnership I have built with this horse over the years and the team behind us that makes all of this possible—especially my wonderful coaches, Mickayla Howard, Tamie Smith, Bec Braitling, and Robyn Fisher.”



*Molly Duda and Disco Traveler. Ride On Photo.*

“Just to finishing on a number” turned out to be finishing on the lowest number for Duda and Disco. Duda and the 15-year-old Swedish Warmblood gelding (Donatelli x Cadence) were second after a dressage score of 36.6, moved into the lead with the fastest round on Morgan Rowsell’s Advanced cross-country course by adding 12.0 time penalties, and jumped clear and added two seconds of time penalties in show jumping to finish on a score of 49.4.

“Moving forward, the plan is for Disco to run the CCI4\*-S at Galway Downs [California] later this month and aim for the CCI4\*-L at Rebecca Farm [Montana] this summer,” Duda said. “Disco continues to exceed every expectation of him, and I’m beyond excited for the rest of the season with him.”

In second and third at Advanced were two California-based five-star riders with Bec Braitling and Caravaggio II (Vangelis-S x Courtesan) just 0.7 points back in second and Tamie Smith and Elliot V (Zavall VDL x Vera-R) in third. Duda credits the support of and camaraderie with the top-level West Coast eventers for her growth.

“On the first day, Tamie led a cross-country course walk for the entire Advanced division, and everyone walked the lines together and discussed strategies,” Duda said. “Tamie’s generosity is infectious, and the sense of community she creates among the competitors is truly special.”



*James Alliston and Cora. Ride On Photo.*

As he looks ahead to the five-star debut for Karma (Escudo II x Travita) at the 2024 Defender Kentucky Three-Day Event, Alliston is quickly moving Cora (Commissario x La-Montana) up the levels.

“The first thing, she’s massive,” Alliston said about the 9-year-old bay Hanoverian mare. “She’s really, really tall. She’s probably the tallest horse I’ve ridden. I don’t know exactly what she sticks at, but she must be 18 hands—really big, enormous. She’s German. She’s kind of cool—she doesn’t look like she’d be super speedy, but she’s a really good galloper and has all the pieces. So, we’re excited.”

Their first event together at the Novice level came at the Twin Rivers Fall International in September 2022. Then 2023 saw them start the year at Training and finish at Intermediate. They were the fastest on Adri Doyal’s Intermediate cross-country at the Twin Rivers Winter Horse Trials, adding 1.2 time penalties, and then show jumped clear to finish with a score of 34.2. James’ wife, Helen Alliston, was second with Call Me Rudi (Clooney x Genia).

“We got her with just 90 days under saddle,” Alliston. “She’s come along quite quickly and been pretty straightforward to move up the levels. It’s been nice. She’s one of those ones that does everything quite easily so far, so you feel like you could go quite quickly with her.”

Then at Preliminary, Sumas Tina Turner (Quantino x Sumas Fanny Brice) and Tamie Smith were “simply the best” in the Open division, finishing on their dressage score of 23.2 and leading after each phase. The 8-year-old chestnut Irish Sport Horse mare whose biggest career victory came in the CCI2\*-L at Mallow in Ireland in 2023 with McNab represents another promising eventing prospect that Smith campaigns for owner Julianne Guariglia. Smith previously rode Guariglia’s Solaguayre California (Casparo x Solaguayre Calandria) up to the five-star level.

Sanborn and Lex D (Freeman VDL x Berber), an 8-year-old bay Dutch Warmblood gelding, finished on their dressage score of 22.4 in the Preliminary Rider division in the important win for their careers.



*Tamie Smith and Sumas Tina Turner. Ride On Photo.*



*Audrey Sanborn and Lex D. Ride On Photo.*

The 2024 Twin Rivers Winter Horse Trials were run against a backdrop of rainy weather in California's wine country of Paso Robles.

“The show was exceptionally well run, and the organizers did a great job rearranging the schedule with the rain to ensure the quality of the footing for the upper-level horses,” Duda said. “Morgan [RowSELL] designed a fantastic cross-country course, which asked a lot of challenging technical questions but ended up riding really well.”

In addition to adapting the schedule to the weather, show organizers also sealed the dirt-based cross-country tracks overnight and adjusted which jumps would be offered based on the changing conditions.

“We’re so appreciative of how our riders came together to make this a successful first recognized event of the year at Twin Rivers,” organizer Connie Baxter said. “When conditions are tough, you really see how special the eventing community on the West Coast is.”

Twin Rivers will next host the Twin Rivers Spring International from April 11-14 offering FEI levels up to four-star. Entries opened on February 27 and close on March 26. The Twin Rivers Summer Horse Trials will run from June 27-30 up to the Advanced level and also offer Twin’s first Young Event Horse competitions on the road to the 2024 USEA Young Event Horse West Coast Championships that will take place October 25-26. Twin Rivers will also host the Twin Rivers Fall International from September 19-22.

The full list of winners from the 2024 Twin Rivers Winter Horse Trials:

Advanced: Molly Duda and Disco Traveler (49.4)  
Open Intermediate: James Alliston and Cora (34.2)  
Open Preliminary: Tamie Smith and Sumas Tina Turner (23.2)  
Preliminary Rider: Audrey Sanborn and Lex D (22.4)  
Open Modified: Rebecca Braitling and Freedom Hill (24.0)  
Modified Rider: Grace Brownrigg and Dhaulagiri (22.1)  
Open Training: Auburn Excell Brady and Happy Prospect (25.3)  
Sr. Training Rider: Seika Streets and Counterpoint (19.2)  
Jr. Training Rider: Megan Bebb and Clara Bö (28.9)  
Open Novice: Amber Birtcil and Oriental Star (31.7)  
Novice Rider: Sophie Stocks and Rosco (25.4)  
Open Beginner Novice: Mia Roeser and Miss Magnolia (18.8)  
Beginner Novice Rider: Emily Hejret and Gandolph The Great (32.1)  
Open Starter: Elisa Karnavy and Foxens Little Treat (14.0)

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For sponsorship opportunities, please contact Christina Gray of Gray Area Events at [Christina@grayareaevents.com](mailto:Christina@grayareaevents.com).

Volunteers play a major part of events at Twin Rivers. Twin Rivers’ generous volunteer incentive program includes vouchers for show stabling and credits for schooling between events at the beautiful 500-acre venue. That is in addition to the genuine appreciation of the Baxter family and the entire Twin Rivers team. To sign up, please visit [www.twinrivershorsepark/volunteer](http://www.twinrivershorsepark/volunteer).

### **Connect with Twin Rivers**

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