

Twin Rivers ranch



Karen O'Neal and Clooney 14. Atalya Boytner Photography

TWIN RIVERS SPRING INTERNATIONAL RECAP

Milestone Moments for FEI Winners at Twin Rivers Spring International

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By Jonathan Horowitz

Paso Robles, CA — A victory in an international eventing competition sanctioned by the Fédération Équestre Internationale (FEI) is always reason to celebrate, but for winners of the FEI levels at the 2026 Twin Rivers Spring International in Paso Robles, Calif. from April 9 to 12, they were also career-defining moments.

Karen O'Neal will be able to look back on her win in the CCI4*-S as the event that got her and Clooney 14 in their best form for the biggest moment of their careers coming next at the Defender Kentucky Three-Day Event later this month. More than 40 years after her first international event as part of the Young Riders Program in 1985, O'Neal, 55, will be making her five-star debut, thanks to her partnership with a horse that she started at the Beginner Novice level back in 2018 .

In addition, Twin Rivers' CCI3*-L represented the first FEI win for Miss Tique and the first at the three-star level for the mare's rider, Mickayla Howard. Imhotep de Kreisker notched his first FEI victory in the CCI2*-L ridden by Marc Grandia less than a year into the horse's eventing career in America. The CCI2*-S was a win by Sportsfield Supernatural in the horse's FEI debut, and it came less than a year after Sara Sellmer started competing him at Training level.

At the same time, James Alliston, a veteran at developing young horses up the levels, continued the consistent results of Made By Leontine EB by winning the CCI3*-S, their 12th top-two finish in a row dating back to this event last year. The same can be said for Amber Birtcil and Prince of Oolde, who notched their second FEI win in a row in the CCI1*-L.

CCI4*-S: Karen O'Neal and Clooney 14



Karen O'Neal and Clooney 14. Emma Gray for Atalya Boytner Photography

O'Neal said she's wanted to ride at the sport's highest level ever since she won the USEA Area 10 Preliminary Championships at the age of 14 in 1985, and she'll now get the shot with Clooney 14.

"I wanted to go to the top of the sport back then, very much so—it was like a dream," she said. "It was a goal, and as life happened and I got married and had kids and had to support the family with my training business, it wavered."

Her career has reached new heights since partnering with Annika Asling's 2014 bay Westphalian gelding (Captain Jack 44 x Zauberfee).

"It takes a long time to get to this level, and I never thought Clooney would get to this level," she said. "He just seemed more of a slower type horse, so it's been very fun and rewarding to see him rise to this level. I've always wanted to do it, and I'm not getting any younger."

O'Neal and "Cloonbear" won their first FEI event in the CCI2*-S at Aspen Farm in their home state of Washington in 2022, the first FEI event Clooney had done in three years and her first FEI victory in 11 years.

They moved up to four-star in 2024 and have won four-star competitions at Aspen Farm in its 2024 CCI4*-S, at Galway in California in its 2025 CCI4*-L, and now Twin Rivers in the 2026 CCI4*-S, an event that has traditionally been a prep for West Coast horses and riders for the Kentucky five-star and also serves as a qualifier in the US Equestrian Open Series on the road to the \$200,000 final at Morven in Virginia in October.

In their final tune-up before Kentucky, the pair led after a dressage score of 29.2. "A big one was my dressage," O'Neal said about a highlight of the weekend. "It's starting to click a little bit, and it feels now like we're riding it and not just surviving it," she added with a chuckle. "He was really good, obedient, soft, quiet, and rideable."

They went double clear on Maja Lindemann's show jumping course, and jumped clear while adding 16.4 time penalties on Morgan Rowsell's cross-country course for a finishing score of 45.6.

“I took my time on cross-country,” O’Neal said. “I just wanted to have a nice clean run before getting ready for Kentucky and not pound his legs too much. So, we went a little slower cross-country, but he was really good cross-country, too.”

O’Neal admitted to being “nervous, to say the least” before her first five-star. “I’m still a little unsure what it’s going to look like,” she said. “I’m excited to go. I’m excited to be able to do the sport at this level and have the help I’ve been getting. It’s just an amazing journey.”

CCI3*-L: Mickayla Howard and Miss Tique



Mickayla Howard and Miss Tique. Atalya Boytner Photography

Less than a month since winning her first FEI event in the CCI2*-S at Galway with HHS Ontario (Can Ya Makan x La Juanita), Howard piloted Miss Tique (Graf Top x Miss Calido) to the mare’s first FEI victory and Howard’s first at the three-star level. In the CCI3*-L at Twin Rivers, they went double clear on Adri Doyal’s cross-country course and added a rail in show jumping to finish with a score of 41.7.

The 2017 bay mare registered with the Anglo European Studbook first competed with Howard at the Novice level at the Twin Rivers Winter Horse Trials in 2023. They won the Preliminary Rider division at the Twin Rivers Spring International in 2024.

CCI3*-S: James Alliston and Made by Leontine EB



James Alliston and Made by Leontine EB. Emma Gray for Atalya Boytner Photography

In 12 events in 12 months since the 2025 Twin Rivers Spring International, James Alliston and Made by Leontine EB have a record worthy of the horse's name that means "lion-hearted"—five victories and seven seconds with zero jumping penalties and finishing 10 events on their dressage score. They won the Open Preliminary national championship at the 2025 American Eventing Championships at Galway, as well as the Intermediate debut for the 2017 bay Dutch Warmblood gelding (Casago x Jackpot E.R.) owned by Arnell Sporthorses at the 2025 Woodside Fall International in California.

"He's always very competitive," Alliston said. "He does every phase nice and consistent. He's very relaxed in general."

After two reserve championships at the two-star level, Made by Leontine EB moved up to three star and won the CCI3*-S on his dressage score of the 28.4 at the 2026 Twin Rivers Spring International.

"The dressage has proven to be pretty reliable up to this point, like he just goes in and does his test and doesn't get too wound up," Alliston said. "Then, he's a really good show jumper. He's very careful, doesn't want to touch the poles. So, he seems to be, touch wood, pretty reliable."

CCI2*-L: Marc Grandia and Imhotep de Kreisker



Marc Grandia and Imhotep de Kreisker. Tanner Messer for Atalya Boytner Photography

The well-bred 2018 bay Selle Francais gelding Imhotep de Kreisker (Cornet Obolensky x Sunlight de Kreisker) had some show jumping and eventing experience in his home country of Ireland before being acquired by Team Rebecca to be produced by Grandia. His older full-sister Guenievre de Kreisker has competed in FEI show jumping competitions in France and Spain up to 1.45 meters.

Imhotep de Kreisker has blossomed in less than a year competing with Grandia in the United States, culminating in his first career blue ribbon in his first FEI victory in the CCI2*-L at Twin Rivers.

"He's a funny guy," is how Grandia described him. "He's really easygoing. He's always known he's a champion. That's what we've been laughing about today because now everyone else knows. He's really easygoing but also really cocky and doesn't like being told what to do."

In addition to his raw athleticism, Grandia appreciates the horse's personality, saying "We kind of hit it off and got on the same page pretty early. That's not to say he hasn't bucked me off a good number of times, but that's part of what I like about him. He's got a cheeky side, so, yeah, we've just hit it off."

Grandia said their goal for 2026 would be the CCI3*-L to be held at Fair Hill in Maryland.

CCI2*-S: Sara Sellmer and Sportsfield Supernatural



Sara Sellmer and Sportsfield Supernatural. Tanner Messer for Atalya Boytner Photography

The original plan for Sellmer with Sportsfield Supernatural was for the Canadian rider to sell the young 2019 bay Irish Sport Horse gelding (Caricello x Copacabana) as a show jumper last year. Instead, Sam Quinn bought "Griffin" with the intention that Sellmer would keep the ride and hopefully, eventually get her first shot at the five-star level.

"I fell in love with him, and one of my clients and really good friends ended up buying him for me to see if we can go up the levels and see how far he'll go," Sellmer said. "I was a little heartbroken that I was going to have to say goodbye to him, so Sam and I talked and I said I think Griffin is the real deal. She totally bought in."

In his first FEI event in the CCI2*-S at Twin Rivers, Griffin won with a dressage score of 31.4, just edging Amber Birtcil and Mississippi (Falaise de Muze x Coniek).

"He's a really good jumper, and we've been working on his fitness," Sellmer said. "His dressage has come along really quickly. We've been down at Galway Downs since January. We winter here from Canada. He's made huge progress in the last few months."

Over the next few months, they'll return to Canada and compete in FEI events in Washington and Montana. Long term, "Ultimately, we'd like to go five-star with him, that's the plan," Sellmer said.

"He's a really good event horse," she said. "He's got the gallop. He's got the jump. He's got the heart. He can move. He's really a quiet soul, but when he gets lit up, he can be quite a lot. I think I've sort of met my match as far as a horse than can intimidate me a little bit at times. He's got all the makings of being a top horse."

CCI1*-L: Amber Birtcil and Prince of Oolde



Amber Birtcil and Prince of Oolde. Emma Gray for Atalya Boytner Photography

Coming off their reserve championship in the USEA Young Event Horse West Coast 5-Year-Old Championship held at Twin Rivers in 2025, Birtcil debuted Prince of Oolde in FEI competition at the one-star level in 2026. They won the CCI1*-S at Galway at the end of March and followed that up with a win in the CCI1*-L at Twin Rivers, finishing on their dressage score of 25.3.

CCI4*-CT: Tommy Greengard and That's Me Z

Twin Rivers also held a four-star combined test that featured two veterans at the upper levels. That's Me Z (Take A Chance On Me Z x Venetia) and Tommy Greengard, the 2025 Advanced national champions at the 2025 American Eventing Championships, had no rails in show jumping and finished first with a score of 31.4. HMR Rolan and Alliston, the 2025 Intermediate national champions and winners of two four-stars, had one rail for a finishing score of 34.8. Both horses are entered in the Cosequin Lexington CCI4*-S at the Kentucky Horse Park at the end of the month.

What's Next at Twin Rivers

Twin Rivers Ranch is scheduled to host the Twin Rivers Summer H.T. from June 25-28, the Twin Rivers Fall International from Sept. 17-20, and the USEA YEH West Coast Championships & Last Chance Qualifier from Oct. 22-24.

The full list of winners from the 2026 Twin Rivers Spring International:

CCI4*-S: Karen O'Neal and Clooney 14 (45.6)

CCI3*-L: Mickayla Howard and Miss Tique (41.7)

CCI3*-S: James Alliston and Made by Leontine EB (28.4)

CCI2*-L: Marc Grandia and Imhotep de Kreisker (31.7)

CCI2*-S: Sara Sellmer and Sportsfield Supernatural (31.4)

CCI1*-L: Amber Birtcil and Prince of Oolde (25.3)

CCI4*-CT: Tommy Greengard and That's Me Z (31.4)

Advanced/Intermediate: Gina Economou and Cooley By Design (150.0)

Open Intermediate: Tommy Greengard and Balladeer Kilbrickens Lad (28.5)

Open Preliminary: Jordan Linstedt and Cooley High Society (29.3)

Open Modified: Sophie Tice and Viva La Vida (30.0)

Modified Rider: Teresa Harcourt and Csongor (30.0)
Open Training: Chloe Smyth and SR Myconos (31.8)
Sr. Training Rider: Lisa Peecook and SZ Raudo (27.0)
Jr. Training Rider: Kennedy Wiklund and Juste Capitaine (30.5)
Sr. Training Amateur: Emily Christen and Orczy (34.5)
Training Horse: Katherine Robinson and Party Favor (27.5)
Open Novice: Mia Brown and Pegasus Le Coq Au Vin (26.1)
Sr. Novice Rider: Dede McCoy and Dune DeHeir (23.9)
Jr. Novice Rider: Samantha Ehrlich and Midnight Endeavour (22.3)
Sr. Novice Amateur: Kayleen Crowley and Just Jam (29.7)
Novice Horse: Amber Birtcil and Red-Rag VDL (36.8)
Open Beginner Novice: Jennifer Plassmeier and RD Smokin Sugarfoot (28.2)
Sr. Beginner Novice Rider A: Jessica Bielenberg and Meant To Bee (23.8)
Sr. Beginner Novice Rider B: Lee Ramensky and Cashelbay Autumn Bloom (34.9)
Jr. Beginner Novice Rider: Kaitlyn Favero and Hallelujah DF (25.6)
Open Starter: Lucinde Van Brakel and Jamaica (25.6)
Sr. Starter Rider: Julie Brookman and Cascorado (35.3)
Jr. Starter Rider: Brynn Miura and Lausbub Z (33.4)

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For sponsorship opportunities, please contact Christina Gray of Gray Area Events at 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.

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