



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

### **Kicking Off a Promising Year at Twin Rivers Ranch**

March 1, 2026

By Jonathan Horowitz

*Paso Robles, CA* — Winners of FEI events and national and area championships in 2025 tuned up for the 2026 eventing season in this Year of the Horse at the Twin Rivers Winter Horse Trials from February 27 to March 1. The first of five USEA-recognized events to be held at Twin Rivers Ranch in Paso Robles, California has traditionally served as a prep for the Twin Rivers Spring International, which is scheduled for April 9 to 12 in 2026.

The highest level offered at the Twin Rivers Winter H.T. was Advanced/Intermediate, featuring dressage and show jumping at the Advanced level and cross-country at the Intermediate level. The hybrid nature of the level fit the needs of horses—with some winners at higher levels coming off a break for their first recognized event of the year and others using the higher-level dressage and show jumping to get their feet wet for a potential move-up in 2026.

Karen O’Neal and Clooney 14 won in their first event of 2026 after finishing 2025 with a career-best victory in the CCI4\*-L at The Eventing Championships at Galway Downs in California. The 2014 bay Westphalian gelding (Captain Jack 44 x Zauberfee) owned by Annika Aisling led from start to finish—dressage score of 26.0 judged by Karen Winn, clear jumping on Adri Doyal’s cross-country course with just one second of time penalties, and double-clear on William Robertson’s show jumping course for a final score of 26.4.



*Karen O’Neal and Clooney 14. Christina Smith for Atalya Boytner Photography*

“Clooney 14 felt fantastic for his first run of the year,” O’Neal said. “He was relaxed, confident, and very rideable all weekend, which is exactly what I was hoping for in an early-season event. He has matured a lot both physically and mentally, and it was great to feel how settled and focused he was across all three phases. Twin Rivers Ranch was an amazing venue for our first outing of the season. The courses were thoughtfully built and asked great, fair questions early in the year.”

O’Neal said she hopes to aim “Cloonbear” for the Defender Kentucky Three-Day Event for what would be the first five-star for both horse and rider. O’Neal’s first FEI event came in 2008.

“This season is about continuing to build Clooney’s experience and confidence at the upper levels while keeping him happy and progressing in the right direction,” she said.

While O’Neal has high hopes for Clooney 14 based in the West, Elena Haas has the horse’s older full-brother Claude show jumping at 1.60 meters at the World Equestrian Center in the East to kick off 2026.

Erin Kellerhouse and Bon Vivant GWF were second in Twin Rivers’ Advanced/Intermediate with a score of 31.3 as the only pair at the level to finish on their dressage score.

“‘Pierre’ was awesome, handled everything like the professional he is now,” Kellerhouse said. “My plan is to keep him at the Intermediate/three-star level. I think he’s very happy there—and play with some bigger show jumping at the NEE [Nilforushan Equisport Events] shows at Galway.”

The 2015 bay Oldenburg gelding (Banderas x Power Point) and Kellerhouse won the CCI3\*-S at the 2025 Twin Rivers Spring International. This was their first competition with Advanced phases, as it also was for third-place finisher Balladeer Kilbrickens Lad ridden by Tommy Greengard. In 2025, the 2015 bay Irish Sport Horse gelding (A. Umonia 60 x Aubane Girl) owned by Patricia Culleton won the CCI3\*-S at Aspen Farm in Washington and at Rebecca Farm in Montana, as well as the Area VII Intermediate Championship.

“Balladeer Kilbrickens Lad showed his experience at the Intermediate level this weekend and continues to be an exciting horse for the future,” Greengard said. “He is aimed for a potential move-up later this spring, so it was nice to check some boxes in the training and make sure everything is where it needs to be.”

Greengard was also fourth in Advanced/Intermediate with That’s Me Z, the \$60,000 Adequan Advanced winner at the 2025 USEA American Eventing Championships. This was the first recognized event of 2026 for the 2017 chestnut Zangersheide gelding (Take A Chance On Me Z x Venetia) owned by Andrea Pfeiffer and Greengard after finishing third in the CCI4\*-S at Morven in Virginia to close out 2025.

“That’s Me Z had his first run of the season, and we were very pleased to get him out in good form before the four-short at Galway Downs in a few weeks,” Greengard said.

In addition to competing seven horses from the Training to Advanced/Intermediate levels, Greengard also volunteered as a cross-country jump judge at Twin Rivers—a great example of the West Coast eventing community.



*Kaylawna Smith-Cook and Dealas. Atalya Boytner Photography*

Twin Rivers' Open Intermediate division was won by Kaylawna Smith-Cook and Dealas with a score of 28.8. This was the first blue ribbon at the level for the 2017 bay Holsteiner gelding (Dinken) owned by Brianna Halliday and Smith-Cook.

“Dealas was with me every step of the way, and our partnership has really come together,” Smith-Cook said. “I’m proud of the progress we’ve made and grateful for a result that reflects the work behind-the-scenes. I’m excited to keep building on this momentum as we move forward. A plan for the year would be for a midyear three-long.”

Greengard was second with MBF Google in a move-up for the 2018 bay Dutch Warmblood gelding (Casallo Z x Icarronne-S) owned by Pfeiffer and Greengard.

“MBF Google is a very talented young horse that has continued to really step into his own,” Greengard said. “This was his first Intermediate and he showed a lot of promise for the level. Myself and his co-owner, Andrea Pfeiffer, are very excited to see what he goes on to do this year. Fingers crossed!”

Tamie Smith and Julianne Guariglia’s Sumas Tina Turner (Quantino x Sumas Fanny Brice), the CCI3\*-S winners at Rebecca Farm in 2024, finished third.



*Megan McIver and Kapitan Sparrow XII. Atalya Boytner Photography*

Some four- and five-star veterans got into gear for 2026 at the Preliminary level. Megan McIver and Kapitan Sparrow XII (Cador 5 x Larena), fifth in the CCI4\*-S at the 2025 Twin Rivers Fall International, won the Open Preliminary division with a score of 25.2. In third-place were Smith and Danito, the reserve champions at the Maryland 5 Star at Fair Hill in 2022, as the chestnut Hanoverian gelding (Dancier x Wie Musik) owned by Ruth Bley embarks on his 17-year-old season.



*Nadia Vogt and New Gaillard AJK. Claire Townshend for Atalya Boytner Photography*

Nadia Vogt and New Gaillard AJK (Gaillard De La Pomme x Pikolina) won the Preliminary Rider division with a score of 35.3. It was their first event of 2026 and their first blue ribbon together.

These and other promising performances to start eventing at Twin Rivers in the Year of the Horse will serve as springboards for the development of West Coast eventing, as well as West Coast eventers that will head to the East in the spring. Twin Rivers Ranch is scheduled to host the Twin Rivers Spring International from April 9-12, 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 Winter H.T.:

Advanced/Intermediate: Karen O'Neal and Clooney 14 (26.4)  
Open Intermediate: Kaylawna Smith-Cook and Dealas (28.8)  
Open Preliminary: Megan McIver and Kapitan Sparrow XII (25.2)  
Preliminary Rider: Nadia Vogt and New Gaillard AJK (35.3)  
Open Modified: Amber Birtcil and Prince of Oolde (27.0)  
Open Training: Erin Kellerhouse and Jonty (27.8)  
Training Rider: Ella Smith and Bittersweet 2 (29.8)  
Open Novice: Danielle McKinley and Lexicon (24.2)  
Novice Rider: Saryn Koch and Samantha (23.3)

Open Beginner Novice: Mia Brown and Pegasus Le Coq Au Vin (27.7)  
Beginner Novice Rider: Maya Barry and Just You Wait (31.2)  
Open Starter: Allyson Hartenburg and MBF Longford (39.6)  
Starter Rider: Lee Webster Ramensky and \*Cashelbay Autumn Bloom (27.4)

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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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