

Waiting For Florence at WEG

It was a wild day Wednesday for the first day of competition at WEG in more ways than one. The endurance competition was the first event to start, even before the sun came up. However, there was some sort of major confusion over the course layout, and the event had to be stopped. When it got going again, over a course shortened from the original 100 miles, it was then stopped again in the afternoon due to high heat and humidity that threatened the welfare of both horses and riders.

The endurance event is the only one not being held entirely on the Tryon International Equestrian Center property, with some road closings today. Traffic on Route 9, however, will be deeply affected by the parking facility at the Block House steeplechase track for the next two weeks.

The arena competitions today were dressage (held outdoors) and reining, which is held indoors due to special footing requirements. That competition went forward normally, and the U.S. is leading in the preliminary standings. Dressage was hit by heavy rains and then heat and humidity. U.S. riders fared well there, with the U.S. currently third in the preliminary standings behind Germany and Sweden, with Great Britain and The Netherlands hot on their heels.

The U.S. drew the very fortunate position of last in the dressage team rotations, so there will be a lot of excited U.S. dressage fans here when U.S. star Laura Graves goes last in the final slot tomorrow with a team medal very much on the line.

This is clearly a national and international crowd here, with visitors from all over the U.S. and the world. (The Aussies and Dutch seem to vie for which group can cheer the loudest.) Many of the visitors are thus unfamiliar with the concept of a hurricane, and weather watching is vying with horse watching for the biggest topic of conversation.

Of course, we can't predict what Florence will do. Right now, the guesstimate is that she'll late Sunday into Monday, which is a off day for competition. However, there are also horses (and riders) who are still due to fly into the area, so delays at airports could also deeply affect the WEG competition.