

# H O R S E S H O W

## Five Questions for Hugh Kincannon

By Lauren R. Giannini

*Attractive divisions, prizes, judges, scheduling, manure removal, trash collection, schooling and longe areas, restrooms, food, vendors and sponsors are some of the gazillion details handled by Hugh Kincannon. His resumé includes the Greater Cincinnati Horse Show (1982-2002) and the American Jumping Classic (1987-2003). He has been the person behind the scenes of the Bluegrass Festival Horse Show since 1994 and he's definitely the go-to person for Kentucky Horse Shows LLC, offering spring and summer horse shows and classics. The calendar at the Kentucky Horse Park is just a tad shorter in 2010, but it's very exciting that this outstanding venue will host the Alltech FEI World Equestrian Games, Sept. 25 – Oct. 11.*

*For more information: [www.kentuckyhorseshows.com](http://www.kentuckyhorseshows.com)*

**Sidelines:** How did you get involved with show management?

**HAK:** When I was showing and did nothing but go to horse shows, I was probably one of the biggest complainers about horse show management. Back in 1980 someone said to me 'if you know so much why don't you run your own horse show?' I thought about it and I had my first A show on Labor Day Weekend in 1980. I enjoyed doing it and seemed to be reasonably successful at it and over the years I got more and more involved in the management end of it.

**Sidelines:** Other than footing and enough entries, what are your primary management concerns?

**HAK:** My background is as an exhibitor – so, coming from that background I think that I always try to look at any decisions I have to make through the eyes of all the exhibitors so that they will have the most favorable impact on the largest number of exhibitors.

One thing we definitely want to do is keep the playing field level so that the competition is as fair as it can possibly be for all the exhibitors. Sometimes you have to make difficult decisions, particularly if bad weather is involved.

I always try to keep in mind that horse shows should be as exhibitor-driven as possible.

It's unfortunate sometimes when you have to make decisions that may make some exhibitors unhappy, but you try to be as fair as possible making those decisions and do the best you can. I try to do it from the standpoint of what's going to be the best thing for the exhibitors while keeping the show financially viable. Horse shows that don't make money are not good horse shows. I've compared our fees and charges with the shows of similar nature, national in scope, against whom we are competing for clientele. Our fees overall, taking everything into consideration, are – if not the cheapest – at least among the cheapest.

**Sidelines:** What are some of the highlights since you've

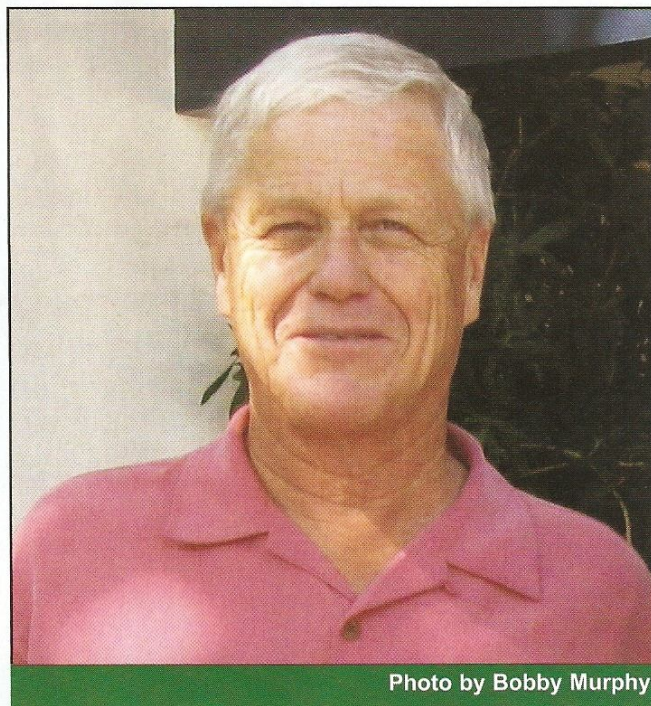


Photo by Bobby Murphy

been at the Kentucky Horse Park?

**HAK:** We're very honored to have been chosen to have the USEF Pony Finals. We're very pleased and proud that we were selected in a bidding process for a number of years now for the Pony Finals which I think is a wonderful event.

We've hosted some Pan Am Games Finals. We hosted the USHJA final – their first final – at one of our shows in August 2009. We're having the North American Junior and Young Rider competition at Kentucky Horse Park during one of our horse shows. We're really looking forward to that – I think it's going to be a really good thing for everyone concerned.

**Sidelines:** What is your pet peeve as a show manager?

**HAK:** I think if I did have one, it would probably be that not enough people look at the good of the entire sport. I'm probably guilty of this at times myself – as I think everyone is. We all get a little too caught up in our own worries and things and don't look at the overall picture – what's going to benefit everyone.

**Sidelines:** Does being connected with the Kentucky Horse Park add a certain bling to your shows?

**HAK:** Well, it's a great facility and it certainly helps. Most of our shows are really national level shows, major horse shows, which involve a lot of our exhibitors traveling greater distances. My impression is that people are going to try to stick a little closer to home – that's one of the solutions that exhibitors have come up with to try and get through these economic times. We started to see that a bit last year, although that may have been tied in with extremely high diesel fuel prices [in 2008].

It's great to be connected with the Kentucky Horse Park, because it is such a great facility. With all the infrastructure changes and additions for the WEG in 2010 it's becoming even more of a wonderful facility. In particular now we have state of the art footing – Otto Sport, which I feel is the best footing in this country, if not in the rest of the world. We have that in 75 per cent of our arenas now – part of the changes for WEG.

We're happy to do our shows at the Kentucky Horse Park – we feel it's the best facility in the world and only getting better.