



## **2026 Media Guidelines**

*Information Subject to Change*

We welcome you and thank you for your interest in and your coverage of the 2026 Defender Kentucky Three-Day Event presented by MARS Equestrian™.

To provide competitors the best possible chance to successfully complete The Event and to give you the opportunity to get the best coverage, the Defender Kentucky Three-Day Event provides the following information and guidelines.

### **Defender Kentucky Three-Day Event presented by MARS Equestrian™**

#### **FIRST HORSE INSPECTION – CCI5\* only**

Wednesday, April 22 - 2:00 p.m.

The Inspection will be held on the High Hope Inspection Lane.

**Need to Know:** This is a formal inspection to determine the soundness and general condition of the horse prior to beginning the competition. Horses will be presented in hand to the Inspection Committee, which is composed of the Ground Jury and the Veterinary Delegate with the President of the Ground Jury in charge. The horse will be stood before the Committee for general inspection, walked away from the Committee and then trotted briskly for a distance. The horse will then be turned and trotted toward the Committee.

The horse will be “passed” (often termed “accepted”) by the Committee or “not passed,” either on account of unsoundness or lack of condition, and will not be allowed to begin the competition. There is no appealing the decision of the Committee if the horse fails the inspection. In some instances, if the Committee is not completely sure that a horse is unfit for competition, it will be put in an officially supervised Holding Area and will be examined by the Associate Veterinarian who will report his findings to the Inspection Committee, which will then allow the horse to be re-presented for further inspection either immediately after the last horse has been inspected or whenever the horse can be reasonably placed back in the inspection order.

**Picture Tips:** Horses will be braided and shown in their bridle; competitors will generally be dressed in slacks, shirts and coats or skirts or dresses. Good photo opportunities are available in the Collecting Area where several horses are being walked around prior to being inspected, as well as when the horse is stood before the Inspection Committee and trotted for the soundness check. The **Dubarry Style Award** is presented to the best-dressed woman rider and the best-dressed man rider at Wednesday’s first horse inspection.

**A new Mixed Zone will be available at the Horse Inspection for those media wishing to interview riders following their horse(s)’ inspection.**

#### **DRESSAGE TEST**

Thursday, April 23 – 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Friday, April 24 – 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

#### **Order of Go and Ride Times**

Provisional Ride Times (Order of Go for each competitor) will be available at the Media Center approximately one hour after the Horse Inspection Wednesday afternoon.

### **Dressage Test**

Dressage will be held in Rolex Stadium on an all-weather surface, GGT Footing.

The Dressage Test takes an average of five (5) minutes to ride. To give the judges time to give the collective marks and comments, rides are scheduled at 8-minute intervals with a break after every six (6) to eight (8) horses to drag the arena.

**Need to Know:** Seating for the Media will be provided. Please don't stand in front of people to take pictures. Select credentialed media photographers, properly dressed, will be allowed access to Rolex Stadium to take pictures.

Quiet is essential. No loud motor driven cameras, please.

### **CROSS COUNTRY TEST**

Saturday, April 25 – 9:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Consult the Event Complex map available at the Media Center and in your programs for the track of the Cross-Country Course and the numbers, names and dimensions of the obstacles.

Be prepared to move around to catch the action.

**A satellite media tent, with closed-circuit television, is available near the finish line on Cross-Country Day. Media staff representatives will be present to help with interviews.**

**Need to Know:** Stay on the outside of the ropes or barriers defining the galloping lanes. You may cross the course ONLY at designated crossover points. Mounted Stewards and Fence Judges will be pleased to advise you on when and where to cross and on the best spots for good photographs. You must heed all Cross-Country officials — their word is law for the day. Their job is to ensure the safety and welfare of the horse, its rider and all others. For everyone's safety, we also require that all dogs be leashed and children watched closely.

**Picture Tips:** Spread fences, drops, banks, water obstacles and combination fences always provide excellent photo possibilities, but there are photo opportunities at almost every fence, even those that do not appear notable on first inspection.

### **SECOND HORSE INSPECTION – CCI 4\* and 5\***

Sunday, April 26 – 7:30 a.m.

The Inspection will be held on the High Hope Inspection Lane.

This Inspection is identical to the First Horse Inspection. The purpose is for the Inspection Committee to determine if the horse remains fit and sound to begin the third and final test of the competition, the Jumping Test. Here again the Inspection Committee may exclude a horse from further competition. The **Mars Equestrian™ Best Turned Out Horse Award** will be presented to the groom of the best turned out horse for both CCI5\* and CCI4\* after the second horse inspection.

### **JUMPING TEST**

Sunday, April 26 – 10:45 - 4:00 p.m.

The Jumping Test takes place on the last day of the competition and is run in reverse order of standing after the Cross-Country Test. The arena, or stadium, is completely enclosed and the interior is a colorful mixture of brightly painted fences decorated lavishly with flowers and greenery.

Please be sure to read about the Jumping Test obstacles in the Program. They have been designed to represent Thoroughbred farms and attractions in Kentucky and have become something of a legend throughout the world. We are proud to have as our Course Designer, Show Jumping Hall of Famer Steve Stephens, who designed these marvelous tributes to the many industries in Kentucky.

**Need to Know:** As with Dressage, there will be reserved Media Seating. This is complimentary seating for that day and should afford a good view as well as photo opportunities.

**Picture Tips:** The design of the course exerts as much influence as do the obstacles. Spreads, double and triple combinations and verticals compose the course and each fence and where it is positioned, asks a different question of horse and rider, testing the horse's handiness and obedience while examining the rider's ability to direct his horse. Schooling in the warm-up area also presents interesting photo opportunities.

## **AWARDS PRESENTATIONS**

Sunday, April 26 – 4:00 p.m.

Presentation of the awards is an elegant and picture-perfect end to the competition. Opportunities abound for pictures of the winners of the various trophies.

All credentialed media photographers will be allowed on to the field of play in Rolex Stadium for the Awards Presentations.

### **\$340,000 Kentucky International CSI5\* presented by Hagyard Equine Medical Institute**

The Defender Kentucky Three-Day Event presented by MARS Equestrian™ will also host the \$340,000 Kentucky International CSI5\* Grand Prix presented by Hagyard Equine Medical Institute on Saturday evening, April 25, after the completion of the cross-country phase.

In addition to riding in the \$340,000 Kentucky International CSI5\* Grand Prix, many of the world's best show jumping horses and riders will compete in a \$62,500 1.55m Qualifier competition on Thursday, followed by the \$200,000 1.50m Major League Show Jumping Team competition on Friday. Saturday will also feature the \$32,000 1.45m Power and Speed class before the pinnacle of the competition, the Kentucky International CSI5\* 1.60m Grand Prix, in the evening.

