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Team Thank you - photo J Keeler    Morgan Wolfe and Lunas - Photo J Keeler

## NAJYRC REGION 7 TEAMS: DAY ONE - WELCOME TO THE BLUEGRASS STATE

*By Yellow Horse Marketing for the California Dressage Society*

The Region 7 Junior and Young Rider teams have officially arrived in Lexington, Kentucky for the Adequan/FEI North American Junior and Young Rider Championships. Two of the horses, Lunas (owned by Morgan Wolfe) and Panash (owned by Stephanie Early) travelled cross-country by van, arriving in Lexington last week. After their trip, the horses enjoyed a few restful days at a stable near the Horse Park where they "enjoyed some turnout time and we just hacked around," said Junior team member Stephanie Early. Stephanie and teammate Morgan Wolfe, who arrived on Wednesday, have enjoyed the southern hospitality. "We toured the University of Kentucky campus on Thursday, and our moms took a tour of the famous Claiborne thoroughbred farm," she noted. "It's been fun so far."

The remaining team mounts jet-setted across the U.S. in the capable hands of shipper H.E. Tex Sutton. Flying from Los Angeles/Ontario International Airport, these six horses (accompanied by Mackenzie Pooley, Jaelyn Pepper, Ari Lopez, and Karen Ball) reportedly enjoyed their flight. "They all flew really well," said Karen Ball,

trainer for Young Rider Kelli Newton and owner of her mount, Luciano. "The flight was really smooth, they all handled it well, and the shipper's staff were great and very capable." As part of a full flight of 22 horses, including mounts for West Coast jumper and eventing teams, the Region 7 mounts were in the air less than four hours and flew directly into Lexington, arriving Monday afternoon.

The new NAJYRC stabling complex adjacent to the Rolex Stadium was a hub of activity on Monday afternoon as teams from around the United States and Canada settled in. Despite the oppressive heat and humidity, many riders, including those from Region 7, took the opportunity to get their horses out for short works in the warm-up arena. "We tried to get out early today to avoid some of the heat," said chef d'equipe Tracy Hill. Junior competitor Stephanie Early said that all team members will be keeping a close eye on their mounts in dealing with the heat during the upcoming week's competition. "You have to know your horse," she said, "and we're keeping our works as short as possible with lots of walk breaks."

Joining the team members on this championship journey are fellow California competitors McKenzie Kelley and Michaela Nelson. Despite finishing as alternates for their respective Young Rider and Junior teams, they volunteered to attend the NAJYRC to groom, assist chef d'equipe Tracey Hill, and help in any way possible. "I am so appreciative that they are here," noted Hill. "In the past, we've had several riders who first attend NAJYRC as a groom, then come back as a competitor, so they then have a better idea as to what it's all about. I think this is a great way to continue the tradition of better preparing our Region 7 riders for this championship, and I'm sure we'll see McKenzie and Michaela riding here next year."

As final preparations are made for the start of competition on Wednesday morning, of utmost importance is for every region to come together as a team. And Hill is confident about the Region 7 riders. "We've done little things (which end up meaning a lot), like pairing a Junior and a Young Rider in each tack stall, with one of them having been here before to 'mentor' the other," Hill explained. "It's always tricky at first because these riders have been competing against each other all year. But they have really come together, and it's been great - I have great girls and great parents."

Tuesday morning will begin official scheduled schooling sessions for all teams in the Rolex Stadium. Region 7 teams are scheduled for sessions at 8:45am ET (Young Riders) and 9:55am ET (Juniors), as well as the veterinary inspection beginning at 3:30pm ET.