

Surveying the Future

Wellington Horse Shows



The Wellington horse show grounds during the 2007 Winter Equestrian Festival.

Photo: © 2007 Ken Braddick-HorseSport USA

By KENNETH J. BRADDICK

As the 2008 Winter Equestrian Festival approaches at the horse show grounds that has been its home for many years, riders and work crews shared the same space and a vision that seemed impossible a year earlier.

The world famous equestrian series is heading into its longest season ever. There's pride that comes from ownership as distinct from a tenant on rented land. And a mixture of relief and optimism from a community—both the permanent dwellers and those who call it home for the winter—in which the annual event is a birthright.

With up to \$130 million invested so far and still counting, the new

owners of the show grounds are not just giving the facility a facelift, they're giving it the full body treatment.

Now named the Palm Beach International Equestrian Center, the Show Grounds and the adjoining South Grounds (formerly Littlewood) encompass 15 rings. That will allow for expanded classes and divisions and better scheduling for shorter show days.

All-weather footing is being installed in the International Arena for the safety of horses and riders, footing and construction of other rings is being upgraded, traffic patterns redesigned to improve the flow and safety of horses, pedestrians and golf carts and upgraded infrastructure and facilities

including improved spectator areas, shaded trainer areas, new show-grounds technology, and extensive landscaping.

Facilities and programs for children and families, including those who get dragged to the horse show by siblings who would rather be

The cover picture of Mark Bellissimo (left) with Olympic footing expert Bart Poels (right) surveying the Internationale Arena at the Wellington horse show grounds where an all-weather surface is being installed. The Palm Beach International Equestrian Center name and logo on the world famous bridge behind them is a graphic representation of what it might look like. Photo: Ken Braddick-HorseSport USA