

On the Cover:

GGT-Footing Stamp of Excellence at Aiken Horse Park

By Rebecca Eddy Murphy



The GGT Arena Conditioner is the perfect companion for your GGT Footing.

For Northerners looking to head to a warmer climate, South Carolina is a leading choice - specifically the town of Aiken, home of Bruce's Field at the Aiken Horse Park.

"Aiken is a fabulous place for people to get away from the weather up North," says Tara Bostwick, Aiken Horse Park Vice-President and Treasurer.

"It's an amazing, eclectic town with opportunities for everyone - eventing, combined training, dressage, and later in the spring our hunter/jumper circuit comes to life."

While the historic town and southern hospitality are certainly a draw, it's the premier facilities situated on the 66-acres, including five all-weather competition arenas and two schooling arenas with GGT-Footing that draws new and returning competitors. "Riders tell us they choose to come here because of the footing and facilities," says Bostwick.

Bruce's Field is named in recognition of the vision that Bruce Duchossios had when he purchased the land in 2000 to protect it from being developed. He envisioned the property becoming a

premier equestrian destination that was accessible to all residents and charitable organizations.

An avid equestrian Duchossios had a personal arena outfitted with GGT-Footing, a well-known product at show grounds throughout the country. When the bid went out to select footing at the inception of the project, GGT-Footing came out on top with the installation by Joe Watkins of Longwood Arenas (longwoodarenas.com).



A long-time horseman, Watkins went into arena building 10 years ago when he couldn't find someone to install an arena for him at an attainable price point. Watkins partnered up with Cynthia Brewster-Keating, National Sales Manager of GGT-Footing in 2012, and in 2018 was named the #1 GGT-Footing arena builder.

"GGT-Footing is a great product," says Watkins. "The consistency of the fiber allows it to function as it should and is one less thing for me to worry about." Watkins works hard to educate clients on what they are getting and emphasizes that they are equestrians building for equestrians. "Our team consists of horse people through and through. We keep the horse in mind; their safety and health is our priority."

Bostwick points out that the recent renovation of the schooling areas to GGT-Footing is as good a testimony of her relationship with Longwood Arenas and GGT-Footing as any. "I wouldn't work with anyone else," she states.

For competitors who want to simulate their horse show experience at home, GGT-Footing has expanded their retail division. "We found a number of people who have private arenas that want the same footing found at horse shows," says Brewster-Keating. Understanding they don't need a competition level product, GGT-Footing developed a recipe at an accommodating price point using high-quality textiles geared toward the private owner.

An Aiken resident herself, Brewster-Keating says, "We are proud to be part of the forward-thinking, exhibitor-friendly events at Aiken Horse Park."

One of those exciting concepts is the \$50,000 LiftMaster Grand Prix Eventing Showcase at Bruce's Field that was held for the first time in March 2019. Nearly 5,000 spectators watched in person as marquee event riders, including 11 Olympians from six countries, such as William Fox-Pitt who flew in from England, competed with a live stream viewed



Polo training track by Joe Watkins of Longwood Farm Arenas.

around the world. "We were absolutely thrilled with the local and international reaction to our Grand Prix," says Bostwick. "It met, and exceeded, our expectations."

She credits the organizing committee, which included Philip Dutton, Boyd Martin, and Doug Payne, for drawing in top names and providing a unique showcase of eventing in a spectator-friendly format. The course was a historic homage to Aiken with replicas of buildings and events designed by Captain Mark Phillips. Bostwick is busy gearing up for the second annual invitational

scheduled for February 28-29, 2020.

In addition to the Invitational, the park is adding a third dressage show and looking forward to working with Classic Company to welcome back their hunter/jumper competitors in June, following the Aiken Charity Horse Shows in May. And, before 2019 closes out, the Aiken Horse Park is teaming up with Spy Coast Farm to host their Young Horse Show on October 5.

For more information on GGT-Footing, visit ggtfooting.com.