

# The Pinnacle of EXCELLENCE

By Martha Veon

We have all been counting the days. The wait is over. The time is now.

XI Mundial Caballos De Pasos/Confepaso/ 2013 is here! Are you ready?

For most hopeful exhibitors, it has been looming on the horizon since the final class ended and the lights were turned out at the last Mundial in 2011.

For the past two years we have all been carefully studying our horses in an effort to select the best we have. Are they Mundial material? That's the question we

have asked ourselves at every training session and competition for these two long years.

Horses representing North America, Central America, South America and the Caribbean have traveled hundreds of miles to compete in this World Cup event.

The Mundial is the pinnacle of competition for the Paso Fino horse. The criteria set for judgement is rigid. Some of the horses entered may already be a champion many times over, but if they do not exhibit the criteria that is required on that day, for that particular class, they

may not even make it out of the holding pen. They can be excused from the class before they ever get to enter the arena. However, for the horses that garner a placement in this competition, the stamp of World Class Athlete will define them for the rest of their life. For the horses that win the exalted Championship titles, they will enter the realm of equine royalty. If your winning horse is a stallion or mare, it enters the top tier of potential breeding stock in the world. For the owner, this all translates into potential monetary gain, because the value of their horse just went up! The stakes are high. To win the Mundial is to reach the pinnacle of excellence and it all started 23 years ago in 1990.

After realizing the benefit of a formal organization, representatives from Aruba,

Colombia and Venezuela met in Cucuta, Republic of Colombia to set the parameters of a new organization, Confepaso.

A year later, in 1991 the merit of this new organization had taken root. A meeting was held in Ponce, Puerto Rico. This time the invitation was extended to more countries. Aruba, Colombia, Venezuela, Curacao, the Dominican Republic, Peru, Puerto Rico, and The United States. In one year Confepaso had gone from a seed to a tree, it branches spreading rapidly.

In October of 1993, the first Mundial took place in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. The Dominican Republic was selected to Host the first Mundial, because 1993 Marked the 500 years anniversary celebration of the Return of the Horse to the New World. The first horses arrived in 1493 in Hispaniola (Dominican Republic/ Haiti)

The First Mundial had seven countries represented and offered a selection of

six discipline choices for the competition. With the formation of Confepaso and the success of the first Mundial, something very significant happened, the Paso Fino breed was elevated to the international stage.

In 1995 the second Mundial took place in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Once again something of marked significance occurred. A young Puerto Rican rider approached the President of Confepaso. The young teen asked if Confepaso would consider adding classes in their program for the youth riders. The idea had merit, so the President presented the request at the next Confepaso meeting. It was approved unanimously.

This young rider's request was the impetus for the Youth Mundial program.

In this competition the rider is judged, not the horse. The first Youth Mundial had six countries participate. Since then the youth Mundials are known as the Youth Mundial "Felix Santiago Oliver".

In 2014 we celebrate the IX Youth Mundial. To date 10 or more countries are planning to participate. Representing North America, South America, Central America, the Caribbean and Europe.

These young equestrians range in age from 4 -24. To be selected for their country's team is the highest honor. They will not only compete in the art of Equitation, but represent their countries in a gesture of peace and goodwill.

They are exceptional athletes and fine Ambassadors.

This program offers an opportunity for our youth to develop not only skills in the equestrian arts, but to develop problem solving skills, group

work ethics and strong leadership skills while nurturing new friendships with other youth riders from many other countries and cultures. It is an education. One that will help them become fine young men and women as well as good stewards when it is their turn to lead Confepaso. We salute all our youth riders from each country, they are the future guardians of the Paso Fino breed. We wish them all the best at the IX Youth Mundial. "Felix Santiago Oliver" in 2014.

It's time, I hear the announcer calling my class. My horse is tacked up and ready. It is her first Mundial. She will compete in two disciplines, Pleasure and Trail. Is

she Mundial material? That is to be determined by the judges. She has many wins and many championships. That was then, this is now and only "now" counts.

Welcome to The XI Mundial Caballos De Paso/ Confepaso/2013!

Good luck to all exhibitors and your magnificent horses!

For me, just being here with my wonderful horse is an honor and a joy.

Let the Competition begin!

