

BRIDGEHAMPTON

GROUNDS for a horse

\$1M renovation begins on Grand Prix grass ring for 2019 Hampton Classic

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The Hampton Classic Horse Show is undertaking a nearly \$1 million project to renovate its Bridgehampton showgrounds, which, following a soggy 2018 season, will ensure solid footing on the event's famed Grand Prix grass ring for years to come.

The renovations are underway and are expected to be completed next month, well before some of the world's best riders and their mounts descend in 2019 on the Snake Hollow Road showgrounds for the 44th annual event, which runs Aug. 25 through Sept. 1.

"As always, the safety and well-being of our horses and riders is of first and foremost concern, and we are thrilled that we were able to come up with a plan to improve the footing while maintaining our tradition of a grass field," Lisa Deslauriers, chairman of the Hampton Classic board of directors, said in a statement.

The show, which began as the Horse Show in Southampton in the early 1900s and was revived several times before taking on its current form in 1977, moved to its Bridgehampton home in 1982. Although the 2-acre Grand Prix ring is the event's centerpiece attraction — ringed by tents hosting its pastel-clad Hamptons audience — it has humbler beginnings.

"When we first got here, it was a potato field," said Shanette Barth Cohen, executive director of the Hampton Classic.

A rainy summer brought problems to grass arenas throughout the Northeast this past season creating damp, uneven fields, she said. The event staff has worked to make the best of the ring's conditions, but the field needs a top-to-bot-



Early stages of construction on Monday in the grand prix ring at The Hampton Classic showgrounds.

tom reconstruction to provide optimal cushioning, traction and drainage, Barth Cohen said.

McLain Ward, the 2018 Hampton Classic grand prize-winner and an Olympic gold medalist, told Practical Horseman Magazine that the footing this year was challenging and "a little bit soft."

The project is managed by the show's equestrian manager, Allen Rheinheimer, working with the show's consultant, Steven McDonald, who teaches turf management and turf grass weed science at Rutgers University.

The process calls for a base of stabilization textile, perforated piping, a rock drainage layer and an eight-inch layer of topsoil/sand/fiber that will allow the grass to grow deep roots. A mix of Kentucky bluegrass / Tall Fescue sod will be

After the rain

Details of the renovation for the Grand Prix showgrounds, which should improve on this past summer's soggy footing:

Cost: About \$1 million

Materials: A stabilization textile base, perforated piping, a rock drainage layer, eight inches of topsoil/sand/fiber top layer mix topped with a Kentucky Bluegrass / Tall Fescue sod blend.

Result: A properly engineered arena ensures the best footing for horses and a good foundation for jumps.

placed on the field next month and will be aerated and fertilized in the spring, ensuring verdant terrain for riders next summer, according to a

statement from the organization.

Perimeter drainage, a new well and a new irrigation system installed in recent years will also improve conditions at the field.

Construction is expected to total about \$800,000, though the nonprofit Hampton Classic organization hopes to raise \$1 million to cover construction plus maintenance costs.

When properly engineered and maintained, a grass field offers an unmatched foundation in addition to a beautiful backdrop, Barth Cohen said.

"They [riders] want grass, but they want excellent grass," Barth Cohen said, adding that good footing gives horses security to push off for a large jump. "They don't have to worry about the horse second-guessing before they jump."

Around LI

Suffolk wants to buy open space

The Suffolk County Legislature has approved a plan to buy four properties in Middle Island and preserve them as open space.

Legislators voted Oct. 2 to authorize county real estate officials to submit offers to the property owners to buy the parcels on Whiskey Road. The owners have 60 days to respond to the offers, Legis. Sarah Anker (D-Mount Sinai) said in a news release.

The Town of Brookhaven would cover 30 percent of the purchase price, and the county would pay 70 percent, Anker said.

She described the parcels as "environmentally sensitive properties," adding that protecting them from development would "protect our natural ecosystems and our vulnerable groundwater aquifer." — CARL MACGOWAN

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