The Americas RIDE *Together* at WORLD EQUESTRIAN CENTER

Photo: Auera Visuals

by JENNIFER WOOD/JUMP MEDIA



A dream that began seven years ago will come to fruition with the inaugural Fédération Équestre Internationale (FEI) Pan American Equestrian Confederation (PAEC) Championship of the Americas, a three-discipline event to be held from January 19-31, 2027, at World Equestrian Center – Ocala (WEC).

Cesar Hirsch, President of PAEC since 2019, and his fellow board members have long hoped to establish a standalone equestrian championship that brings together most of the 30 countries comprising the Americas. With the steadfast support from the host national federation, US Equestrian (USEF), guidance from the FEI and leadership from the accomplished team at WEC, fans of equestrian sport will be able to cheer on teams in jumping, dressage and eventing from both hemispheres.



Cesar Hirsch.
Photo: Lucio Landa

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>
> — Cesar Hirsch

Originally from Venezuela, Cesar Hirsch is a globally respected leader in the equestrian industry with more than 30 years of experience at the highest level of international sport, including Games and Championship planning and delivery and as an FEI Level 4 Judge and Chief Steward. His career is distinguished by continuous involvement in Olympic Games, World Championships and major FEI events, with a strong focus on sport integrity, operational excellence and equine well-being. He is currently serving as the Subject Matter Expert – Equestrian for the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games.

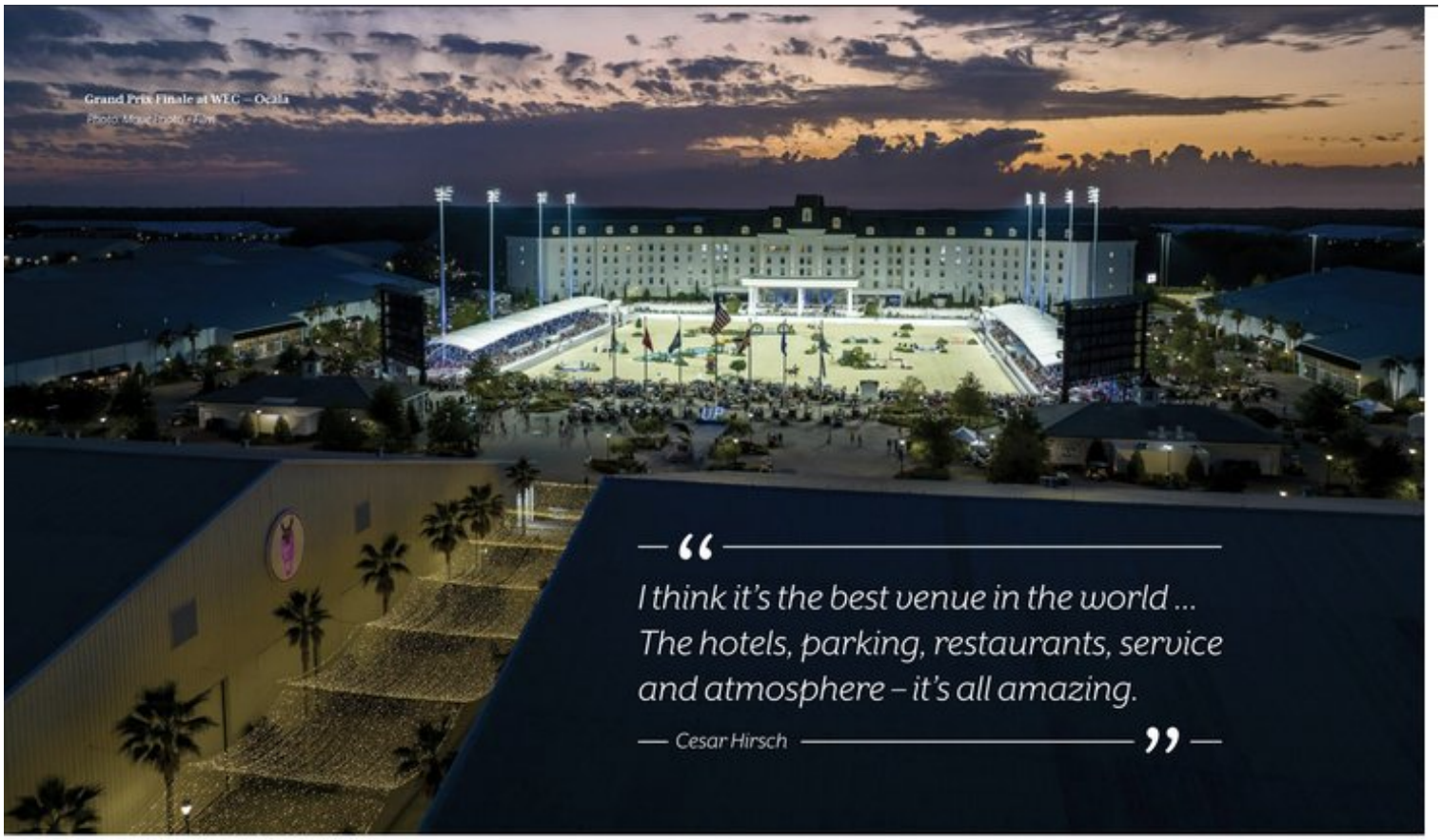
Founded in 2001, PAEC is the official continental authority recognized by the FEI, Panam Sports and major sports associations. The board includes Hirsch, USEF President and Group IV Representative Tom O'Mara, FEI Group IV Chair Monique Archer (BAR), FEI Group V Chair Daniela Garcia Nigaglioni (MEX), FEI Group VI Representative Luiz Roberto Giugni (BRA), FEI Group VI Chair Esteban Abedrabbo (ECU), and Athlete Representative Tiffany Foster (CAN).

Jaime Morillo (ECU), who is part of the FEI Solidarity Program to promote and develop sustainable and structured equestrian culture and sport worldwide, is the PAEC Sport Development Officer, while Elena Couttenye (VEN) is the Games & Championships Coordinator at PAEC.

Hirsch and Garcia Nigaglioni advocated for the Championship to create more opportunities for riders across the Americas, grow the sport and build a structured pathway for athletes. The idea was a continuation of PAEC's mission of supporting and growing equestrian sport from the grassroots to the elite level.

"Obviously, countries like the USA, Canada, Mexico and Brazil have solid, successful equestrian programs and are already on the podium at the World Championships and the Olympic Games, but the sport is growing in other parts of the Americas," said Hirsch. "PAEC wants to give them more opportunities to elevate their performance, strengthen regional development and create a structured pathway for athletes. There are countries that dream of fielding teams for international competition, so PAEC must serve them all. We want to build a legacy."

The Championship will combine elite performance with meaningful development opportunities. For some National Federations, it will serve as a platform to field their top athletes and refine preparation ahead of major championships such as the Pan American Games. For others, it provides a valuable opportunity to introduce emerging talent and support the progression of the next generation of athletes.


Grand Prix Finale at WEC – Ocala
Photo: Mike Inglis / FEI
“
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— Cesar Hirsch
”


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This dual-purpose approach allows each National Federation to participate in alignment with its own high-performance strategy while strengthening the competitive landscape of the Americas.

When developing the idea for the FEI PAEC Championship of the Americas, there was never any question about where the organizers wanted to hold it. Hirsch approached the team at WEC and the wheels were soon in motion.

"The best timing for the Championship is in the winter, so participants have more options to compete," he said. "Holding it in conjunction with a show during WEC's Winter Spectacular Show Series allows athletes to stay longer, bring additional horses or have clients join them. This makes it financially viable for many athletes."

A preliminary conversation with WEC Show Manager Jon Garner helped identify the schedule and the number of countries that could attend. PAEC received approval of the concept from the FEI and USEF, which fully supports the event with the host agreement.

"I think it's the best venue in the world," expressed Hirsch. "The hotels, parking, restaurants, service and atmosphere – it's all amazing. WEC also prioritizes the safety and well-being of the horse throughout its operations. It's like a dream come true and everyone at PAEC is so proud to have the first edition at WEC. We are grateful to everyone at WEC for trusting PAEC with this project."

On behalf of WEC's owners, the Roberts Family, Mason Jordan noted, "We are thrilled to host the inaugural FEI PAEC Championship of the Americas. WEC was purpose-built to hold the best equestrian competition in the world, and it is an honor to welcome athletes for the first time to our facility."

All competition will take place at WEC, except for the eventing cross-country phase, which will



Dressage at WEC – Ocala.
Photo: Andrew Ryback Photography



Mimi Gochman riding at WEC – Ocala.
Photo: Andrew Ryback Photography

be held at the nearby Florida Horse Park thanks to a partnership with organizer Emily Holmes and manager Jason Reynolds, whom USEF suggested.

"It is a very nice facility that already hosts top eventing competitions and they know what is needed for an event like this," explained Hirsch. "It's a turnkey operation. From day one, we clicked."

The vision for the FEI PAEC Championship of the Americas is to be a quadrennial event, with plans to add additional disciplines, such as para dressage and vaulting, in the future. The strategic objective is for the Championship to become an established qualification pathway for the Pan American Games, in addition to the current various Regional Championships.

With an estimated 16 to 20 countries expected to participate in the inaugural 2027 event, the international atmosphere at WEC will be unmatched. The FEI PAEC Championship of the Americas is the only FEI medal championship for senior teams in the Americas.

"The icing on the cake is the opportunity to win an FEI medal," said Hirsch. "PAEC is shaping history in the sport with this new event."

