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Crestview Farm to be unveiled Sunday for Silver Cup

By BEN BAUGH Staff writer

Aiken's newest polo facility will be unveiled Sunday for the 302 Polo USPA 20-goal Silver Cup presented by Mercedes-Benz of Augusta. Alan Meeker's Crestview Farm is a 152-acre facility located on Crooks Bridge Road.

"Mr. Meeker was keen to host the Silver Cup as part of the grand opening of the Crestview Farm polo field and polo facility," said J.D. Cooper, Cooper Home and Stable, who served as the general contractor on the project. "We're really excited about that opportunity. We hope we can get a lot of people out to see the match and enjoy the facility."

The location of the polo field on the property had been used previously to grow crops, said Cooper.

"We did have to do a lot of cut and balance here," said Cooper. "It was over 12 inches of really rich topsoil that we stockpiled on one side, and then we cut and balanced. We took the crown out of the field. There was a natural crown in it. We tilted the field toward the pavilion for better viewing on both sides, so spectators will find it easier to watch the game that's being played."

The sidelines are ideal for spectators as there's ample shade. The polo field itself is encircled by beautiful pine trees. Cooper Home and Stable acted as the general contractor for everything on site. Nigel Alcock, Pat Nicholson and the Rich Brothers were in charge of building the polo field. There's an in-ground irrigation system. The field is spectator-friendly and there will be tailgating along the sideboards.

"The polo field's location lends itself to a great setting," said Cooper. "The field runs north and south, which is ideal, so the sun isn't in the players eyes at the ends of the field in the afternoon or the morning."

The polo field's surface is a special hybrid type of grass known as Celebration, said Cooper.

"It's a special hybrid grass developed primarily for golf courses, polo fields and sports fields," said Cooper. "This is the only field in Aiken with Celebration on it. This particular variety of grass is very aggressive in its lateral growth, so therefore it ties itself together and creates an amazing mat. You can cut it so tight that it's almost as tight as a golf green. I'm fortunate that I have great help."

The facility is unique in that all of the features in the clubhouse and the barn are custom made, said Cooper. The clubhouse features an area where one can get beverages, a men's and women's rest room, and the second level provides officials with an outstanding view of the field, said Cooper. The clubhouse as well as the barn have slate roofs.

"Mr. Meeker wanted things built to last the ages and for generations for his family," said Cooper. "The farm is in the family name, and it's for his sons and future grandchildren. Everything built on the facility has been built to last for 100 to 150 years. The wood is specially treated to assure no termite rot or fire would affect the structure."

Meeker wanted to create a polo facility that was world class, and comparable to the best facilities in the world, said Cooper.

"I think he's achieved that," said Cooper.

The idea for the creation of the barn started on a napkin at the Willcox Inn. The barn is made from the wood of Douglas Firs. The barn configuration features identical sides, with each having 12 stalls and an apartment for guests. There's also a tack room and a team room, where players will have the opportunity to view and discuss previous games as well as strategy for their next match. There were no nails used when constructing the barn or the clubhouse. Wooden pegs were utilized during the construction. The floors in the apartment are made from mesquite wood and are kept warm by radiant heat.

"Mr. Meeker would come in every weekend and tell us how he would want things done, and we would follow through along with the suggestions he would make to get the job done," said Cooper. "There isn't a piece in the barn that isn't custom made. All the posts, the beams and the siding are made from Douglas Fir. The light fixtures are custom made, they're one of a kind and are made here in town."

The design of the stalls allows for maximum visibility, where a horsemen will be able to see everything that's going on in the stall. There's also low voltage lighting throughout the barn. The open screens allow you to see everything that's going on with the horse for safety purposes."

The wood on the property has been treated with a product that protects it for life against rot, mildew and insect infestation. A Class A fire retardant material was added to the barn as a precautionary measure because of the facility's location (there isn't a fire department in close proximity).

"Mr. Meeker has a tremendous sense of space and architectural design in arts and colors," said Cooper. "He has a tremendous sense of scale. It was great working with him on this project and I was very fortunate to have a client like him."

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