

A Nations Cup on Borrowed Horses in Rio de Janeiro (BRA) by Debbie Stephens



(The riders, left to right: Ragan Roberts, Michael Walton, Callan Solem, Robin Sweely, Debbie Stephens)

The USA Nation's Cup Team for the CSIO Rio International Jumping Cup-Brazil 2004 arrived at Miami International Airport on October 5th for their journey to Rio de Janeiro. The team members were Robin Sweely, Callan Sollen, Ragan Roberts and Michael Walton. There was an immediate cohesive sense among the group. As a team member in the past, I've always felt very strongly that this bond provides the strength to win. The first day upon arrival in Rio, we rode our horses (all borrowed) and thank goodness all riders were of a mindset to become a team with their borrowed horse. Within three days it was amazing to witness the horse/rider confidence magically develop! We were so ready for the challenge of the Nations Cup. All four riders rose to the occasion, including Robin Sweely whose horse was not fond of the water. Robin's support for the team through the second round was as if she had jumped a "double clear". Needless to say, the team met my expectations and we finished in second place. For three of the four team members, it was their first Nation's Cup out of the country and competing on borrowed horses! I was very proud to have served as Chef d'Equipe for this team and can only say great things about those who made our Brazilian experience unforgettable.