



National Office News Sheet – December 2003

Before I make you aware of a few other developments and then wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, I need to say a few words about EFA High Performance Management issues. There are stories being peddled in some parts of equestrian media and in *The Horse Magazine* in particular, that need to be put straight.

I must admit that I can get annoyed, and not just about people (or trains) not being on time or about misplaced apostrophes. I get annoyed especially when untrue and offensive stories are printed that involve our National Office. Right now, I can say that I have been involved in the selection of all National staff members, including the appointment of Gareth McKeen over nine years ago. Gareth's appointment and his subsequent achievements have created results that no one would have thought possible. Let me also say that I have full confidence in the team that I appointed at the National Office in Sydney.

We are trying to work as a team, with the good of the sport and of the Federation in mind. We are also constantly striving to improve systems (yes, there is a lot of room for improvement). Progress can be slow, however, and honestly, we do not always get everything absolutely right. Do you? We are human and we deal with humans. We also need to rely on many hard-working volunteers. Sometimes communications are not quite perfect. Tell me of an organisation that cannot make improvements in this and other areas.

One more thing: The Board, the National Discipline Committees and other panels make policy and most decisions. The administration implements them. As far as the National Office is concerned, the buck stops with me. I am responsible to the Board for its performance and that of its staff. I have broad shoulders. Address things to me. And I promise you, I will respond.

High Performance Management

When it comes to high performance management in the EFA, we have a system that involves National Discipline Committees, Selectors, High Performance Panels and the High Performance Manager (HPM). The decision-makers are volunteer appointees who are trying their hardest to get things right. The High Performance Manager assists, coordinates and administers.

When we asked for nominations for the post of selector, we are not exactly swamped with applications. Why? When selectors "get it right" (the team wins or does as well as expected), everyone is happy. When the desired result doesn't eventuate, who is to blame? The selectors, of course. Everyone else would have picked a different team - after the event. The same applies to long lists and short lists of any kind. A line has to be drawn - no matter whether this is demanded by the AOC, ASDA or by plain common sense. A line has to be drawn on a basis that appears right at the time. When we then have performances that no-one predicted and which in hindsight "justify" inclusion on a long or short list, who is to blame? The selectors, of course. They should have known better. You and I would have always known better, at least after the event!!!!!!!!!!

The system certainly is not perfect, but attacking individuals directly or indirectly, especially without even trying to find out what actually happened, does not help anyone and does not help the EFA or the sport as a whole.

Olympic Eventing Qualification Requirements

Eventing qualifications have been very much under the spotlight. More than ever, all riders should be aware of the qualification requirements and everything that goes with it, including anti-doping matters. All of the regulations regarding qualification are available for download from the EFA or the FEI web site. Details have been discussed at riders' forums at each major event and on other occasions. As far as Olympic qualifying standards are concerned, the FEI rules state:

An FEI qualifying result is achieved by completing the above competitions within the minimum parameters of an all round performance, with:

- Not less than 50% Dressage good marks;

- maximum 20 jumping penalties on Cross Country Obstacles, not more than 90 seconds over the optimum Cross Country phase time;
- not more than 16 jumping penalties on Show Jumping

Is this not quite straightforward? Could we not expect the average rider (or editor or correspondent) to understand this? If we cannot, we have a serious problem.

The 25% rule that is quoted by some people is part of the "ordinary" Eventing rules; it does not apply to the qualification for the Athens Olympic Games. It is thus a little frightening that non-existent conditions are publicised when it is very clear from the Olympic Regulations what a qualifying performance means.

Boyd Martin eligible to be nominated for Athens

In the months BEFORE the "no-notice testing" rule came into effect on 13 August 2003, Gareth spent considerable time and effort trying to convince the AOC and the Australian Sport Drug Agency (ASDA) that the proposed rules were unrealistic to be implemented for Equestrian. At the time, he was not successful with getting any kind of exemption from the general requirements. Gareth did, however, achieve agreement on a modified and much simplified athlete "whereabouts" form and reporting system for Equestrian.

There have also been a number of accusations against the EFA revolving around Boyd Martin and his ability to be selected for the Olympic Games. This issue concerns the AOC, IOC and the new World Anti Doping Code. This has been a complex matter to which our High Performance Manager Gareth McKeen and others in the EFA and AOC have been devoting an enormous amount of time and effort. The background was explained on the EFA web site at the end of November and can be found at http://www.efanational.com/content/high_performance/h_p_notices.htm. Please bear in mind that the issue is no longer as **we have now received verbal advice from the AOC that Boyd Martin is eligible to be nominated for selection to the 2004 Australian Olympic Team.**

The AOC has recently communicated with both the IOC and WADA regarding the meaning and effect of the World Anti-Doping Code provision requiring athletes to be available for sample collection and to provide up to date whereabouts information from 13 August 2003 if they are to be eligible to participate in next year's Games. WADA confirmed that the AOC's interpretation of the World Anti-Doping Code was correct.

However, in light of the comments received, the AOC decided it could relax its nomination requirement that athletes must have been included in the OOC testing list by 13 August 2003 in order to be eligible for nomination. Provided an athlete was subject to his or her NF's anti doping policy as at 13 August (and therefore bound to provide samples on request) and had kept the NF fully advised of his or her contact details since that same day, then the AOC will permit the athlete to be included in the Shadow Team and therefore eligible for nomination. All members of the Shadow Team must be included on the OOC list.

We expect written confirmation of the advice early in the new year.

Other Uninformed Comments

I was also made aware of a claim asserting that a clinic with Martina Hannöver after Equitana was offered to and then rejected by the EFA. This is just another one of those silly comments made out of ignorance (and there are many others, unfortunately). The true story is that when Klaus Balkenhol was due to come to Equitana, the organisers offered him for an HP Dressage camp. This was accepted. When Klaus subsequently was unable to make it because of illness, his replacement Nadine Capellmann was not willing to stay on to give a clinic. At the same time, the Dressage High Performance panel dropped the idea of having a camp. Then the organisers offered the services of Martina Hannöver. Since the camp had been cancelled, the offer was declined but elite riders were given the opportunity to train with Martina with financial assistance from the HP program.

Why don't you (didn't you) call?

I would not normally react in such a detailed manner to stories that involve the EFA or its staff. In a way, criticism comes "with the territory". It often comes out of ignorance of all of the facts involved in a particular issue. I am, however, very happy to listen to constructive comments that help with the development of the sport and the improvement of its administration. We are progressively reviewing our "systems" and are trying very hard to improve to a level that is consistently acceptable to the large majority of the various groups with which the EFA deals. This takes time and resources, things of which we only have a limited amount. Any assistance is welcome.

Now, what else is new?

The **2004 EFA Dressage Rules and Tests** are now with the printers. You can order a set either with or without the specially prepared "Dressage Folder" for delivery after the office re-opens on 05 January 2004. You can download an order form (<http://www.efanational.com/content/attachments/shop/rules.pdf>) or the documents themselves (<http://www.efanational.com/content/documents/rules.htm>). Please bear two things in mind: The materials are "copyright" and are available to EFA members and member organisations only. Secondly, the files are big and your printer will be busy for a while printing altogether more than 150 pages. So you may wish to think about purchasing a set including the folder for \$39 (or \$29 without the folder).

Staying with Dressage for a moment, the National Dressage Committee will consider applications from clubs for an exemption from the rule that prohibits the use of driven-in stakes and continuous rope as **arena surrounds**. This opportunity for exemption is available until 30 June 2004. Please send applications to the National Office of the EFA, PO Box 673, SYDNEY MARKETS, NSW, 2129.

The **EFA Annual Report** is now available for download from the EFA web (<http://www.efanational.com/content/news/news.htm#2003AR>).

Barbara Fenner, our "outgoing" National Coaching and Officiating Manager, will officially end her employment with the EFA on 31 December 2003. Barbara will still be involved in the completion of a couple of projects but **Brad Paterson** who joined us 04 December will now fill the role.

The **Governance Review** is still not complete as we are still waiting for a vote by the Tasmanian Branch Committee. The adjourned business of AGM and a Board meeting will take on Sunday, 18 January 2004, in Sydney. Let's see what will happen. The Board has, however, adopted a number of governance policies recommended by our governance consultant Terry Kilmister. You can download the Board-related policies (http://www.efanational.com/content/documents/board_policies.htm).

Last year, I put together a rather ambitious **Christmas wish list** (you can view it if you like at <http://www.efanational.com/content/news/newsletter-archive.htm#Dec2002>). I am not quite sure whether I should be pleased with the progress we have made. Progress there has been, and with the re-location of the office and the engagement and training of new staff, many things had to be put on the backburner. I won't make a list this year. There is one already in the strategic plan, and that is challenging enough.

* * * * *

I now wish you a very **Merry Christmas and Happy New Year**. Stay fit, healthy and accident-free. 2004 is going to be another big year for the sport and the EFA and we need you to be around.

Best regards,

Franz Venhaus

23 December 2003