

Email from IDOC:

From: Hans Christian Matthiesen, IDOC President

Sent: jeudi 23 mars 2017 08:03

To: Maribel ALONSO DE QUINZANOS - Deputy Chair Dressage Committee; Klaus ROESER; Luis LUCIO; Frank KEMPERMAN - Chair Dressage Committee; Bettina De Rham; Anna PAPROKA CAMPANELLA - Athlete Representative Dressage; George WILLIAMS

Cc: Olivier Smeets; Mariette Withages; Anna Milne

Subject: Letter from IDOC

Dear Friends and colleagues,

I hope you are all fine.

As we all care for our sport, I think it is necessary to clarify some of the points that was brought up at the stakeholder meeting in Amsterdam – all of greatest importance for the IDOC.

In difficult times, it is often tempting to make changes and renew systems – but sometimes it's more wise to re-think already existing systems and consolidate and explain. From the minutes I think the position of the IDOC is clear. We don't want to change the existing judging system, we want to consolidate and are open to revision and explaining.

I know, that Stephen Clarke, Judge General, has sent you a letter with his opinion, and IDOC support that in every way. I have also read the reply to Stephen – and just to clear things up: The proposed idea, new judging system, was only supported by the IDRC ! The IDOC, AIDEO was against, and so was IDTC, they even pointed out "that it would be a step back" – however they suggested a new Code of points.

The last decade has changed many things in dressage. Mostly for the good. Sometimes "criticism" makes you think – and that can be healthy for the system. One of the base-elements of the working group was to identify areas, that could be revised. IDOC is concerned that the background for that is only based on "perception" and not facts. According to statements from David Stickland and Bettina de Rahm, the judging has improved over the last years.

So we don't want to change the system we have – we want to explain it.

Transparency is important – accuracy is important.

We need to be able to explain our sport and judging. That is why the IDOC will work on a more codified version of the handbook and tools for judges, that can simplify the (difficult) way to the marks. At the meeting in Amsterdam – a Code of points was suggested by the IDTC – that will be a good starting point for an addition to the handbook, a short version, that can be used by judges and for the spectators to learn and understand. We do understand the need for a clearer

structure for the deductions and feel that the Guidelines for Marking would constitute a good basis for the Code Of Point as it is based on the best practices validated by the 5* judges.

The accurate performance will always do good in our sport – but at the same time: Good training according to the training scale, education of the rider and horse also. At the top level we also want to see excellence and quality – and according to the presented system that will not be appreciated – it will not be possible to assess and reward. Judging the technical mistakes is not the problem (according to statistics and JSP) – but rewarding quality can be a challenge. That's why we have to educate and explain. If we only base our judging system on "errors and mistakes" it will be very negative and we will end with lower marks and scores.

It is important to maintain the basis, as it is closely linked to the training and welfare of the horse. Our starting point in dressage is "10" – all riders have the possibility to get a 10 – then the important part for the judge is to assess the quality (find the level and potential) and then point out the technical problems/mistakes to end with the correct mark/score. Statistics will show, that movements that require a high degree of technical knowledge (eg canterpirouettes) have a tendency to be lower, but movements that include elements of "brilliance" (eg extended trot) will be higher.

The key-word is Education.

There will always be differences in judging and results – but that doesn't mean that we should accept it – but the road to accuracy and consistency is difficult. That's why we have to educate and explain. Education has to be based on experience and pointed in a more individual direction. Evaluation of judging and judges has among other things to be based on evidence and statistics, we have the tool, Dashboard, for that.

A part of the consolidation is focusing on education. NO new system will change the way of thinking and compensate for "human" mistakes/bias. At the same time we have opened up to "spectators judging" – that is fun, educating for the spectators – but at the same time – that will always be biased – for the good and the obvious bad!

The revision of the Handbook has in a way already been started – but now postponed, but it is essential that we carry on with this. There has already been made Guidelines for the judges. This is only a working tool for now – but it is an important start.

It is essential for the IDOC that we focus on education – in the future. Starting now !

We will work on

1. Codifying the handbook including a needed revision, that will include a "Code of points"
2. Shortversion of the handbook (compact edition, catalogue form)
3. Handbook and judging-manual for "dummies" – an educational tool for spectators and people interested in our sport.

As the IDOC has a lot of support not only from our members but also by top riders and trainers we are certain, that this will be the best way to go forward.

Sometimes you have to be brave to consolidate – a change in judging system will not change the way of thinking – but also not in perception ! We will have to educate and explain. Not to mention the costs and problems for all national federations that will have to change their judging and education systems. The world wants more knowledge – but at the same time any change will not provide that, only uncertainty and confusion – but education in and explanation of the current system will.

HC Matthiesen, IDOC