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Dear Eventing Stakeholders,

I would be honored to serve as Chairman of the FEI Eventing Committee. As a candidate for this position, I wish to provide you with my background and thoughts on the sport of Eventing, role of the Bureau and Eventing Committee and the future of Eventing.

### **Background**

I have spent my entire life immersed in the sport of Eventing as a competitor, coach, official and administrator. Starting as a child, Eventing was in my blood and I have been fortunate to have a career that spanned three decades as a competitor with the honor of representing my country for 28 years. During that time, I was able to compete in two Olympic Games and four World Championships winning a combination of five medals in those championships. I have attended every Olympic Games since 1988 in Seoul Korea and have attended every WEG that has been organized in varying roles including as a competitor, coach and president of the NF that was hosting the WEG in 2010. I consider myself fortunate to have lived at a time where this happened for me and I am pleased to have seen these competitions from every angle – as a competitor, coach, spectator and administrator.

### **Bureau Member**

They say that once you have competed in an Olympic Games, you are always an Olympian and I am an Olympian through and through. I believe in the Olympic spirit, I believe in the Olympic process and the good that it does for athletes, fans and nations. This is a time when our sport needs to stand united in our resolve to stay in and participate in the Olympic process for the good of our athletes and the good of the sport worldwide. The new dimensions that the IOC has brought to the table have increased the opportunity for more athletes from more nations to compete.

I believe that it is of the utmost importance that the Bureau recognizes and supports that all athletes, including those newer to this level of competition, are prepared in the best way possible for them to enjoy their own personal Olympic experience and showcase the discipline of our sport in the best way possible. Olympic champions will always prevail, but it is just as important that the athletes that have achieved their dream of participating in the Olympic Games have the experience of their sporting lifetime and further equestrian sport on the world platform.

### **The Future of Eventing**

To achieve the goals stated above, we must ensure that numerous qualifying competitions of proper quality exist. Additionally, the officials administering these competitions must be highly qualified and highly educated in their sphere of influence. This is where the global education system has had a positive influence on the quality of officials around the world. I am interested in the report from the officials working group, but I know that since the funding has ended for this program that some type of

exchange program will have to be initiated. It may have to be driven by NFs that have fully developed officials programs, but I see the necessity for this exchange to continue.

The discipline of Eventing has three distinct levels of events worldwide. These include the destination events, the normal qualifying events and the local competitions for the amateurs and young horses. Each level can have the full range of competitors from the professional to the hobbyist.

- The destination events have a commercial element to them that the FEI must support and encourage. These events are the showcase to the sport and must have an awareness of the needs and desires of the paying public and sponsors who are there to watch and be part of the best of the best.
- The normal qualifying events are those that athletes use to qualify through the different levels of the sport and the non-professional may use to fulfill their dream of competing at that level. These need to be numerous and accessible around the world. There are countries with very sophisticated systems that are supported by their NFs and there are countries that need help to organize and administer these extremely important competitions. It is the responsibility of the FEI to foster and administratively support these events that are so important to the development of the sport.
- The local level is the development of the sport as a whole. These events are the introduction to the international levels of the sport. The new 1\* level will further this thought greatly in places where the sport is in its infancy.

### **Role of the FEI Eventing Committee**

The Eventing Committee's role in this process is to provide a framework where these levels can prosper and expand. My role as Chair is to be the facilitator, researcher and collaborator. The Committee needs to have the idea of problem solving within a structure that is consistent in its concept. The world is not the same across the globe, but a guiding philosophy set by FEI as a whole, and the Committee in particular, needs to be the backbone of the sport. I believe that the Committee must first be a listener. What are the issues that different parts of the world have and how can the FEI be a resource for helping with those issues? The issues in a country with a strong Eventing background and with successful events at all levels are quite different from a country that is in its infancy within the sport. The committee needs to hear those concerns. The Committee must also drive better communication between NF's and FEI Eventing committee on issues including, but not limited to, the new Olympic format and its ramifications, coaching protocols for countries new to the Olympic process, risk management, Officials' education and exchange programs between different NF competitions, new opportunities for Eventing competition and series to be developed for sponsorship, and supporting more work on the new star system and helping to coordinate its launch in 2019. It is my desire to have the Committee collect ideas from around the world and be the catalyst for those ideas to become placed into the worldwide FEI structure as appropriate. The Committee should not consider itself a directorship, but rather a center for meaningful discussion and problem solving.

All horse sports have a risk factor to them. Eventing, because of the all-around expertise needed and the higher speeds of the cross country, involves a risk factor that must be evaluated all the time. I have been fortunate to be part of the first committee involved in this subject in the early 2000's. I was the first Chairman of the Safety Committee in 2006 and am again Chair of the Risk Management Committee formed last year. This is a strong passion of mine. Staying within the sport's traditions, modern technology can enhance the experience of all athletes at all levels and provide a platform that can minimize the effect of a sporting mistake. Education of these ideas and technologies is of primary importance to the discipline of Eventing, but also to the whole FEI sport structure. As always, the

welfare of the horse is the priority. It goes hand in hand that by reducing horse falls, the human is also at less risk. So by being vigilant about the horse, the risk is minimized.

Education of riders is also of high priority. Coaching at all levels needs to be stressed so the athletes are truly prepared for the tests at hand. All top level sports have highly evolved coaching programs at all levels. I believe this is an area to be looked at and strengthened around the world to raise the level of proficiency and competitiveness around the world. I truly think this a weak part of the sport as a whole and there is a way for quality education to be available to all parts of the world, whether through internet technology or personal time by coaches.

In closing, I have a strong inclination toward the volunteer side of the sport. I was always taught that not only did you have to give back to the sport that has brought you so much but to also try a pass the opportunities to the next generation. Maybe that is why the coaching and teaching side of the horse world has become my business and true passion. I have held volunteer positions for many years culminating with being the USEF president for nine years which lead me to be in positions with in the FEI during that time. I was on the Bureau as Group IV chairman during my time as USEF president and after being away for a time, I am looking forward to trying to be helpful again. During that time we initiated a coaching program for group V and VI which still has its effects to this day. These are the type of programs that can be fostered by the FEI. Perspective is a powerful ally in looking at worldwide issues not only in the sport of Eventing, but also within the FEI family itself. I hope to have the opportunity to bring a perspective from a background of competing and administration and help the continued FEI progress and growth in this immediate time and the near future.

Thank you for taking the time to read my letter and I am always available if you would like to speak with me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "David J. O'Connor". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

David J. O'Connor

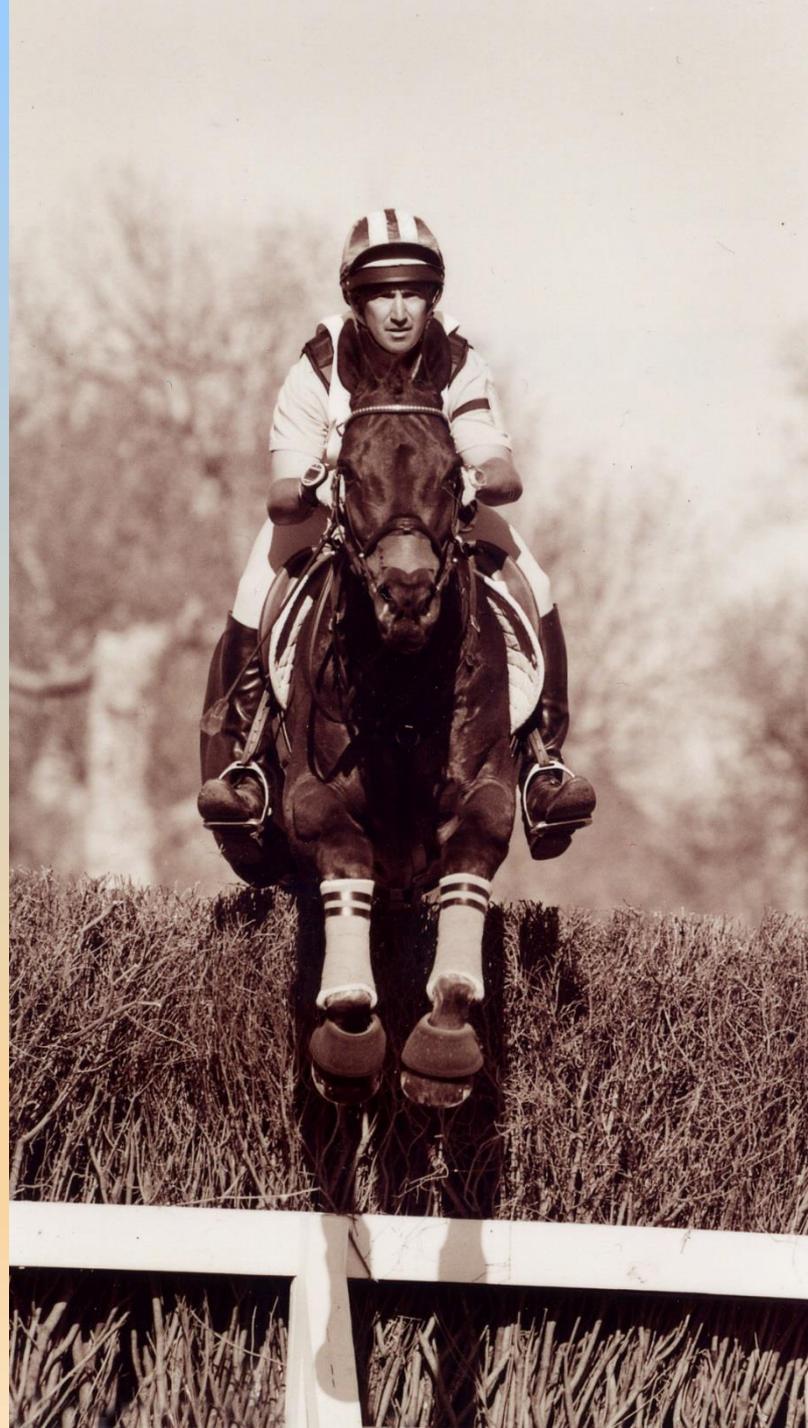
David J. O'Connor



# PERSONAL BACKGROUND

## Athlete

- Individual Olympic Gold medal Sydney Olympics
- Team silver medal and bronze medalist Atlanta and Sydney
- Team world championship Gold medal Jerez Spain
- Pan American Gold medal team and individual silver Winnipeg
- World number 1 2000-2001
- 25-year career as an athlete
- Coaching International teams: Canada and USA 2006-2017



# PERSONAL BACKGROUND

## Governance and Leadership

- USEF President, 2003-2012  
First President of new NF for the USA
- FEI Safety Committee Chair, 2005
- FEI Group IV Chair, 2009-2011
- FEI Integrity Task Force, 2009
- FEI Risk Management Working Group Chair, 2016 to present
- Organizer of FEI Nations Cup for USA, 2016 and 2017



# FUTURE

Drive better communication between NFs and the FEI Eventing Committee on issues including:

- The new Olympic format and its ramifications
- Develop coaching protocols for countries new to the Olympic process
- Expand Risk Management protocols
- Expand Officials education and an exchange program between varied different NF competitions
- Promote new opportunities for Eventing competitions and series to be developed for sponsorship
- Support the new star system by helping to coordinate its launch in 2019

