

Dressage Round Table

9 April 2013

The Panellists for the Dressage Round Table were The FEI Dressage Committee Chair Frank Kemperman (NED), the Dressage Committee members Thomas Baur (GER), David Hunt (GBR), Kyra Kyrklund (FIN) and Hans-Christian Matthiesen (DEN) as well as Trond Asmyr, FEI Director of Dressage and Para-Equestrian Dressage.

The main topics were the future of Dressage, following the success for the discipline at the 2012 London Olympic Games, the introduction of an FEI Nations Cup™ Dressage series and the review of the Freestyle judging format.

The Chair introduced the members and gave a presentation covering the tasks of the Committee, judging (including education system, JSP and new judging systems), welfare of the horse, Dressage tests, the future of dressage and the different target groups (sport, sponsors, media, public) as well as how to develop the sport and the importance of television.

Currently in Dressage, there are 660 Grand Prix horses on the FEI World Ranking List, of which half reach the 64% minimum eligibility standard and with the top ones competing 6 to 8 times a year. The Grand Prix is the test of the highest level in the sport, and in order to bridge the gap to the Small Tour, see more stars in the arena and give more possibilities for top riders to compete, the Chair proposed creating a Medium tour, with a test between Intermediate I and Intermediate II. This Medium tour would be a stepping stone both for young riders and for young horses towards the Grand Prix level, offer top riders more opportunity to compete as well as opening the sport to new riders. This new level would also be positive for horse welfare as not all horses have the capability to compete in Grand Prix. Such a test and level exists in several NFs already, the experience of whom could be drawn on.

The Chair also presented the Nations Cup series, a new top product for the summer season. So far, Nations Cups have only been held at Championships. A test season was to be conducted in 2013 with CDIOs in Vindauban (FRA) in May, Rotterdam (NED) in June, Aachen (GER) in late June and Hickstead (GBR) early August (TBC). The rules are simple and the organisers can choose to use the Grand Prix or the Grand Prix Freestyle test as the Nations Cup test. The Chefs d'Equipe make up the teams and can choose to bring young riders to mix with the senior ones to give them the opportunity to start for their country and ride with the stars.

Q&A Part I

Wendy Christoff (CAN)

- Which tests would be used for the new Medium level, current ones or new ones ?
- Would there be mixed teams for future CDIOs?
 - **Trond Asmyr:** A new test between Int I and Int II. NFs already having such tests would be consulted.
 - **Trond Asmyr:** The CDIO at Wellington with mixed levels was a special case (test for the development of the Pan Am Games). If a USA organiser holds a CDIO, the FEI would see if it could fit into the Nations Cup calendar.

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- **Frank Kemperman:** *Mixed teams could be a new concept to develop the sports in new parts of the world.*

Wojtek Markowski (IDOC)

- Congratulations to the DC for their work
- Support for the above idea from Canada of mixed teams (GP with other levels)
- Consider the Children category and increasing the age limit for it to match the Pony rider category; many nations have this category

- **Trond Asmyr:** *The mixed team concept would be evaluated after Wellington, where two DC members would be present to observe*
- **Frank Kemperman:** *Age limits are cross-discipline, so a change would then affect all disciplines. EU-CHs for Children could be organised, open to bids.*

Dane Rawlins (IDTC)

- In favour of the Medium level concept, it could be involved as a lower level at Nations Cup events

Ulf Helgstrand (DEN)

- New Medium test - how possible to talk about top sport if two levels below? Why would it make more GP horses?

- **Frank Kemperman:** *Top sport at that level and will open up the sport and mean seeing top riders in the arena more.
The GP level should not be made easier, but a new test was needed to improve the structure and make it easier to advance from the Small to the Big tour.*

Sönke Lauterbach (GER)

- Thank DC for the Medium tour initiative, works in GER to help close the gap
- Careful with raising age limit for Children, in order not to limit the Junior category too much.

Kimi Nielsen (DEN)

- U25 group – important to keep young people in the sport – consider to raise age limit from 25 to 27?

- **Frank Kemperman:** *This has been discussed. 25 was seen as a good limit.*
- **Trond Asmyr:** *U25 has been very successful and has helped young riders join national teams. Next step could be the introduction of a U25 Championship*
- **Ulf Helgstrand** – *Denmark has a national U25 Championship*
- **Frank Spadinger** – *suggests organising U25 CHs together with Senior CHs. Suggests organising a CH-Ch with CH-Y/J, time permitting.*

Frank Spadinger (AUT)

- Asking rule for rotation of judges (max 3 years) to be reviewed by the DC.

- **Trond Asmyr:** Rule approved by GA in 2011 to come into force 1.1.2013 to give organisers time to adapt. The communication did not seem to have worked successfully. The working of this would be reviewed.

Sjef Jansen (IDTC)

- Questioned U25 age limit being too low, in NED it's 28 – request DC consider increasing the age, as training takes time in Dressage.

Christian Pläge (SUI)

- To increase the number of riders for Grand Prix, propose having GPs at 2* level not for top riders, but for those unable to reach a certain percentage. Many riders have horses with the technical capacity, but with not sufficient quality.

POL Delegate

- The chance to win prize money has to be given also at Medium and Small tour level. Finding sponsors difficult.

- **Frank Kemperman:** Prize money is important, the Organisers want the best riders in the arena and if they start also at Medium level, tickets for this can be sold and consequently organiser can pay better prize money. New shows with good prize money have sprung up lately, e.g. in recently in Qatar.

- Take care not to make Grand Prix easier, it is not meant for everyone

- **Trond Asmyr:** No discussions about making the GP easier, want a medium level to make the transition to GP easier.

Carlos Lopes (POR)

- Problematic for less developed countries to be invited to big shows (4*/5*) even if have quality horses

- **Trond Asmyr:** Reminder to all NFs that for CDIs3* and above, the FEI can give a wild card. This possibility is currently not used much by NFs. It is also possible to ask the organisers directly.
- **Thomas Baur:** Problem – last minute cancellations or non-shows by riders
- **Frank Kemperman:** Request to all NFs to inform shows early in case of cancellation, so other riders can be invited. A sanctioning system for repeated non-shows to be discussed.

Khalid Bin Abdulla Al Khalifa (FEI Bureau)

- The DC should control the organisers as part of developing the sport. Organisers to have a small percentage of wild cards for riders who can and want to participate in CDIs4*/5*

- **Trond Asmyr :** Thank for idea, will be taken aboard. Is how the wild card system is meant to work.

Peter Bollen (IEOA)

- Medium tour a good idea. Worry that the Small tour may be overlooked

- Last minute cancellations (30-40% per show for Dressage, compared to 5% for Jumping) is a big problem for Organisers and needs to be addressed.

- **Frank Kemperman:** *A real problem that needs to be investigated. Possibility of a yellow card system.*
- *The Medium tour not intended to take the place of the Small tour, but to complete the structure with an additional level.*
- **Kyra Kyrklund:** *A rider may hesitate to go to a show with just one horse, but if can ride 2-3 on different levels, this would help participation.*

Ulf Helgstrand (DEN):

- idea to keep Small tour – put an age limit to keep for upcoming horses.

- **Frank Kemperman:** *A possibility, but it is also meant for younger riders starting with older experienced horses.
Organisers could be given the possibility to schedule for different age groups.*

Dane Rawlins (IDTC)

- When making the definite entry, the NF would have to pay the start fee, and then the rest when arriving at the show. This would mean NFs would chase non-shows.

- **Frank Kemperman:** *In the schedule, organisers can state that NFs will be charged in case of no-shows. Question over to NFs?*
- **Frank Spadinger:** *FEI to allow organisers to define the sum for non-show in the schedule, and make it substantial. NFs are liable for their entries and if billed, will in turn bill the riders. If they don't pay up, they will not be allowed to compete.*
- **Peter Bollen:** *Problem not only financial, but people buy tickets to see certain riders announced to be present in the press releases, and disappointed if they are not there.*

DC question to non-European delegates about what could be done for Dressage in their countries

Constanza Jaramillo (COL)

- The Medium level would be very important
- Frank Kemperman: the possibility to organise a CDI3* on medium level to be discussed. Hope to introduce Medium tour from 2014.

Pablo Mayorga (FEI Bureau)

- Thanked BRA NF for organising a Childrens event on borrowed horses.

Jim Wolf (USA)

- Medium level is a positive development for the USA

Jim Ellis (NZL)

- Planning to develop a sport worldwide, it is not possible to have the same rules everywhere. True development is difficult if no allowances for travel and distances are made (concerns all disciplines)

- The issue of a 3* judge being mandatory – feedback from the rest of the world to be sought.

Trond Asmyr (FEI)

- The comments are taken aboard, but difficult situations with variations in the rules based on geographical situations.
- Exceptions are not a good way forward.
- NFs may suggest rules for special conditions, but the issue is difficult.

Review of the Freestyle Judging Format

Trond Asmyr spoke about the Freestyle, which has been instrumental to the current popularity of the sport and is the most popular test with the public and television. It is also the most subjective of all Dressage tests to judge, and continuous efforts need to be made in order to make the judging as objective and streamlined as possible. The aim was to increase both accuracy (giving the correct mark) and consistency (all judges agreeing).

Elements to be tried out during a test event in 2013 included judging the degree of difficulty (catalogue of difficulties – a consensus of what is difficult, floor plan of choreography), judging the music (currently 10% of total result), judging in pairs (one technical, one artistic), splitting, merging or moving certain marks, test if the JSP should work also with the Freestyle and split some technical marks in order to have more of them and obtain more consistency.

Q&A Part II

Sjef Jansen (IDTC)

- Congratulations to the DC for these steps, the way towards real professional sport.

Richard Nicoll (Moderator)

- Which are the biggest challenges when judging the Freestyle?
 - Hans-Christian Matthiesen : As a judge, most difficult to get the artistic part right, very hard to make totally objective. More movement marks would be positive.

Trond Asmyr

- Ask the top riders present what should be done?
 - Constanza Jaromilla (COL) : Agrees with the issue about choreography, much work done on this. Different combination find different things easy/difficult.

Wendy Christoff (CAN)

- Is the choreography submitted to a panel? When is it evaluated? How do the proposed changes fit in with instant scoring? Can the rider change choreography during the test?
 - **Trond Asmyr:** *There will be challenges with the implementation. Instant scoring should not be altered, a system that delays the results cannot be introduced. The rider gives the choreography/floor plan in advance to a judge or a panel. To be discussed what to do if the rider changes something during the test.*
 - **Kyra Kyrklund:** *In figure skating even the announcer knows what is coming. If the rider does not follow the floor plan he should not be penalised, just judged differently on the degree of difficulty.*

Wojtek Markowski (IDOC)

- Generally support trying out these factors. Request not to make judging a Freestyle more complicated or time consuming than it currently is, as results, especially for big events, are wanted fast. Proposal for training Judges with dedicated Seminars, also more training regarding music and choreography.

Will Connell (GBR)

- Is there a possibility to develop computer software that would calculate the degree of difficulty as the rider goes along? With such an app, improvising would be possible

- **Trond Asmyr** : This would be good if practically possible. It would be based on the consensus on what the degree of difficulty is for different figures or combinations.

Dane Rawlins (IDTC)

- Suggestion to take two judges of five to judge the artistic part and music, and the rest to give technical marks. Have a list of degree of difficulty, but not yet require to hand in floor plan, evolve towards this.

- **Trond Asmyr** : *one of the points to be tested is judging in pairs, one to give artistic marks and the other technical marks.*

Larasati Gading (INA)

- There needs to be some flexibility in the Freestyle so the rider can adapt to the form of the day. Deductions from an optimal mark not good, rider feels judged already before riding. In practise, many people needed for this. To be for major events only or all Freestyles?

- **Hans-Christian Matthiesen** : *Handing in the floor plan would be a guideline for the judges, so they can be more precise in the marks.*
- **Kyra Kyrklund**: *iPad app idea good, Judges, riders, trainers need to have same view of what is difficult. Handing in the floor plan gives the judges a better chance to give correct marks. If the rider changes and does something easier, the degree of difficulty mark for that movement will be lower.*

Kimi Nielsen (DEN)

- The music counts for 10% of the total result – the rider and the judges may have very different musical taste and style preferences.

- **Trond Asmyr** : *In theory, all learn that the type of music should not have an influence on the judging, and judges work hard to follow this. They need to see how the music fits the horse and rider.*

Kerri McGregor (CAN)

- Learning from other sports – figure skating has worked in the last few years to make judging more objective, and have patterns submitted beforehand.

- **Trond Asmyr** : *Contact with other Federations – in 2009 (figure skating, gymnastics and boxing), and also now concerning the degree of difficulty work.*
- **Frank Spadinger**: *Also look to Vaulting – also has Freestyles and judges, same issues with music.*
- **Trond Asmyr**: *Absolutely correct.*

Carlos Lopes (POR)

- Congratulations to the DC on this work. Judges judge by the rules, request to keep it as simple as possible while making it specific.