Frank Kemperman (FK), Chair of the FEI Dressage Committee, opened the session dedicated to the future of the discipline by emphasising the fact that Dressage is in a good position, especially thanks to the Freestyle, but there were strong signals from the IOC that change is needed, particularly the sport’s appeal to the media.

Frank Kemperman outlined the discipline’s goal to be one of the main equestrian sports and highlighted the necessity to unify formats at the Olympic Games and main championships, to attract new spectators, sponsors and generate increased media interest while maintaining the core value of Dressage, the well trained horse.

A single format for Olympic Games, World Equestrian Games and Championships was proposed in order for the public to more easily understand the sport. Most importantly, there has to be openness to innovation and learning how to improve. There is a young public out there and they are needed, they have iPhones and iPads and they follow everything ‘in the moment’ online and dressage has to adapt to being part of their world.

Repocom Survey

A survey conducted in the autumn of 2014 by Repucom, which specialises in market research, media evaluation and commercial auditing, found that in order to attract new fans:

- New and shorter formats are crucial, as are commentary and graphics on television
- Key events should be actively used to attract new audiences
- Modernisation and increased freedom of dress code and music should be actively considered
- Human interest stories in media would broaden interest
- Modernisation should be handled carefully in order to retain the core dressage fans

The Repucom survey also established that 86% of those surveyed are attracted to Dressage by its beauty, the relationship between horse and rider, the horse itself, as well as the sport’s grace, elegance, aesthetics and fun, with only 24% interested because of concepts including discipline, control and training.

Proposed change to Olympic Games format

Proposed changes to the Olympic Games format were detailed for consideration by the Forum. They included teams of three or potentially two combinations, shorter tests, Pas-de-Deux or Pas-De-Trois.

The positives of these proposals were considered to be a larger number of nations, which would increase universality, and separate individual and team competitions. The removal of the drop score would increase drama and entertainment and contribute towards more unpredictable results.

The negative aspects would include a possible decrease in the level of excellence as top nations may bring fewer participants, and significant consequences for the team if a horse was eliminated or disqualified. Having reserve horses would be essential.

The proposal was also that formats for the FEI World Equestrian Games™ and European Championships should match the Olympic Games format.

Greater interaction and explanations on the sport, social media, use of music during tests other than the Freestyle, length of tests, formats, quotas, open scoring, a redefined dress code,
lifestyle stories, higher prize money, more attractive prize giving ceremonies and the involvement of young riders, were outlined as likely to have a positive impact on the attractiveness of the discipline.

Discussion

The presentation was followed by a discussion, with representatives of the Dressage riders, trainers and organisers’ clubs, the National Federations of Australia, Austria, Denmark, Germany, Great Britain, the Netherlands, New Zealand and the United States, as well as the European Equestrian Federation, making contributions.

The main topics raised during the discussion were judging, dropping of highest and lowest scores for each movement, code of points, open versus running scores at major events, change in dress code and the increased use of social media. Protecting the welfare of the horse at all times was highlighted, and the creation of a video handbook was also discussed.

Detailed comments by the participants:

**Anky van Grunsven, IDTC**
- Findings of survey indicate that the Dressage Fans are satisfied and loyal to the sport. Attractiveness should be increased without hurting the core sport.
- Proposal to use elements of scoring from Reining – penalty for error; limit to the number of times a movement can be shown in the Freestyle
- Dress code – for modernising it, but without scoring it as this would be one more subjective element.
- Down time between competitors should be reduced.
- The time of the GP test should not be reduced
- Find more creative way of broadcasting (live streaming, social media).
- Update tests more frequently and give difficult movements more value.
- Formats such as pas de deux or knock-out should be used, but only as show elements.
- Judging should be looked at as it is always subjective and constantly needs to evolve. Riders have to have confidence that they are being judged fairly.
- As in Reining, the highest/lowest score per movement should be removed.
- Big mistakes should be penalised in a consistent way to be clearer to the spectators/media.
- A video handbook and a code of points were needed as soon as possible, to be created with the aid of relevant stakeholders.
- A degree of difficulty app for the Freestyle would make judging clearer.
- For the Olympic format, teams of 3 were acceptable with the provision of having a reserve horse.

**Chris Hodson, NZL NF**
- The paper submitted by the NZL NF outlines their feedback on the main issues (teams of 3 with no additional individuals; 66% MES; format Proposal B Alternative 1; no shortening of GP etc.)
- Using a running score would help audiences understanding of the sport.

**Ulf Helgstrand, DEN NF**
- If teams of 3, having a reserve horse is crucial. If substitution happens during a competition, how to calculate the result?
- **FK:** This depends on the format chosen. If starting from scratch for the Team competition, it works. A horse can never be substituted during a test.

**Ali Kucuk, EEF**
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY  
27-28 April 2015, Lausanne (SUI)

- Against short Grand Prix
- Teams of 3 – agree if the same for all disciplines ??
- Question of whether formats have to be the same in all CHs – FK: yes, preferable as it makes the sport easier to understand.
- The consequence of reducing the number of riders at FEI CHs/Games could result in better media coverage, better timetables etc.
- Question of how to handle qualification – FK: a solution has to be found across the disciplines as it will not be possible for organisers anymore to organise such huge events.

Wayne Channon, IDRC
- Agrees with points made by Anky van Grunsven
- The DC deciding against shortening the Grand Prix shows they work in cooperation with the stakeholders.
- IDRC online survey (3254 responses) – three biggest problems all related to judging (subjectivity, transparency, not understanding the system)
- Improvements wanted in the survey: More TV coverage, fixing the judging system, real time information/seeing the scores as they happen and less biased judging.
- Dressage is the only judging sport that does not drop high/low scores. Doing this would also reduce the need for the JSP.
- Dressage is always the focal point for the welfare of the horse and should take the moral/ethical high ground and be a model to other disciplines, also on social media.
- FK: Judging is always a main issue being worked on improving. The IDRC has presented a draft for a code of points, the DC is waiting for the final paper and would look at this and at the dropping of high/low scores again.

Sabrina Zeender, FEI Secretary General: Asked Wayne Channon to send in a proposal for an Ethics panel.

Andrew Finding, GBR NF
- Owners should also be consulted. Risk that owners lose interest if they risk not seeing their horse competing at top events.
- FK: looking for more prize money to help keep owners interested and attract new ones. Have the voice of the owners in the DC via the Riders and Trainers. Is there a need for an Owners club in Dressage also like in Jumping?

Maarten van der Heijden, NED NF
- Compliment the DC on the proposals, a big improvement
- If teams of 3, reserve horses are needed to ensure horse welfare.
- FK: to see with the IOC if this was possible.
- Trond Asmyr, FEI Director Dressage (TAS): aim to be able to put reserve horses into competition closer to the competition than what was possible in London.

Frank Spadinger, AUT NF
- For horse welfare, prefer 4 riders in a team with a drop score.
- Number of flags – if the same format in all CHs, number of flags will be reduced. Events that show that there are many NFs participating are needed.
- Continental CHs should be the platform for all NFs to be able to participate. OGs are different.
- FK: Dressage rules permit judges to judge max 40 horses per day, might risk having 3 days of Grand Prix. Perhaps look at pre-qualification so still see the number of flags aiming to participate (capacity problem).
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
27-28 April 2015, Lausanne (SUI)

Soenke Lauterbach, GER NF
- Welcomes the list of ideas to improve attractiveness; some of Anky’s proposals to be added.
- In favour of teams of 4 with a drop score. Horse welfare issue, especially in Jumping and Eventing, if a horse still continue to compete even if not a 100% well, in order not to have the team eliminated. **FK**: have to make it work with reserve horses; the goal was teams of 3 with a reserve horse.
- Formats of CHs – in favour of having the same format in all CHs. Suggestion to add a medal for the GPS to the Olympic Games. **FK**: if two individual medals, unsure who is the champion.

Sjef Jansen, IDTC
- Clarification of open versus running score? **FK**: only showing the average score of all judges per movement is permitted in the rules. If change is wanted, has to come with proposal in the rule changes process.
- More information on time schedule for video handbook and code of points: **FK**: as soon as possible.
- IDTC likes to join the other disciplines, aligned for the OGs. **FK**: yes, harmonised for Rio, goal to harmonise again for the future.

George Williams, USA NF
- Proposal to use GP as qualification at CHs (4/NF to compete), then GPS as team test with 3 of the 4. **TAS**: then the horse is not a reserve horse, competition gets longer and it would not open to more flags.

Jason Brautigam, GBR NF
- Agrees with comments from Anky van Grunsven and Sjef Janssen, except on open scoring. Open scoring would detract from the sport if shown during the test. Also there is the problem of anomalies, incorrect scores that get corrected in the end.
- Fundamentally the current structure of GP-GPS-GPFS works well.
- To reach out to new audience, make it easier to understand, use new technology to make the sport more accessible like biathlon did, without changing the sport so much.
- Aim for improved consistency, using a code of points etc. The more that can be explained and interpreted for the public, the better.

Monica Theodorescu, GER NF
- Appreciate opportunity to give ideas. The sport has globally come a long way in the past years.
- Agrees with previous speaker, the sport has to be made more transparent and be better explained.
- The core values to be defined, explained using broadcasting technology, split screens, good commentators.
- The sport cannot be exactly compared to figure skating, the horse remains a horse.
- **FK**: core value – want to see a well-trained horse.

Linda Keenan, IDTC
- If the removal of the high/low scores is adopted, the discussion of running open scoring disappears.
- **FK**: the DC will look into and discuss this.

Gerrit-Jan Swinkels, Organiser of CDI ‘s-Hertogenbosch
- Allowing the public to show their appreciation with loud applause a success in Las Vegas, should this be promoted more generally?
- **FK**: Positively surprised by the reactions of riders, trainers, media, all liked it. Personally supports it.
- **TAS**: Two sides to this, certain riders preferred not to participate due to this. But certainly increases the interest and excitement.
- **Sjef Janssen**: Permit earplugs again.

Grant Baldock, AUS NF
- Create flexibility for the Southern Hemisphere NFs to qualify for the WEG?
- **FK**: The qualification system for the next big CHs/Games was to be looked at and a solution found, pending for now.

Will Connell, USA NF
- Increased universality = more flags. If the number of teams is increased, what will the standard of the additional teams be like? Has a simulation been done with the various proposals?
- **TAS**: No, collecting feedback from here first, then will do this.

**Moderator:**
Richard Nicoll

**Panellists/Keynote Speakers:**
Frank Kemperman, Chair FEI Dressage Committee
Trond Asmyr, FEI Director Dressage