



United States Eventing Association

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Fédération Equestre Internationale
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To the Bureau of the Fédération Equestre Internationale,

The United States Eventing Association, Inc. (USEA) is the official Eventing Affiliate of the United States Equestrian Federation (USEF). The Association was founded in 1959 to preserve, protect, grow and educate about the sport of Eventing in the United States. The USEA represents over 12,000 members and well over 100,000 followers/enthusiasts within the United States. The following statement was drafted by the USEA Board of Governors in response to the invitation by the Fédération Equestre Internationale (FEI) to provide input on proposed rule revisions to the sport of Eventing.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on proposed changes to the sport of Eventing. Since its founding the goals of the USEA have remained relatively unchanged. Those goals include: being an indispensable resource for members regarding education, safety, horse welfare, certification, training and information; being a leader in making Eventing competition user-friendly, enjoyable, efficient, simple and affordable; and promoting the sport of Eventing as a recognized spectator sport. The USEA typically defers to the USEF on topics directly related to Olympic and International Competition and the USEA Board of Governors believes that the USEF has done a thorough and admirable job in outlining the issues with the FEI proposals as presented. We encourage the FEI to examine the USEF responses closely. The USEA has chosen to respond to this invitation for input with the sole purpose of adding more voices to the chorus to ensure that the integrity and safety of the sport are not irreconcilably altered. It is with this background that we write with concern regarding several of the proposals currently being considered by the FEI.

The essence of the sport of Eventing is rooted in its establishment in the 1912 Olympic Games. Eventing has been a test of 1) endurance and 2) a mastery of multiple riding disciplines since its establishment. As most people in the equestrian community are aware, the role of endurance in the sport was dramatically reduced

with the removal of three out of the four endurance phases of the Eventing competition beginning at the 2004 Olympic Games. At the time some believed that this change to the sport would only impact international competitions. This assumption has since to be proven to be incorrect. To our knowledge the only competitions still featuring all four phases of the endurance portion of Eventing are at eight national events held in the United States. It is our deepest fear that some of the proposals recently developed by the FEI will erode the sport to the point that a test of endurance is no longer a part of this sport and may have the unintended consequence of raising the risk level for the health and safety of the rider and their mount. Increasing risk is the most detrimental potential outcome of this proposal. Our primary focus over the past decade has been on improving the safety of Eventing to better protect horse, riders and the future of the sport. The USEA agrees that more work needs to be done to better market and translate the sport to the general public, however, those efforts should not include the dismantling of the sport to a point that it no longer embodies the principles on which it was established.

The following is a point by point response to the FEI Eventing Committee's Summary of Proposals for 2017 Rules for Eventing Revision.

GENERAL POINT: CONTINUATION OF CURRENT RULE BOOK SYSTEM OR ONE RULE BOOK INCLUDING ALL DRESSAGE AND JUMPING RULES APPLYING FOR EVENTING

The USEA and the USEF are currently engaged in efforts to streamline and simplify the rules of the sport on the National level. This simplification is not meant to alter the purpose of the rules, but to make those rules more intelligible by the layperson. If we require for competitors, officials and all others directly involved in the sport to be informed about the rules we must challenge ourselves to write those rules and communicate them in an understandable fashion. We encourage the FEI to conduct the same type of review.

COMPETITION LEVELS & FORMATS

For the 2017 competition year the USEA and the USEF will introduce a new National level of competition termed "Modified." This level was established for the same purposes as outlined by the FEI for the 1.05-meter level and will feature similar obstacle heights as proposed. An adjustment to the star rating would be understandable although we would recommend against using the word "Classics" to describe the CCI4* competition. The term "Classics" in the United States refers to traditional long format competitions, with all four phases of the endurance day run, held at the National level. We would encourage a different name be considered such as "Worlds", "Masters", "Experts" or a synonym of those words denoting the level as the highest within the sport.

POSITIVE SCORING

The weight of the score by test should not further erode the importance of the endurance (cross-country) phase of the competition. Cross-country is the heart and soul of the sport of Eventing. As described in the FEI summary document it appears that a country could field a team of three horse and rider pairs and opt to skip the cross-country phase of the competition and still be considered to have completed the competition. We strongly oppose such a change as it would irrevocably harm the integrity of the sport.

RENAMING THE DISCIPLINE

Of all of the proposals suggested this perhaps generates the largest negative response from our general membership. In the words of the USEF, "It is not the name but the promotion of the identity of the sport, which is linked to that name, which is more important. Is adopting a new name going to change anything or just further divide the community and confuse the public?" A substantial amount of funding would need to be spent by national governing bodies, related businesses and Associations (such as the USEA) should a name change be enacted. Trademarks, licensing and copyrights would need to be re-established for the whole sport to realign with this name change and retain a unified marketing message on all levels. Marketing would need to be put in place to draw a connection between the sport under its new nomenclature, especially in areas where the name "Eventing" has had commercial success with the general public. For this reason, we recommend that this change not be made without due consideration of its economic effects, and that no change be made unless and until such analysis shows it to have a potential positive economic impact upon our sport.

Additional points related to the FEI document entitled *Session 6 - Olympic Competition Format.*

TRADITIONAL ORDER OF TESTS

Differing opinions exist within the sport on this topic. We ask that enough flexibility exist within the rules to allow for events to tailor the order of each of the tests to best suit the conditions under which they operate and the clientele they serve.

MAXIMUM OF THREE RIDERS PER NATION

In its explanation for the proposal of limiting the number of riders per nation to three the FEI states that its intent is to address the main objective of "a more open and inclusive competition." It is counterintuitive to suggest that by reducing the number of riders allowed to compete that a competition could be more open and inclusive. Under the current structure of four riders per team with one drop score a nation is able supply a team of three riders. So this change simply reduces the number of riders allowed to compete and thereby limits the potential diversity of field. The only actual accomplishment of limiting teams to three riders and removing the drop score is that there will be more pressure on each team to complete even in the case of an unprepared or physically compromised horse or rider. This raises huge concerns about the safety of the sport and the welfare of our horses.

CONCLUSION

Rule changes without thorough consideration and impact assessment may have the opposite effect of its original intention. We must constantly probe and confirm the desired outcome of proposed rule changes and carefully judge if such changes are worthwhile. Should the FEI move forward with all of the proposals as outlined and deviate from the recommendations as outlined by the USEF, the USEA and other major National Governing Bodies of the sport, we will need to reconsider whether risking the integrity of the sport of Eventing justifies remaining a part of the Olympic Games.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the USEA Board of Governors,



Diane Pitts
USEA President



Rob Burk
USEA CEO