



NEWS & MESSAGES

08/04

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- **Message from Maciek Kacprzyk, Poland**

Hello!

In the last Endurance Intercontinental there is something about CEEC.

All informations (general information, point system, schedules) about Central European Endurance Cup you can also find on www.endurance.pl/ceec

All the best,

Maciek Kacprzyk

www.endurance.pl

- **News from the FEI Endurance Committee**

- Hallvard Somerseth has been re-elected Chairman for the FEI Endurance Committee
- Pierre Cazes, FRA, and Allan Renner, AUS, are new members of the FEI Endurance Committee to replace the outgoing Horst Müller, GER, and Faisal Seddiq al Mutawa, UAE.
- The FEI Endurance Committee got some very good constructive input from Australia, France, Argentina, South Africa and Switzerland on the rewording of the qualification criteria. The Endurance Committee Meeting is being held in La Baule, France, on the 9th/10th and will consider all contributions on this issue received prior to that date.
- At that meeting the FEI Endurance Committee will also be looking to finalise the introduction of * rating for all FEI Endurance Officials effective 1st January 2005 together with moving forward the identification of a Nations Qualification system ahead of the World Equestrian Games in Aachen.

All of this information was announced at the recent General Assembly in Paris.

As an attachment to this newsletter you'll find a comparison of the "old" (actual) FEI Endurance Rules with the new ones (which will be effective 1st January 2005). The comparison has been put together by Suzanne Dollinger with the permission of Ian Williams for publication.

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Suzanne Dollinger, 28/04/04

▪ **Message from Sergio Tommasi: Answer to Ian William's letter (15th April 2004)**

Dear Mr Williams,

I'm answering to your e-mail dated 16/4 in order to clarify some things that maybe have been misunderstood.

First of all I didn't mean to offend you with my words, that I recognize were very harsh, since I don't even know you in person and I don't have a reason to attack you. I apologize for this, my message was mainly addressed to the Toulouse Group to solicit a reaction to the communication dated 5/3 regarding the Qualification Criteria for the World Championships.

I don't attack Mr Williams as a person, but the FEI Secretary. It's not possible to justify a mistake with a series of meaningless considerations. This is what caused my indignation. I also noticed that I wasn't the only one to have such a reaction: the American Federation also shared my thoughts in its recent communication.

A 160 km ride in two days and a 160 km ride in one day are not comparable: they are very different and you, I understand from your letter, as a former endurance rider, should know it very well. You cannot justify the rule saying that the hold time is not specified and that a 12 hours hold is alike the regular hold time of 30 minutes or 1 hour maximum. It is not true that there is not a placing list at the end of the first day since on the second day there is still a mass start (exception: Barcelona 2003).

This means to make a fool of the whole endurance world, or maybe there is no courage to take an inconvenient decision as someone is psychologically conditioned by some NF that in the latest years are economically leading (and this is good) the FEI and manipulating it. FEI should protect all NF.

Rules are not only changed at the Assembly but on ride's fields. Please ask how many times the chef d'équipes have to react to situations created by FEI delegates during pre-ride briefings. And I don't want to talk about veterinarians. FEI has also approved the schedules of 2004 CEI O of La Baule and Newmarket (that have turned into 3* instead of 4*).

Of course the conditioning, maybe unconscious, does exist since when some NF sponsor the Championships, they also claim some privileges.

It is with much satisfaction that Italy last year has put on the World Championships for Juniors and Young Riders without being sponsored by other Federations.

I haven't yet received the communication of 17/4 that I asked you and which was never received by my NF.

I also include herein an article written by me and published in 1999 on a horse magazine (Cavallo Magazine). Please read it carefully as I think it is still up to date.

Yours faithfully,

Sergio Tommasi

Some years ago we were given an American book on endurance. It was 1993 and we had just started. We were very impressed by the book, whose forward said something like this:

«This book is dedicated to the horses that died at the hands of uneducated riders on June 13, 1987, at the Catoosa 'Suicide' Races in Oklahoma. May no other horses ever have to suffer as they did» (America's Long Distance Challenge by Karen Paulo).

A few years have gone by, but it would seem that no one has ever read these words. Many more horses have died in endurance races: for some, death might have occurred in any case, for many others it was for fault of their riders.

The most common reason for this genocide is the speed at which these races are run. When one pushes a horse beyond its limits, its generosity can bring death to a horse before we even can realize what is happening. We are talking about very fit horses who have been prepared as carefully as one preps a car to race in Formula One. In these rides nothing is left to chance.

In the 100 miler that recently took place, whose points were valid for the World Cup (and with a prize of 400,000 dollars) the winner reached the finish line in 7 hours and 49 minutes, with an average speed of over 21 km/h. It is probably a world record. Anyone who has competed in endurance races will understand what it means to hold such a high average. To hold 21 km/h, taking into account the fact that every now and then one stops to let the horse drink, means that in some parts of the course one must travel at 30 km/h. If then one also considers that at the start the horses are fresher and that their performance will decrease during the ride, perhaps they even reach 40 km/h in some parts. Almost like on a race track. Just that they're not on a race track, and the distance to be covered is 100 miles.

How can this be possible? Let's consider a few things. In 1986 Cassandra Schuler on Shikos Omar won the World Championship in Rome in 10h50'30"; in 1988 Becky Hart, with her legendary R.O. Grand Sultan ("Rio") won the World Championship in Fort Valley, Virginia, in 12h51'11"; in 1990 Hart, still on Rio, won the world title in Stockholm, on a mostly flat ride, in 10h33'59"; in 1992, Hart, once again on Rio, won the World Championship in Barcelona in 10h29'35".

Now the average required to win a 100 mile ride has decreased of 3 hours. Chances are that Becky Hart would finish among the last. Does this mean that we can do even better?

The decision is yours, here are the two options. We have written several articles on specialized magazines and on the Internet on the training process for endurance horses and how we go about it. We do short training rides every other day, and ride our for a longer workout at the end of the week; we add some dressage to all of this, and pay the utmost attention to the terrain and the progress of our horse. We have asked world class rider Valerie Kanavy -who sold us horses some years ago- if there was any special training system that in her experience was more effective (it

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was still 1993 and Valerie was not yet World Champion). We then applied common sense and instinct and tailored our training process to each horse, in line with their needs, strengths, and above all with the utmost respect for their legs. We worked consistently and achieved good results with a number of horses. This is what has made us "well known", and is the reason why many people have called to tell us about their problems or ambitions. We have always acted with the utmost clarity and never made a secret of how we work with our horses.

However, now we are at a standstill. We don't have the nerve to take the "leap". Although we have good horses we don't have the heart to take ask them to run at these averages. The risk is too high. When a horse is asked to perform at these speeds its legs can only last for a limited number of seasons, but it seems that many riders are indifferent to this and are only concerned with coming up in front. If all goes well, they will be able to sell their horse for several hundreds of dollars, and with that money one can buy lots of other horses...

To bring a horse to these levels of performance one must necessarily train every single day. The winner of the last world race said that he trained his horses up to 3 times a day (yes, the same horse). Needless to say, all our theories and concepts of respect towards our horses are chucked out. This type of training implies a greater energy requirement for the horse, therefore a revised feeding program that comes close to the model of a race horse. Anyone who has seen a picture of Rio will have noticed how different he is compared to the winning champions of today. Rio is "short", medium sized, with a very deep chest. Nowadays endurance horses tend to be increasingly similar in build to the slim racehorse type, with long legs, long body, tall, and aerodynamic. Some people even use Anglo-Arabs, which is the breed of the horse who won the European Championship in Portugal.

But let's get back to the initial debate, and to horses who have died. Word is going round that in several rides that took place in a hot country a number of horses died. It is said that horses have been seen literally falling to the ground along the trail, with horse ambulances going back and forth in the attempt to save as many as possible.

Those who survived will be scarred for life and some will never race again. We don't dare imagine how they will end their days. Vets have hushed up some deaths with creative diagnoses such as a heart dysfunctions that no one, not even the rider, ever knew of. We find it hard to imagine that a competitor in this type of race does not have the necessary experience to know or understand its horse's condition.

However the vets cannot be blamed. It is not their fault if a horse is ok at the vet gate and in the next leg it falls to the ground. The horse is guided by its rider, who should understand when something goes wrong and have the good will to slow down.

A horse won't tell you that it's about to die. Its instinct to stay in the pack bring it to stay with the others, up to its death. This type of rider seems to believe that if all goes well a horse can be sold, if not, one can buy another one and try again.

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Suzanne Dollinger, 28/04/04

In the hope that new nations would put money into this poor sport and bring it to its rightful place in the Olympics, Europeans and Americans alike have offered their best horses and experience to them, involving them in rides, giving them the satisfaction of winning some notwithstanding their arrogance and refusal to comply to the rules.

These countries have sponsored the World Championship, the European Championship, and countless rides all over the world. Who has the nerve to get up and tell them that to do an endurance ride one must know how to ride a horse? Who dares tell them that rules must be respected, and that it would be nice if they could take time to participate in the Awards Ceremonies or in the pre-ride parades, and that some public image wouldn't hurt, and that when one reaches a vet gate one should take care of one's horse just as one does when training at home?

No one dares. With their money they have bought our dignity and pride.

If the path towards the Olympics is paved with the bodies of dead or lame horses, we don't want to go further. FEI must review its position: it can't give everything away.

We are not against the participation of these nations. In fact we are firmly convinced that if we can "administer" their help wisely we will allow this wonderful sport to soar.

But the rules must change. As it is now, the speed averages are ruining the legs of our horses and we are also reaching their metabolic limit. If we want to race with horses that are not "disposable", we must lower the speed averages.

There are two ways to do this: either the courses become more technical or we lower the heart rate and time to present at the vet gates (a year ago at the ELDRIC meeting in London this subject had been addressed).

Today we have a journalist here asking us to talk about how one prepares a horse for a 100 mile ride and we don't feel like answering.

Perhaps we are outdated and love our horses too much. If we wanted to teach someone to win we would be describing the way to harm horses, and we can't afford to do this.

Sergio & Lara