





# PERISCOPE ON THE FEI

By Khaled Assem

***“THE PRIMARY MISSION OF THE FEI IS TO ADVANCE THE ORDERLY GROWTH OF EQUESTRIAN SPORT WORLDWIDE BY PROMOTING, REGULATING AND ADMINISTERING HUMANE AND SPORTSMANLIKE INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION IN THE TRADITIONAL EQUESTRIAN DISCIPLINES.”***

## ***FEI MISSION STATEMENT***

EQUESTRIAN SPORT IS PERFORMED IN UNION WITH AN OUTSTANDING AMBASSADOR OF NATURE AND THE ANIMAL WORLD; THE HORSE. THE FÉDÉRATION EQUESTRE INTERNATIONALE (FEI) IS THE SOLE CONTROLLING AUTHORITY FOR ALL INTERNATIONAL HORSE EVENTS IN DRESSAGE, PARA EQUESTRIAN DRESSAGE, JUMPING, EVENTING, DRIVING, PARA EQUESTRIAN DRIVING, ENDURANCE, VAULTING AND REINING. IT IS AN UMBRELLA ORGANISATION THAT WORKS IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE NATIONAL FEDERATIONS OF EACH MEMBER COUNTRY TO REGULATE AND GOVERN THE EQUESTRIAN DISCIPLINES NAMED ABOVE.





▲ The FEI's Clean Sport workshop during the FEI General Assembly in Copenhagen, November 2009

IN RECENT YEARS, THE FEI HAS BEEN UNDER SCRUTINY AND CONTROVERSIES HAVE GROWN OVER DRESSAGE JUDGING, DOPING, AND RUMOURS OF THE POSSIBLE REMOVAL OF THE SPORT FROM THE OLYMPIC GAMES. ACCORDINGLY, HOW HAS THE GOVERNING BODY OF EQUESTRIAN SPORT TONED DOWN THE TALKS AND HOW HAS IT WORKED ON DEVELOPING IT FURTHER? HORSE TIMES CONDUCTS AN INTERVIEW WITH THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE FEI MR. ALEX MCLIN THROUGH WHICH HE AMPLY ANSWERS MANY QUERIES ON WHERE SEVERAL ISSUES STAND.

**Please provide our readers with a briefing on the developments of the FEI in regards to coaching programmes, clinics and judging seminars?**

Among other programmes, the FEI has developed a system of education for coaches (oriented towards competitions) based on providing courses for coaches under the direction of appointed FEI tutors who initiate the system in developing regions. The tool was created to help developing National Federations to become self sufficient in organising their own coach education structure. Currently, the FEI has educated no less than 1,100 coaches in jumping, eventing and dressage from 76 National Federations in regions such as South/Central America, the Caribbean, Africa, Central Europe and Asia. The Coach Education Programme also includes workshops and scholarships for coaches, in addition to assistance towards the development of National Federations' sports structures. This Coach Education System is closely linked to

the FEI World Jumping and Dressage Challenges, the objective of which is to provide less experienced jumping riders from developing/emerging National Federations on all five continents with an opportunity to compete at FEI level without having to leave their own countries.

The FEI is also standardising the education of officials across all disciplines in order to harmonise the transition from national level to international level. Only active officials will remain on the FEI list, with a system of refresher seminars set up for all FEI officials, including Veterinarians, which is separate to the qualification courses. Inactive officials or those that have not completed the required refreshers courses will be taken off the list. Furthermore, following a recommendation from the Stevens Commission, a Stewards' education system has also been developed and is now being implemented as part of an internationally harmonised system that links the national and international levels. A similar education programme



will also be put in place for Veterinarians.

### **How has the FEI been dealing with the issue of doping?**

The last year has been about ensuring that all necessary measures are in place to make sure the sport is clean, competition is fair and that the competing horses are safe. The FEI's Clean Sport Campaign has involved a revision of the rules and the production of a list of prohibited substances that makes a clear distinction between doping and medication, with strict sanctions for doping in line with the World Anti-Doping Code. An Equestrian Community Integrity Unit has also been set up to safeguard the integrity of equestrian sport and we are also working on professionalising the sport over time. The FEI has been greatly assisted in this task by Professor Arne Ljungqvist, Chairman of the IOC Medical Commission and Vice-Chairman of the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA), as well as Lord John Stevens, former London Metropolitan Police Commissioner.

The specific measures taken by the FEI, which go into accreditation protocols, searchable drug databases and the like are too numerous to list here, but can all be found on our dedicated website, [www.feicleansport.org](http://www.feicleansport.org), which provides all the information that anyone involved in equestrian sport needs to know, including a number of tools to stay informed. Perhaps the greatest difference between

our recent efforts to prevent doping and previous initiatives is the much greater focus on education and communication, leaving little room for anyone to state that they simply didn't know what they should or should not have done.

### **Following the 2008 Olympics, there were reports mentioning the removal of equestrian sport from the upcoming London Games; what is it that everyone needs to know?**

The FEI Olympic disciplines of Jumping, Dressage and Eventing are very much part of the Olympic programme and there is no question of them not being part of the next two editions of the Olympic Games. The IOC rightly reviews the sports on the Olympic programme on a regular basis to ensure that the sports that are part of the Olympic Games deserve to be – namely that they meet certain criteria including universality and appeal. The London Olympics will mark the 100th anniversary of regular inclusion of the three current Olympic equestrian disciplines in the Games, and historical significance and longevity also play a part in the IOC's evaluation process.

That said, it is our belief and approach that being a part of the Olympic programme is a privilege rather than a right, and that we must

ensure that equestrian sport continues to develop in line with Olympic ideals and principles so that its place in the Olympics continues to be assured and can develop in prominence. The positioning of equestrian events in London's Greenwich Park in 2012 will ensure that the sport is very much at the heart of the Games. However, the FEI approach to global development of the sport seeks to ensure that opportunities to participate, compete and rise to prominence within the sport exist, regardless of geographic or socio-demographic constraints. This is and will continue to be an ongoing effort in which we seek to work together with our member National Federations at national and regional levels.

### **Where does the FEI stand in regards to dressage and its controversies?**

The Dressage Task Force presented its report to the FEI General Assembly in November 2009 and it was very well received. A number of improvements were suggested to the judging model, and we are now in the process of piloting all these changes during 2010. The changes will be implemented full scale from 2011. A new education and assessment programme for judges is coming into force on July 1st this year, with an emphasis on strengthening the quality of judging. Dressage judging will always have subjective elements, but we believe that these efforts will bring many of the controversies to an end. (The Dressage Task Force report is available at [http://www.fei.org/sites/default/files/file/DI%20SCIPLINES/DRESSAGE/Technical\\_Info/FEI%20DTF%20report%2016%20October\\_final.pdf](http://www.fei.org/sites/default/files/file/DI%20SCIPLINES/DRESSAGE/Technical_Info/FEI%20DTF%20report%2016%20October_final.pdf)). A new Dressage committee was appointed six months ago, and its main objective now is to implement the conclusions from the Task Force.

There has been considerable debate on warm-up methods over the past number of months and the FEI has now implemented new and expanded manuals to clearly define what is permitted and what is not. This came into force on May 15th 2010, and so far we have had a considerable amount of positive feedback from the media, spectators and from inside the sport.

▼ FEI President HRH Princess Haya bint Al Hussein addressing the 78th OIE (World Organisation for Animal Health) General Assembly in Paris, May 2010





**Many comments, reports and controversies concerning dressage judging were heard from dressage enthusiasts; as such, has the FEI taken any measures to work on the vision of making "dressage judging" better as to tone down the controversies as a whole? Especially since plenty of developments are seen in show jumping?**

The FEI is taking a number of measures to standardise the level of judging for dressage. One of these is the introduction this year of a completely new education and assessment system for the dressage judges with the main goal being to increase the quality of the judging. We have a lot of developments in all our disciplines and, at present, dressage is going through more changes than ever before. We also feel that the judges are very open to any improvements and are keen to participate actively in the actual testing of new ideas.

**Dressage as an official Arab League World Cup discipline is not large in the Middle East yet, although enthusiasts are working on it. Is the FEI working on developing the vision of Middle Eastern dressage enthusiasts closer?**


The FEI is constantly working on closing the gap between the most advanced nations and the rest of the world, and we are happy to see that the interest in dressage is growing in the Middle East. When we develop new concepts, whether they are for judges, events or for series, we are always looking at ways that allow us to bring new countries into the sport.

**A new FEI publication has been launched; FEI FOCUS. How does this add to the FEI's investment in the sport?**

The role of an international sports governing body is multi-faceted and is sometimes criticised as, at best, technical, and at worst, bureaucratic. Regardless of perception, what we really are all about is promoting and supporting the sport, ensuring that it and its values can grow and flourish. Vehicles such as FEI Focus and the FEI Year of Youth are about ensuring that our organisation, which only exists as a result of the roles and responsibilities the sport's stakeholders have entrusted us with (whether athletes, organisers, volunteers or National Federations) remains relevant and connected with our mission in a way that is tangible to those who want or need to know. FEI Focus is therefore a less technical

publication than the Bulletin that the FEI published in the past, and seeks to promote the various aspects of the sport in a manner that is both accessible and relevant.

**Is there anything you would like to add?**

To me the role of International Federations is unique in that they benefit, through a democratic process, from a tremendous amount of autonomy to govern their sports. This is a privilege, and with it comes a great deal of responsibility – responsibility to ensure the growth of the sport by finding the right balance of commercial promotion and respect for the sport's traditions and responsibility to ensure that the organisation is run according to the best professional standards of integrity and transparency, while ensuring and promoting the ongoing participation of volunteers, without whom the sport could not exist. I'm happy to say that the FEI team is very conscious of its need to serve the sport to the best of its ability, just like any athlete seeks to do his or her best in the arena. We will continue to do so in order to be deserving of the trust that the sport places in us. The success of the sport globally is our ultimate reward. 

▼ A session at the FEI General Assembly in Copenhagen, 2009







*FEI President HRH Princess Haya Al Hussein & FEI Secretary General Alex McLin*