



American Endurance Ride Conference

December 9, 2013

On November 7, 2013, following the FEI General Assembly in Montreux, Switzerland, the Endurance Strategic Planning Group (ESPG) circulated their “plan on a page” for proposed changes within FEI to correct and reform the current egregious issues in regards to equine injuries, fatalities and positive drug tests within the endurance discipline. During a subsequent conference call with the AERC Board of Directors, it was requested by Joe Mattingly, Vice President of USEF and Chair of the High Performance Endurance Committee, that AERC’s Board of Directors provide their specific recommendations in regards to the ESGP’s proposed plan. The below list is in response to that request.

- **Commitment to change.** Above all, AERC is concerned as to whether there is a true commitment to change and reform within FEI infrastructure, rather than just rhetoric and “words on a page”. While we understand that some proposed changes may take more than a few months to show measurable improvement, we recommend an immediate demonstration of commitment through a change of leadership within FEI, and especially within the endurance leadership of FEI, that will demonstrate and symbolize FEI’s dedication towards correcting the increasing international perception of compromised integrity within FEI.
- **Transparency of equine fatalities.** AERC sets an example of transparent reporting of all known equine fatalities related to or occurring during competition. Moreover, AERC subsidizes necropsies for all those fatalities to more completely understand underlying causes of death. We recommend that FEI adopt similar policies, and that results of those fatality investigations be openly published on their website. Additionally, we request that FEI endurance fracture statistics be similarly reported to the general public, scientific and veterinary community.
- **Major penalties for responsible individuals, not excluding rider, veterinarian, trainer, owner and stable for infractions of FEI rules and FEI code of conduct.** If both riders and owners or stables are sanctioned and prohibited from participating with any horse for a significant period of time following rule infraction, even to the extent of a permanent ban, then steps will be taken by those in the position of authority to ensure all personnel under their influence take care to stringently comply with rules. The results of all disciplinary hearings, sanctions and penalties should be made publicly available. We further recommend that any prize money and placings be forfeited as a mandatory result of rule infraction, and that fines be levied that significantly exceed prize monies.



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- Extensive drug testing at major competitions. We recommend increased and extensive drug testing at any FEI ride which is 2* or above, as well as any FEI rides involving substantial prize money or awards.
- Limited competitors per team. We strongly recommend repealing the recent rule change that allows more horses per team, of which the results of only the top three are counted towards awards. This rule contradicts the commitment to equine welfare, as it promotes the ability to compete numerous horses as expendable commodities, rather than striving towards the goals of high completion rates amongst the entirety of the team. As such, we recommend that each team be limited to a maximum of four riders, of which the top three members will count towards a team score, and all four stand on the podium if medaling.
- Certificate of Capability. We recommend that time requirements to qualify for a COC be a reflection of the technicality of the individual course, as opposed to a set and immobile time for distance, regardless of terrain. We are concerned that in response to current requirements, FEI endurance racing has evolved to emphasize courses that are essentially extended flat track courses in order to maximize speed. This has resulted in an increase in the frequency and type of serious injuries to horses previously only associated with flat-track thoroughbred racing. We recommend that COC requirements be redirected to include and emphasize more technical courses, including the practices that allow successful and safe negotiation of difficult terrain.
- Disciplinary action. FEI officials are obligated to promptly investigate and respond to reported rule infractions occurring at events. Officials failing to do so will be severely sanctioned, suspended and/or otherwise removed from officiating duties and opportunities.
- Crewing from moving vehicles. Horses may not be assisted or accompanied in any manner during competition by one or more moving vehicles. Not only does this practice endanger all participants within the immediate area, but doing so also constitutes ‘hazing’ of the target horse to unfairly increase its speed. Crews violating this rule will result in the immediate disqualification of the horse and rider with which they are associated.
- Sponsorship Entities providing significant financial support to the event that constitute a conflict of interest may not be provided with special privileges or allowances as a result of their sponsorship. No VIP passes may be given that allow an unfair advantage to the associated team, or otherwise interferes with the assurance of a level playing field for all participants.



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- Conflict of interest for FEI officials. FEI officials employed by a participating rider, owner or stable are prohibited from officiating in any capacity at events when the associated parties are entered in competition.
- “Elite” status. In the interest of providing a level and fair playing field for all participants, we recommend the elimination of the recent rule change providing for “elite” rider status.

While we understand that permanent and tangible changes will not occur immediately, it is only through a united and consistent monitoring and enforcement of strong rules that the current egregious issues will be resolved. We recognize that infractions may originate from many levels, from grooms up through the highest echelons of owners, trainers, ride management and officials. It is only through rigorous adherence to rules, consistently applied to all participants at every level, that FEI will demonstrate their commitment to true change within the organization and the sport of international endurance racing.

Sincerely,

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