

## **Endurance Strategic Planning Group**

**(ESPG)**

Presentation to the

**FEI GA Session on Endurance**

**Montreux**

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by

Andrew Finding – Chairman ESPG

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**Slide 1** President, ladies, gentlemen, friends: we have a serious problem to resolve for Endurance sport and thus for all equestrian sport. We may not like the nature of the media coverage, we may feel that it is not all correct, but we cannot deny the fact that the levels of doping and the incidence of catastrophic injury to horses are unacceptable.

It is for these reasons that the President, HRH Princess Haya, in providing leadership, called first for a round table meeting and then for a task force to work independently of the FEI to recommend action for a resolution. Some, including a number of national federations, expressed the view that this task force, the Endurance Strategic Planning Group, was neither independent nor adequately equipped to perform this task nor adequately focused on the key issues. Some even suggested that it was an exercise in covering up the facts or to use a football analogy, of kicking the ball into the long grass.

In many respects, Endurance has reached a state of maturity following a period of rapid growth; a process that the Olympic disciplines would have gone through in their own time.

It is in this uncomfortable environment that the Strategic Planning Group has set about its work, work that has been more complex than at first thought.

**Slide 2** I should like to introduce members of the group:

**Dr Brian Sheahan**, the FEI's Endurance Technical Committee chairman, a veterinary surgeon from Australia;

**Jean-Louis Leclerc**, also a veterinary surgeon, from France, Jean-Louis eats, sleeps and drinks Endurance every day of his life and has done for decades;

**Saeed H Al Tayer**, the Chairman and Chief Executive of Meydan and Vice-President of the Dubai Equestrian Club with special responsibilities for Racing and Endurance in Dubai;

**Joe Mattingley**, Chairman of the US Federation's Endurance High Performance Committee and the high performance chairman for all disciplines and an Endurance athlete in his own right.

We have also been ably supported by:

**Ian Williams**, the FEI's Director for Endurance

And

**Graeme Cooke**, the FEI's Director of Veterinary services and himself a veterinary surgeon.

**Slide 3** And, here I set out the running order for our presentation. Each of us will present a component of the Group's recommendations. We plan to speak for about an hour leaving an hour to take questions from representatives of national federations and to hear your views and opinions.

**Slide 4** **Blank slide**

I want to assure you that we will be speaking plainly today, that we have not been influenced or led in any way by the President or the FEI staff. We have though, at every turn, been helped by everyone at the FEI when asked, not least because there is a very strong desire to resolve these issues just as there was when task forces were established to resolve other challenges in the past. We have been provided with every piece of detail we have sought. The FEI's approach has been entirely constructive.

Moreover, the President has from the outset taken herself out of the decision making processes recognising that her family connections present a potential conflict of interest for her and the FEI. Being mindful of this and the wider expressions of anxiety, I asked at the outset for Lord Stevens, the former Commissioner of London's Metropolitan Police Force and head of the Equestrian Community Integrity Unit, to monitor all of the work undertaken by the Planning Group. I have sent him our papers, the minutes of our meetings and copies of the presentations you will see today. I have asked Lord Stevens to attend today; you will have seen that he is listed as a speaker. He will assess for you directly the nature of the Planning Group's work and its integrity. I trust that he will tell you if it has been good, bad or indifferent. I have specifically asked Lord Stevens to make that judgement as independently as I and my team have sought to work.

Some of you and some members of the FEI will not like what we are going to say; you may well feel a little uncomfortable. I am afraid reality can be uncomfortable. Nevertheless, I have been tasked, with my group, by the FEI's Bureau to be independent, to find solutions

to deal with the doping and injury crisis and to develop recommendations to ensure, in so far as this is possible, that we have a plan to sustain solutions for the long term. This is why a strategic plan is necessary.

There are some short term fixes, some quick wins, but a complete resolution will take time. We know very well that many clamour for the problems to be resolved instantly. That will not happen; it is simply unrealistic to think so. Why do I say this? It is because no plan, no paper, no intervention, no committee and no gathering of well intentioned individuals can make these problems go away instantly. Sport is about people and this is no different in equestrian sport.

There are two legs to the resolution of our challenges. Yes, of course, we can change rules, put in place more officials, make new arrangements for competition, undertake more research, educate people better, introduce more vets and stiffen up the disciplinary processes. That's the first leg, the more tangible elements of work that must be done.

The second leg is about people. We have to win the hearts and minds of our entire community; we have to encourage those responsible for leadership to lead effectively. We have to encourage self discipline and work to drive a change in culture. Importantly, we have to stop blaming each other. Every person in this room must reflect on their individual roles as leaders of national federations and as members of the FEI committee structure and its executive. We are all responsible to find the solutions for the problems we face today. This is because the problems are largely caused by systemic failure; failures of leadership, inadequate resourcing, in the quality of officiating and in recognising that this sport has grown inexorably. Our management of that growth has not been good enough. And, to be frank, we have not moved quickly enough to deal with the challenges that now draw criticism of us in the media. We simply have not yet done a good job. That must change.

So, what is the problem? On the surface it is manifested in the use of prohibited substances in competition and in what is perceived to be a rising number of injuries leading to fatalities in horses.

It is also the case that too many are failing to adhere to the rules; that is cheating.

I want to deal with this head on; I want to do it now. I am therefore asking Graeme Cooke to set out for you now, what we know about the levels of doping and injury, where they are prevalent, where our knowledge is deficient and what the FEI is doing to improve the quality of data and how this will help inform our work in the future. In short I want Graeme to define the problem as a matter of fact, not as speculation.

(Graeme's Presentation)

Graeme, over to you please.

Thank you Graeme, that sets the scene for us. I now want to turn to our analysis of the problems we face and why we need a strategy.

Endurance is our second biggest discipline after Jumping with 911 events staged in 2012. Yet, it has no formal vision; an inadequate formal educational programme and no arrangements in hand to ensure the needs of supply and demand are met. It may be that some might wish to challenge me on this – to those people I say simply that what is in place isn't working; we have a crisis on our hands.

The sport has grown inexorably and in some parts of the world it has become a highly professional business. The speeds of the horses competing over 160 kilometres in a day have increased from an average of 12k per hour ten years ago to over 25k an hour in the Middle East. I fear we too have not kept pace with this change and have not been able to cope with the challenges of what is now an elite high performance sport.

I am afraid it is the case that if you give an athlete or a trainer a centimetre and he or she is desperate to win he will take a kilometre. If he is allowed to push the boundaries and he gets away with doing so, he will push them further. This is human nature, we might not like it but it is true. It is this very pushing of the boundaries that was happening in other disciplines before the FEI's Clean Sport policy was introduced. Its introduction has reduced the incidence of cheating very substantially.

The problems in Endurance are complex. I regret to say that collectively there has been a lack of resource, self-discipline, effective officiating, leadership, courage and determination. Too many have turned a blind eye, probably fearing that they might not be asked back and too little reliable evidence is provided in reports from responsible officials to take to a tribunal to secure a conviction. Too many complain and too few stand up to be counted. The problems we face are systemic.

Recently, I listened to an interview with the chief executive of one of the top hundred companies in Britain. Carolyn McCall took over the low cost airline EasyJet three years ago. It was losing money but under her leadership, the airline now makes a good profit and is thriving. She was asked what she put her success down to. Her answer was brief: a clear vision and a good strategy.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we need a clear vision and a good strategy for Endurance sport.

We need it all to be easily understood. A strategy running to a hundred or more pages will not be read and absorbed. This is why we seek to present our proposed strategy on a single page: "a plan on a page".

**Slide 43** This is what it looks like; we will have a copy for each of you to take away today. We need a compass around which we must tie our aspirations for long term success.

**Slide 44** We must have a vision, a set of values behind which we must all stand; we need to define our critical success factors, our strategic goals and a form of measurement, key performance indicators, that will tell us whether or not we are achieving the successes we must secure.

From this we need to promote an effective operational plan. A strategy and its operational plan must be monitored by the Bureau, the Endurance Committee and the FEI's executive team. It needs to be risk assessed, regularly, it needs to be a living thing and it needs to be flexible and adjusted in the light of experience.

Once we have a plan in place we all need to follow a code of conduct. This does not apply alone to those who are pressing the boundaries, it applies to every one of us. What we do and how we do it is important. Our standards of behaviour and the way in which we adopt a set of values is vital in the way we promote and engage in our sport.

But strategies, plans, policies, disciplinary processes and educational programmes will not alone resolve our problems. We need to create incentives, a system of "stick and carrot". We need officials to feel valued and appreciated; their reward may not be financial but it should be in feeling that they are contributing to a thriving and successful sport in a happy community. Athletes, all athletes, and their trainers need to compete on a level playing field where natural talent wins out without artificial and performance enhancing support. We need national federations, all of you, in every region of the world to take responsibility and provide leadership. We need every single person involved in the sport to be self disciplined, to respect their horses and abide by the code of conduct for the welfare of horses; it was carefully developed and it must be adhered to if we are not to fail.

The strategic plan we propose sets out a vision and a set of values we will expect everyone to adhere to if they genuinely want to be an active part of our family. Those who do not should be asked to leave us.

So, let me turn to our proposed vision for Endurance sport, we are suggesting it should be:

**Slide 45 To ensure Endurance athletes compete, complete and win fairly while sustaining and developing the sport globally in a professionally administered way and operating within the FEI code of conduct for the welfare of horses.**

We hope that you find this simple and straightforward. We have included the word “complete” because we believe we should set a culture that celebrates increased levels of completion. For us it is not good enough to say that we are protecting the horses by taking them out of competition because their heart rates are too high. We want to propose that athletes and trainers be rewarded for increased levels of completion. We want to see horses that are fit and healthy enough to complete and enter competition with this as a core objective, even if the speeds are reduced to achieve a successful completion.

**Slide 46** The values we must adopt are those of: **Clean Sport, Welfare, Integrity & Partnership.**

**Slide 47** The text we recommend applying to **Clean Sport** is shown here:

**I will work with NFs, athletes, trainers, officials and organisers to ensure we adhere to and promote the highest Clean Sport standards and meet the FEI’s Code of Conduct**

If each and every one of us adopts these and the following principles we will resolve our challenges overnight.

**Slide 48** Here is the value we ascribe to **Welfare**:

**I will work with NFs, athletes, trainers, officials and organisers to ensure we adhere to and promote the highest standards of equine welfare and meet the FEI’s Code of Conduct**

**Slide 49** and, for **Integrity**:

**I will work to the highest levels of sporting integrity, in a professional manner encouraging others to do the same**

Naturally we include in this the need for no prejudice amongst people

**Slide 50** and, **Partnership**:

**I will work in collaboration with the FEI, NFs, athletes, trainers, officials and organisers to achieve the best outcomes for endurance globally**

Ladies and gentlemen – apply these values, clean sport, welfare, integrity and partnership and we live and work together. If you do not subscribe to them, our message is, simply, leave us.

From the vision and the values we propose, we develop our **Critical Success Factors** under the headings:

## **Slide 51** Foundation for Growth, Culture & Behaviour, Structure & Governance and Communication & Marketing

These expand as:

### **Slide 52** Foundation for Growth:

Ensure an agreed plan is in place setting out the strategic intent for the sport over the period 2014-2024 supporting growth in all regions in appropriate and effective ways, ensuring the needs of equine and human athletes are met

### **Slide 53** Culture & Behaviour:

Regulate, educate & provide support to ensure the highest standards of sporting integrity and horse welfare are developed and maintained

### **Slide 54** Structure & Governance:

Ensure the appropriate structures and governance are in place to support long term, sustained development for the sport

### **Slide 55** Communication & Marketing:

Promote clean sport and horse welfare at every opportunity, to ensure confidence is restored and maintained in our sport globally.

In these sections we include our thinking for the overall philosophy we must adopt in the long term if we are to succeed: this is the moral compass upon which we must build our entire thinking. Our vision, our values and adhering to what is critical in what we do and how we behave represents the bed rock upon which we must build a great global sport, one that has the potential to increase participation both nationally, internationally and indeed, globally.

I now move into the meat of our recommendations, the strategic goals we recommend to you. Under “**Foundation for Growth**”:

**Slide 56** we definitely need a strategic **plan for a decade** that we hope all NFs can support. This needs to be underpinned by an **operational plan** that the executive of the FEI must prepare for approval by the Bureau at the outset of every calendar year and, with the Endurance Committee, they must ensure it is implemented. The operational plan must be developed following an assessment of the potential **growth** region by region to ensure there are adequate resources, especially high quality and highly qualified officials to match the anticipated number of athletes expected to compete. In turn, the physical resources, the

**infrastructure**, must be in place to meet the demand. The going on field of play must be right, the vet gates appropriate and the dope testing undertaken appropriately. All of these components must be in place and planned ahead of time to satisfy the demand. It will take dedication, staffing resource and the funding mechanisms, especially at the FEI and in national federations, to make it all work efficiently.

**Slide 57** Where “**Culture & Behaviour**” is concerned we include, **education**; Jean-Louis Leclerc is going to cover the detail in this area. **Research** is a vital component. Graeme Cooke has already covered this for his area. The work undertaken will define the risk factors associated with Endurance horses and the associated need for rule changes. We strongly recommend the need for a sophisticated **leadership** programme for officials together with a formal, obligatory and Continuous Professional Development programme (CPD). We expect to see a **code of conduct** developed, widely published and regularly reviewed. It should have special sections for athletes, trainers, officials, veterinarians, technical delegates and organisers together with a set of sanctions defined for those who do not abide by the code. It should be a condition of engagement for everyone that’s involved that the code is followed. And, together, every national federation, with the FEI, must provide leadership in working to promote a **culture** of mutual support and self discipline amongst its athletes, trainers, owners, grooms and other connections.

**Slide 58** The “**Structure & Governance**” of Endurance sport is a primary component of our recommendations. Dr Brian Sheahan will discuss our view about structural governance and specifically that the FEI should appoint and remunerate **Independent Governance Advisors** to the high level events. They will supervise and mentor officials on the ground, they will ensure officials are taking their responsibilities seriously but will not take the responsibility away from officials. Saeed H Al Tayer will propose an entirely new initiative in respect of **Trainers**. We are recommending, amongst other things, that they become “persons responsible” along with their riders and that, generally, trainers are regulated and promoted much as they are in Thoroughbred Racing. We also want to see the **disciplinary procedures and penalties reviewed** for both athletes **and officials** and we want to see access to the **Field of Play severely limited and enforced** completely. We want to see the rules already in place properly used to **test horses out of competition**. We want to see **course design** made **more technical** challenging the athletes’ levels of skill.

**Slide 59** We believe the **governance structure** should be reviewed regularly by the FEI. Dr Brian Sheahan will cover this as well and our view that officials receive proper **induction** programmes, improved levels of education, are **remunerated** at an agreed level, **rotated, appraised** for their performance and **examined before promotion**. They must also be supported, encouraged and subject to an award scheme where the best are recognised for their skills and contribution.

With the creation of the Independent Governance Advisors we believe that the **executive team at the FEI should no longer officiate** at any international Endurance events. They may be talented and highly knowledgeable people but we find that ground juries have a tendency to defer their responsibility to the executive team. Now, it might be that some will hold the view that the appointment of independent governance advisors will create the same dilemma. Their contracts and terms of reference will have to be very clear indeed for it is our intention that all officials have to take proper responsibility, take action where it is needed and provide proper reports so that the disciplinary processes can be properly sustained.

It worries us that we need to make these recommendations; we are calling for the culture of officialdom to change. We want to see the **rules properly enforced**. We know there are many officials, invariably volunteers, who do a wonderful job. To those people we want to say thank you but sadly, it is evident that a few have spoilt the way of working for the many. Because the issues we have to resolve are so important we are left with little alternative but to make recommendations for a series of initiatives in this area.

In his presentation, Joe Mattingley, will cover a range of points, not least being the need we see for a **“risk register”**. We believe that the level of risk associated with the governance of the sport is so high that it needs constant monitoring and review against the requirements of the strategic and annual operational plans.

**Slide 60** We also believe that **every rule must be reviewed** in light of the extensive recommendations we are making. There is an understandable view that the rules have been developed well in recent years and do not need much attention. We are though aware of the “rule of unintended consequences” and feel such a review is a healthy and a properly cautious action to recommend when we are calling for so much change.

We would like to see **ride qualification standards** reviewed and probably increased especially at the elite end of the sport where we feel some inexperienced riders are over pushing their horses to keep up with the best. We feel that only **properly competent riders should be able to compete**. Finally, in this section we support strongly the decision already made, that the **recovery periods for horses are extended**.

There is much in this section and in Dr Brian Sheahan’s presentation to come, about officials. We want to be very clear. Where we mention officials we mean all **officials, including veterinary surgeons**.

**Slide 61** Our final strategic goal covers **“Communication & Marketing”**. The extensive nature of these recommendations means that there is much to communicate. We certainly need an effective **internal communications programme** to ensure our own community is fully briefed about the plans for change and the decision making processes. We must build

confidence ensuring all national federations have been involved, support the approach being taken and above all have a proper belief that the changes to come will mitigate reductions in doping and injuries and restore respect for the rules and credibility of the sport.

As important is the need for an **external ‘hearts and minds’ campaign**, the promotion of Endurance to existing and potential supporters and to the press, providing re-assurance and evidence of clean sport and welfare best practice.

I have already mentioned initiatives about trainers; we want to support and promote trainers and we see **“trainers” ranking lists** as a good medium for this purpose. We would also like to see a ranking list or a similar medium or award mechanism for team events by national federations with the highest levels of **“completions”**; this desire applies to trainers as well. And, as already mentioned, we would like to see an awards programme for officials.

**Slide 62** As I have already expressed, our proposed strategy includes a recommendation for **key performance indicators** (KPIs) to be used to measure strategic success. We feel they should be applied to each of our critical success factors.

**Slide 63** The **KPIs** have to be **specific, robust, measurable, deliverable, timed** and most importantly they have to be **“owned”** first by every national federation, as well as by the FEI. As leaders of our national federations we have to have absolute belief in the strategy we must support fully, before the FEI’s Bureau gives its sanction to the final piece of work on our behalf, as the shareholders in the FEI, our FEI. Every one of the FEI’s 9 global regions is represented on the Bureau by a President. For the regional group I come from, Gp 2, it’s Dr Hanfried Haring. Hanfried and every other regional chairman must carry the support of the national federations they represent be they in Asia, the Americas or the Middle East. It is through the regions and national federations that we need the highest class of leadership if we are to achieve the success we deserve.

**Slide 64** This is why I do not want the ESPG to set the **KPIs**. My team and I have a very strong belief that you, the leaders of national federations, should decide what success will look like. Our recommendation is that you should debate them and together set the robust and measurable targets. We can arrange for the debate to be facilitated but ultimately we want you to be responsible, we want you to own the strategy and to provide the leadership that is now so vital for our sport.

We propose that the debate takes place during the February 2014 Endurance Conference and that you return for the special session on Endurance at the FEI Sports Forum in April 2014. There, with the Bureau’s support, we should agree the targets for the first 5 years of the strategy

**Slide 65** I now call on my ESPG colleagues to **cover more detail** in the areas for which they have a special interest in relation to our proposals. First, Jean-Louis Leclerc will cover the need for more and better education. Jean-Louis...

**Slide sections:**

**67** - Jean-Louis (education)

**87** – Saeed Al Tayer (trainers)

**104** – Dr Brian Sheahan (officials, supervision & discipline)

**127** – Joe Mattingley – (planning and monitoring processes)

**Slide 145** We have also set out a brief **action plan** that shows the progress now developed for the decision making processes together with our recommendations for the key performance indicator debate and agreement.

**Slide 146, 147** We are close to the end now! Here we propose **our recommendations for immediate action** recognising that some work is already underway. We believe these points should be underway or deep into the planning processes by 1 January 2014. I will leave you to read them on the following two slides.

**Slide 148** Before I conclude, I now invite Lord Stevens to comment on the integrity of our processes and on what he has seen and been following.

Lord Stevens.....

**Slide 149 Conclusion & Next Steps** President, ladies and gentlemen, friends. This has been and will continue to be, for a while, a very difficult period in our history. We have faced challenges before and no doubt there will be others to confront in the future.

There are parts of the world where Endurance sport is in good heart and where volunteers and others are wonderful in their commitment and zeal. To those people we must express our thanks for your work, your perseverance and commitment. Please stick with us while we work hard to develop a brighter future. It will come but it requires leadership and self discipline. Please give those with the responsibility to make the necessary decisions time to do so. Managing change takes time. There will be some quick wins but not all change can

or will happen overnight. In some cases the change will take months, even years. But there is one thing that is not in doubt: change must come.

In conclusion, ladies and gentlemen, there is a problem to resolve, it is serious and systemic. I am confident that it can be resolved but no committee and no plan on paper can achieve anything without the commitment of people. Together, the team at the FEI, the leaders of each and every national federation, officials, ground juries, organising committees, administrators, those responsible for accurate communication, trainers, coaches, veterinarians, grooms, others who care for our horses, owners and athletes can resolve the problem we have in following an agreed strategic direction and the set of values we now ask you to follow. I urge you, please to work with us in a spirit of positive determination to succeed. Failure cannot be an option.

Thank you.

Andrew Finding v.1 – 6 Nov 13