



15th January 2018

Mr Paul Latiolais
President
American Endurance Ride Conference

Dear Paul,

Thank you for your letter dated 29th December 2017. As I indicated in my email, I apologize for the delay in responding but I wanted to clarify a number of the points you raised with the FEI. I have now had a very useful call with the FEI and they were able to provide the detail I requested and a valuable insight in to how the UAE Equestrian Federation is approaching the governance of Endurance in their country, which is where regrettably recent fatalities have taken place, with five reported at National and two in FEI Events

Of course these are unacceptable, a sentiment shared by all parties, and we agree that fatalities damage the reputation of equestrian sport in general and endurance in particular. Whilst there are not yet statistics in the public domain that analyze the impact of the procedures put in place by the FEI and the UAE during 2017 the reports are that there has been a very positive change in attitude and far more effective communication and the sharing of information with the FEI. There has also been the introduction of training and education courses for officials, grooms, trainers and athletes in UAE. I know the FEI will be monitoring these changes and the impact they have. In March 2015 the FEI suspended the UAE National Federation, demonstrating that the FEI will take severe measures if needs must. The US Equestrian Federation has full confidence in the leadership of the FEI and supports the steps they have taken to address horse welfare in Group VII. However, US Equestrian will continue to require that at the appropriate time the FEI backs up progress reports with analytical facts.

Like the AERC, US Equestrian applauds the steps taken by HH Sheikh Sultan Bin Zayed Al Nahyan through the Bouthieb Initiative. These initiatives will contribute to the sustainability of the sport of Endurance and we would support the FEI in promoting these initiatives throughout Endurance.



Having discussed the subject with the FEI, it is clear that the UAE Federation recognises its responsibilities in managing and governing a sport that is growing annually in terms of numbers of athletes, horses and events. They are also aware that the increasing numbers of starters can result in increased number of injuries. Of course what we must all focus on is ensuring that the percentage of injuries versus starters is reduced and dramatically reduced when it comes to catastrophic injuries.

The UAE Federation has taken strong action to minimise injuries and fatalities at its national events, and introduced increased sanctions in February 2017, in the form of fines, penalty points and suspensions for:

- Catastrophic Injuries and metabolic issues (for both athlete and trainer)
- Non-compliance with mandatory rest periods
- Breaches of equipment and weight regulations
- Unauthorised substitution of athlete or horse
- Unauthorised veterinary treatment

Information on the Rule changes can be found at;

<http://emiratesequestrian.com/Content/Files/Endurance/Circular/2017/AmendmenttotheUAEEnduranceNationalRules-SanctionsWithEffectivefrom19-2-2017%D8%B4%D8%B4.pdf>

My understanding is that the UAE Federation is the only National Federation (NF) that imposes additional sanctions on athletes and trainers linked to eliminations and minimum rest period offences. The UAE NF also supplies the FEI with all results and information on its National rides, including details on injuries and fatalities, and is the only NF to do so. Sadly, there have been a number of fatalities this season, including two at international rides, and the FEI has assured USEF that they continue to work closely with the UAE Federation to ensure that both FEI and national rules protecting horse welfare are adhered to.

Where it is felt the UAE Federation could be more effective is in communicating what sanctions have been applied at a National level and also the extent of the testing they are carrying out at National level. US Equestrian has requested that the FEI request of the UAE that this information is published. The FEI have agreed to make this request.



The Emirates also recently (December 2017) held its first meeting of the Emirates Equestrian and Racing Federation (UREEF) Disciplinary Committee. As with the increased sanctions and their implementation, it will be the actions of the Committee that will cause change and they should be judged by those actions but the Head of UREEF, Major General Dr. Ahmed Nassar Al-Rissi was clear that their focus is to ensure a clean sport and to protect horses from abuse.

The second part of your letter proposes some Rule changes. US Equestrian completely supports the proposal to remove or significantly decrease the speed requirement linked to the Certificate of Capability. We have lobbied the FEI on this and will continue to do so. We agree that there is a welfare issue but also we are very concerned that the speed requirement is impacting on Events that have traditionally been run over terrain where the required speed would be very difficult, if not impossible, to achieve.

The balance between “winning and finishing” is an interesting proposal. Requiring athletes and or horses to maintain a completion rate of above 66.6% could encourage athletes to continue in a competition when the “right” thing to do would be to retire and save their horse for another day. There are, within FEI Rules (Article 815), sanctions for athletes that are eliminated and also mandatory rest periods for horses; I am sure you are familiar with these. In discussions with the FEI I have asked that the FEI’s Endurance Technical Committee consider how athletes that do maintain a high finishing percentage could be recognized. We would welcome suggestions from AERC as to how US Equestrian and AERC could work together to recognize U.S. athletes and horses that achieve sustained completions.

Under existing FEI Rules, Trainers can and have been suspended for Clean Sport violations. The AERC’s proposal that when Trainers are suspended they be suspended from training “any of the horses listed under them” makes perfect sense. Our understanding, following discussions with the FEI, is that the principle applied (this is of course flexible and each case would be looked at on its merits) by the FEI is that Trainers are sanctioned, including suspensions, when there are two or more doping violations recorded against them. Suspensions of course mean they cannot train any horse at any FEI Event.

We agree with AERC (and the wider Endurance community) that Trainers must be held responsible for their actions and we will continue to be proactive in pushing for this. For example, US Equestrian successfully lobbied for an FEI Rule change that was approved by the 2017 General Assembly that states that the Trainer as well as the athlete receives 100 penalty points if the Horse is not brought to the Final Horse Inspection. Recent media reports, following the publication of positive test results, have again emphasized the need for Trainers to understand that if they do not follow the Rules they will be sanctioned.



The need for Trainer education and Trainer sanctions (when applicable) will again be emphasized by USEF to the FEI.

There is a necessary rule change process that, as an NF, we need to follow with the FEI. We welcome suggestions and proposals which we channel through our Endurance Sport Committee to the FEI. As you will be well aware, the Rule changes are discussed by the FEI Endurance Technical Committee, presented to NFs for comment and then voted on at the FEI's annual General Assembly.

We join the AERC in looking forward to a wonderful World Equestrian Games in September, which celebrates and promotes the rich tradition of Endurance that exists in the U.S. WEG is of course run by the Organizing Committee in partnership with the FEI. The USEF is a co-signatory to the Hosting Agreement and supports the Organizing Committee and the FEI where possible and when permitted (i.e. we cannot gain a competitive advantage over other Nations). We are very pleased that a number of U.S. officials have been appointed to officiate at the WEG Endurance competition and are certain that they will maintain the high standards that collectively we expect of Endurance competitions in the U.S.

In closing, we would like to work with the President of the AERC, the FEI and HH Sheik Sultan to try to facilitate a visit by the President of AERC to Bouthieb and an Endurance event in the UAE (maybe the President's Cup). We hope that this would allow AERC to better understand, first hand, what progress is being made.

Kind regards

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