

Arena - April

Editors: Sibylle Gussmann, Sheba Zager, Alex Parry, Rebecca Haynes

FEI Round Table resolves Rollkur controversy

Following debate at the FEI round-table conference in Lausanne in February, consensus was that any head and neck position achieved through insistent, hostile force is unacceptable. The group redefined hyperflexion or Rollkur as flexion of the horse's neck achieved through aggressive force. The technique known as Low, Deep and Round (LDR), which achieves flexion without undue force, is acceptable.

The group unanimously agreed that any form of aggressive riding must be sanctioned and the FEI management will establish a working group to expand the current guidelines for stewards to facilitate the implementation of this policy. The group agreed that no changes are required to the current FEI Rules. Additional measures, including the use of closed circuit television for warm-up arenas at selected shows, are being studied. It was emphasised that primary responsibility for the welfare of the horse rests with the rider.

Smiles all round

An all grades dressage show at KEP in March proved a highly successful event, with some excellent riding demonstrated from both able-bodied and para riders. Winner of the able-bodied Advanced 2 class was a thrilled Sarah Maio on Local Dancer. Second and third places went to Julie Mew on Loth Lorian and Elena Bosman on Videnco, respectively.

Sponsored by Forever Living Products, there were also some super prizes. Says Forever Living's distributor, Angie Loubser: "we decided to introduce our products at this show to create awareness about their benefits, both for horse and rider. We feel that this was an excellent show and we achieved our objectives".

Forever Living Products International Inc. sells aloe vera and bee-derived drinks, cosmetics, nutritional supplements, and personal care products in over 145 countries. According to Angie, the benefits of the products have been recognised by such insurers as Petsure and they can be claimed on your horse's medical aid.



Winners of the Advanced 2 test at the Dressage All Grades show, on the podium, from left to right, Julie Mew (second place), Sarah Maio (first place) and Elena Bosman (third place). From left to right on the ground: Felicity Matthysen, Caroline Potts, Clare Bailes and sponsor Forever Living Products' Angie Loubser.

Very important to note

ALL the SANEF dressage tests (which are available on the SANEF website) will be re-named/dated as '2010' tests on **01 June 2010**; this includes Freestyle tests, inter-provincial team tests etc.

The reason for this is to avoid any further confusion because amendments and changes were done to a number of tests during 2009.

All show-holding bodies are requested to ensure that schedules reflect the new tests from 1 June 2010, riders must also ensure they have the most up to date tests.

On the international front

With thanks to Heather Partner Arena has an update on Adriaan van Wyk's time overseas 'straight from the horse's mouth'!

"After a four-day trip from Munich to Cadiz Adriaan had to settle Othello into the strange new environment, but invaluable advice was received from grooms. Unfortunately, Danielle Hau's horse, Ugolini, was injured on the truck, so she was unable to compete in the first week.

During the challenging first week Adriaan and Othello, in their first international show, achieved 56.89% for the Intermediare II and 58.98% for the Grand Prix.

In the second week Adriaan rode into fifth on a score of 60.99%. Danielle, who rode the Owners Class Junior Preliminary Test, achieved 64.21% and fourth in her second class with 66.27%.

By week three Adriaan and Othello had both settled well, achieving 63.66% and 18th place for their Grand Prix test, but sadly it was too late to qualify for the Invitational Kur.

That said Adriaan was particularly pleased to achieve a result 65.96% from O level judge, Mariette Withages, who will soon be running Judges seminars in South Africa. In the consolation Grand Prix class Adriaan and Othello scored 63.61% to put them in third place, which was a wonderful end to a show that, most importantly, offered excellent experience for them".

Congratulations

Well done to the following judges who passed their first written exam during March:

Amy Hunter
Andrew Bird
Claire Nadin
Gizelle Theron
Natalie Kriel

Time in with Erica de Groot

A perspective from National Candidate Panel dressage judge, Erica de Groot.

Q: When did your interest in horses first start?

A: At age six when my parents finally gave in and allowed me to start riding with Joan Blackwell in Cape Town. I think I started nagging them as soon as I could walk and talk!

Q: Tell us about some of the special horses you have owned and ridden over the years.

A: My first horse was a chestnut thoroughbred called Le Marquis named after Sylvia Stanier, my Irish instructor's horse that she won the Irish National Dressage championships on. Actually all my horses have been special to me and most of them remained with me until they went to horse heaven. Whether they were talented or not, each one taught me something about riding, sometimes just the art of staying on! Currently I own Mossandi Dance to Rock, a rather "hot" mare competing with Andrea Harrison at Elementary level, although I do the everyday schooling at home with help from Andy.

Q: When, how and why did you get into judging?

A: I started by helping at shows and really enjoyed being a secretary. When I thought I was going to retire from commercial life and would have time to study and gain practical experience, I put my name forward to be considered for judging and have been doing it now for about 14 years.

Q: What in particular do you look for when judging?

A: For me the most important things I look for is the purity of the gaits, freedom and regularity of the movement, impulsion, cadence, suppleness of the back, engagement of the hindquarters, ease of the movement, lightness of the forehand and position of the rider and correct application of the aids. In other words, I feel the collective marks give a good guide to what judges want to see at any level of dressage.

Q: What changes (good and bad) are you seeing in dressage fraternity these days?

A: I think it is very exciting to see so many good young horses coming through the grades. Hopefully the really talented horses and riders will reach Grand Prix in time to come. It would be wonderful to see a Grand Prix class with entries in double digits! It is encouraging that we are now having more international trainers visiting South Africa but it is also disappointing that one does not see more of our riders and trainers attending courses as I am a firm believer that 'one steals with one's eyes'. Having said that, attendance at seminars has increased over the years, which can only improve the level of training and riding.

Q: What is your advice to the dressage rider?

A: Firstly always put the welfare of your horse before your personal ambitions. It is wonderful to see a horse working happily in harmony with its rider. Attend as many courses and seminars as you can. It is said one needs two lives, one to learn how to ride and the second to put into practice what one has learnt so always keep an open mind and most of all, love your sport.

Q: If you had \$1-million to spend on any horse globally, who would you buy and why?

A: Wouldn't we all want to buy Tortilas although I don't think \$1-million would be enough! Having said that, I think I would import his rider as well as they are such a wonderful combination.

Q: Please share one or two funny anecdotes you have experienced either competing or judging.

A: Over the years one sees quite a few amusing things when judging. One that I must admit to having great difficulty in keeping a straight face was when I suddenly found two ponies in my arena, one having decided to leave the first arena where it was competing to join its friend in my arena. Needless to say, the legitimate competitor was adamant that she did not want to share her arena with another pony which steadfastly refused to exit and followed the legitimate pony round for half the test before he was caught and forcibly removed! Another incident was a lead rein class where the father turned left at C when the test called for a right turn. He was loudly chastised by a very angry six year old rider! The situation was probably made worse when two marks were deducted for use of voice!

Hard at work – here and abroad

Shiree Darley took time out of her very busy schedule to update us on how her UK-based horses are coming on.

"Besides my beautiful horses in SA that I train with Helen Laros I have two fabulous horses based at Peasebrook Farm in the UK with Peter Storr," she says. "Vinducath (Seal) is an 8 year old Dutch-bred Sandro Hit stallion and Pamina is a 12 year old Holsteiner mare. Both are very different in conformation; Seal is light and elegant and Pamina is substantial and flashy.

"Helen Laros discovered Seal, based at Peter's yard in the UK, three years ago."Peter has been personally training Seal very carefully as he is a very special horse. Seal has three wonderful paces. He has a feather-like footfall and an incredible talent for piaffe and passage. Recently we took him to Hartpury to compete with Peter in his first Advanced Medium competition. In the first class he was placed second alongside Peter's own gelding, Royal Concert – they scored 69.66% and 69.32%. In the second class Seal scored 71.15% to win the class. This was Seal's first outing this year as well as at this level, in a very intimidating indoor arena with plenty of background catering and spectator noise, so we were thrilled with how he handled it.



Seal at Peasebrook Farm

"My mare, Pamina has also had a good introduction with us. She was purchased in April last year with the plan to bring her back to SA to get some PSG/Intermediare I competitive experience. However she has only ever been ridden by a professional German rider, competing extensively on the Small Tour circuit for the past three years and being an amateur, I had concerns about whether I would manage her. It was agreed with Helen and Peter, to send her to the UK for a few months to give Peter some time to assess her before committing to exporting her from Europe. I would travel over there to train on her.

"Well, she did take some time to settle. One issue was working in an arena with other horses and Peter was worried about how she would behave at a competition warm-up. However, on her first outing she was a delight – definitely the kind of mare that puts on her "show performance". I competed H/C, but we were second in the class after Peter on his horse. It was decided to keep her in the UK for me to compete at that level and work towards taking her on next year's Spanish Sunshine Tour.



Pamina at Peasebrook Farm

"In November we had to dig deep into our overdrafts again to keep Pamina and I am very fortunate to have such a supportive husband who sacrifices so much for my personal goals!!

"Well it has turned out to be the best decision for us to hang in there and make a plan. Pamina is doing very well in the UK Premier Leagues, placing in the top three at all her shows and everyone agrees there is much more to come.

"Finding a balance between actually braving to reach for a lifelong dream of competing internationally, alongside my commitments to my family, animals and business partners here in SA, is challenging to say the least, but wonderful and so rewarding".