

Dressage Newsletter

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Grow dressage

Disappointingly, dressage was the one equestrian discipline not represented by South African riders at the 2010 World Equestrian Games (WEG). Local riders decided that they could no longer sit back and accept the status quo, and Grow Grand Prix was born!

Grow Grand Prix (GGP) is an initiative being run by dressage riders in Gauteng, with the objective of developing the sport at the highest level in order to pave the way for successful international competition. Dressage riders and horses have to qualify for international competition abroad but there are only a few South African riders competing at this level.

The GGP initiative recognises that riders need to work together in order to make meaningful progress, and, by pooling resources, talents and commitment, it is believed that the overall level and standing of dressage will improve.

A series of intensive boot camps and seminars are planned for 2011, run by top instructors, riders and judges, to better prepare our riders for the challenge of competing and succeeding at Grand Prix level. Paving the way for local qualification using invited O-level judges is also part of the project.

Recognising that this is a journey, all riders are invited to join the project, no matter what grade they are riding. Selection for boot camps will be based on ranking points, grade and level of commitment to participation in boot camps, seminars and special GGP events.

Support thus far has been amazing, and the first boot camp, run by Natalie Hobday, was oversubscribed the day it was announced. Interest from the other provinces is also growing. It must be stressed that this is a national initiative, with riders from all provinces welcome.

Intense fund raising is being undertaken to reduce the costs of participation for members. A fund will also be established to help support selected riders eventually competing abroad.

The first fund raiser took place at the Farm Inn, with a delicious dinner and a showing of the WEG Freestyle tests. These were real inspiration indeed for all those present and it was also super to see members of the dressage fraternity socialising and bonding. Wonderful gifts were donated by generous sponsors, which added to an enjoyable evening.

Interested riders may join Grow Grand Prix by paying a R1,000.00 membership fee. Non-riders are also welcome to participate for a R100.00 participation fee. These fees should be paid into the Grow Grand Prix account, details for which are available from Jacqui at office@hee.co.za or phone 071-201-6630. A database of horses and riders is also being developed.



This lovely illustration epitomises the beauty of dressage and is symbolic of the South African Grow Grand Prix initiative with the objective of having a strong presence at international dressage events.

Tribute to Yolande Pieterse

It is terribly sad to have lost another contributor to the dressage community to cancer. Yolande Pieterse, newly elected chairman for the East region and competitive dressage rider, passed away in January after a long fight against cancer. Andrea Harrison expresses what everybody who knew her felt: "Yolande was truly dedicated to whatever she put her mind to. She was full of positive energy and always upbeat. When life threw adversity at her she always overcame it. Her spirit was contagious and she will be sorely missed. Our sincerest condolences go to her family and friends".

Possible rules changes in the pipeline

Currently some rule change proposals are being reviewed. If successful, it means that the top ten riders in each grade will be compelled to ride a Freestyle test at each championship show, bringing us in line with what is compulsory overseas.

It would also mean that for Medium and Advanced riders a starter fee of R 150 will be charged. This amount will automatically be refunded if the horse and rider combination does not ride in the classes that were entered. If a horse and rider combination does not turn up for a class entered or withdraws without a pertinent reason from a class entered, the R 150 will be forfeited.

A rider will be given two days from the day of the end of the show to produce either a veterinarian's certificate, a medical doctor's certificate or any other valid, acceptable reason for not having participated.

This rule is to be introduced due to the number of higher graded riders who have scratched from classes at the last minute without any real, valid reason or simply do not turn up or have the courtesy to notify anyone, upsetting the programme and upsetting officials who dedicate their valuable time to make shows possible. This has also happened at high profile shows where there are spectators wishing to see what our horse and rider combinations have to offer and it certainly does not set the best image of our sport.

Simply scratching from a class because your horse is not quite on form on the first day and you may not feel you are in a winning position for the final day really is not a valid reason. Bottom line, this can be perceived as unsportsmanlike behaviour.

No damp smiles!

The first Charvid and Chez Charlene dressage show of 2011 went off smoothly in spite of inclement weather. Fortunately rain held off on the Saturday apart from a short shower at lunch time. The Sunday riders were less fortunate but despite many very damp people and ponies, the riders still had smiles on their faces!

There was a total of 98 horses entered – an excellent turnout considering that many people were only just back from their holidays, and some horses are still in horse sickness.

The show organisers say they would really like to see more Junior and Pony Riders and would like to encourage young people interested in dressage to come along to their shows, instead of only focussing on the schools shows. Their comment that it is easier to do a good dressage test when it is not mixed up with all the other disciplines really holds true!

They also remind everyone that they will be looking out for the good horse and rider combinations for the Gauteng North inter-regional team later in the year.

Many thanks to all officials over the show, from judges, Liz Dewsbury, Erica de Groot, Lyn Sacks, Heather Camfferman, Heletha Burmeister and Jane Morris Abson to scribes Gill, Blanche, Danielle and Sheila, show directors Alet and Heletha, scorer Michelle, first aider Alta Roets, marshalls and runners Yolande and Laura and Carol Ann for once again preparing the Georgiades family's lovely venue so well.

The next show is scheduled for 12 and 13 March and the graded schedule is already on the GHS website. The training schedule will be available shortly.

Farewell Liz Dewsbury

One of our wonderful and stalwart judges, Liz Dewsbury, is leaving South Africa to return to England at the end of February. Liz has made an enormous contribution to dressage here and she will be sorely missed. Bon voyage, Liz and every success in the future!

Amateur Dressage Challenge

It looks like a new dressage initiative is ready and set to add a whole new dimension to our sport! Preparations for an Adult Amateur dressage challenge are underway.

The principle is simple. This is an **amateur** challenge, aimed at giving the opportunity to win a title to a horse and rider combination that has never previously won one at any level or on any horse, for example, at SANEF Competition, SA Championships, the Musical Kur Festival, GHS Champs, Mini Novice Champs, FEI – you get the picture!

The levels will be adult preliminary, novice and elementary. Whoever wins the Adult Amateur Dressage Challenge titles in these levels in 2011 will not be allowed to compete in the series next year as they will have then won a title.

Some of the conditions of entry include that horses must compete in the grade that they are registered and cannot upgrade or downgrade within the year. Preliminary classes are open to horses that do not have more than five novice points. Preliminary horses and riders need be entry level members of GHS and all horses need to be registered. Novice and Elementary riders need to be fully registered.

There will be a number of qualifiers throughout this year at graded shows around Gauteng. Riders can ride at however many qualifiers they choose. An average of their two highest scores will be used to reveal the 15 finalists from each level.

The Series Championship Challenge is to be held at the GHS Mini-Novice Champs in November 2011. The classes will be judged by an international Judge and two South African national panel judges. Riders who qualify will be able to compete in the Mini-Novice Champs as well as the Series finale.

More about the Series will be revealed very soon, including its incredible prize money! Watch this space...