

GLOBAL DRESSAGE FORUM 2002

Most participants agreed that the program of this second Global Dressage Forum will be hard to beat in the future. There were many highlights, including a most exciting evaluation of Jerez. And there was an impressive program by the World Breeding Federation of Sport Horses, including presentations of the world's finest young horses by the studbooks of Hannover, KWPN and Oldenburg. But for many of the representatives of 30 countries, the presentation of the educational program of the German Federation "from pony rider to Grand Prix", was really impressive and something to think about when countries are planning their own activities to promote the sport in the future.

After Joep Bartels and David Hunt, the newly elected President of the International Trainers Club, had opened the Forum, the USA based trainer Robert Dover really woke up the participants with a clinic in which he explained his thoughts about the discussions on riding deep or riding high. "The frame of the horse has to be adjustable", Robert told, which means that a rider should be able to change the position of the head at any time, always starting from behind, riding the horse with legs and seat forward. In the second clinic, by Ernst Hoyos, a former rider of the Spanish Riding School in Vienna, a lot of working from the ground was shown. Ernst was assisted by Lisa Wilcox, who recently was very successful with the American team in Jerez.

The first evening was reserved for the evaluation of Jerez, an exciting experience as 6 tests were shown on a huge screen with the points per movement and per judge produced at the moment that a movement was exercised. Then, a trainers panel asked questions and made remarks, which were answered by the Jerez judges in an open manner. There were lively discussions between the trainers, chaired by David Hunt and the judges, chaired by Mariette Withages. The following tests were shown and thoroughly discussed:

1. Grand Prix: Nadine Capelmann – Farbenfroh GP
2. Grand Prix: Rafael Soto – Invasor GP
3. Grand Prix Special: Beatrice Ferrer Salat - Beauvalais GPS
4. Grand Prix Special Ulla Salzgeber – Rusty GPS
5. Grand Prix kür: Anky van Grunsven – Krack C Kür
6. Grand Prix kür: Debbie McDonald – Brentina Kür

The most hectic discussion took place on the comparison between baroque horses, like the Andalusians, and the modern sport horses.

On Tuesday morning the World Breeding Federation presented a very interesting explanation on the breeding of top dressage horses. Veterinarian dr. Gerd Heuschmann got a lot of applause on his presentation about the possible backgrounds of back and leg injuries of young horses. Very impressive were the demonstrations by the world's best young horses, including several world champions. Hannover presented Wyoming and Dreseman, KWPN Rousseau and Broere Jazz, and Oldenburg the champions Don Davidoff and Rubels.

Last part of the Global Dressage Forum was the presentation of the systematic approach of the German Federation, which educates riders from pony level to Grand Prix. It is certainly no coincidence that over 50 % of the German team riders come from the young riders teams, including

such famous names as Nicole Uphoff, Isabel Werth and Ulla Salzgeber. National pony trainer Cornelia Endres and junior trainer Hans Heinrich Meyer zu Strohen introduced several of their pupils to the Forum and showed how the system works in practice. Johan Hinneman, as always a darling of the crowd, demonstrated the last difficult part of bringing a young rider to Grand Prix level with his pupil Marlies van Baalen. Warendorf's Christoph Hess was the overall presentator and gave explanation about the backgrounds and details of this highly educational item.

Report Global Dressage Forum 2002 by Jane Kidd

The Bartels Family organised, with their team from The Academy in Holland and the International Dressage Trainers Club, the second Global Dressage Forum on October 21 & 22. FEI World Cup director Joep Bartels summed up this unique equestrian event with the two keywords, 'respect' and 'communication'. These were what had come out of two days of presentations, demonstrations and discussions between representatives from 30 nations, including the sport's leaders amongst the trainers, judges, riders and breeders.

Never before have so many people on the cutting edge of our sport been able to collect together and discuss in a friendly, respectful manner many of the key issues within the sport.

The session that tested those key words to their limit was the evaluation of the judging at the World Equestrian Games. The judges were led by the Chairman of the FEI Dressage Committee, Mariette Withages and included Dr Volker Moritz, Jan Peeters and Ernst Holtz from the jury at WEG. The discussions were with the trainers and riders that included Sjef Janssen, Christine Stueckelberger, Margit Otto Crepin, Richard Davison, Johan Hinnemann, Robert Dover, and Ernst Hoyos that were led by David Hunt (the new chairman of the International Trainers Club).

Mariette Withages opened the session by saying: "Transparency is one of the big issues for our sport. The system of judging should be clear so all can understand what we want." She went on to talk about inclusion of Dressage in the Olympics which after the success of the Freestyle looked settled, but said: "We have to be pro-active and all of us are responsible to help our sport. We have to analyse all sides of our sport and that is why we are here, to do it in a friendly way."

Videos of some of the WEG tests were played, and re-played, with the marks given by each individual judge on the screen too. The judges faced thrusting questions from the trainers and riders.

Any weak defence by the judges was met by another barrage from the trainers, but explanations were welcomed and the reasoning behind marks gave all a greater insight into the judging. Honest acceptance of problems was respected especially Mariette Withages' remark: "We are not computers but humble humans." There are times when even the best judges would like to have given a lower or higher mark.

Changes are in the air; Dane Rawlins brought up the idea of different methods of judging was told the FEI committee is already looking into this. They are likely to try out the judges sitting together and giving fewer marks.

The session ended with Richard Davison congratulating Mariette Withages for being so open and all the judges for answering in such an honest way. "It was a great reassurance to all of us," he said.

Although this was the most controversial session there was groundbreaking material on training of young horses from the veterinary surgeon and professional rider (Bereiter) Dr Heuschmann. His findings could lead to far reaching changes to the upbringing, early training and competing of our young horses.

The reasons for the success of the gold and silver WEG team medallists Germany and the USA were looked at by Robert Dover from the USA and a high powered team from the German FN including Christoph Hess, Klaus Meisner, and Johan Hinnemann. The Germans focused on the development of talent which included a revealing session with Jo Hinnemann and 22 year old Marlies van Baalen which covered the difficulties in taking that big leap from Young Riders to Grand Prix.

The training sessions led to lively discussions particularly about the contrasting methods of Ernst Hyos trainer of Lisa Wilcox and Spanish School member until this year, and Robert Dover who was the USA's leading rider for nearly 20 years and now top trainer.

Nor was breeding omitted with the winning stud books from the World Breeding Federation, (KWPN, Oldenburg, Hannoverian) presenting their selection processes, the type of horses they aim to breed for dressage and demonstrations with some of the best young horses in the world including the two current Young Horse World Champions and Bundeschampionats from ponies upwards.

The 2002 Global Forum did valuable work by providing insights into the sport, raising questions that can then be pursued and bringing together people who can lead dressage forward.