

Correspondence

Replying to the suggestion given by the FEDERATION EQUESTRE INTERNATIONALE We publish hereby an exchange of correspondence between the International Olympic Committee and the Fédération Equestre Internationale. The latter's reply speaks by itself and needs no comment.

Lausanne, August 8th 1958.

FEDERATION EQUESTRE INTERNATIONALE
Chevalier H. de MENTEN de HORNE
19, Champ du Vert Chasseur
BRUXELLES

Dear Sir,

I am instructed by my President to forward to you the attached photostatic copy of an article which has been published in a German newspaper concerning the GRAND PRIX EQUESTRE d'AIX-LA-CHAPELLE.

In this article it states that a prize of 10,000 marks was awarded for one of the equestrian competitions. Complaints from different parts of the world reach us regularly on the subject of excessive prizes awarded to riders who later take part in Olympic Games. We know that the prizes go to the

horse and not to the man. Nevertheless, to the uninitiated this explanation is not convincing.

My President also wrote to Prince Bernhard, your President, some time ago on this subject and suggested to him that this money, instead of being called a 'prize', should be designated as a refund of the expenses entailed in participation, as is, in effect, the case.

You must realize that this question of prizes awarded to the winners of equestrian competitions is constantly reported in articles in the Press and these considerations make a laughingstock of the principles of amateurism which the International Olympic Committee never ceases to uphold. We think it is absolutely essential to find a solution to this problem.

We, therefore, venture to ask you most earnestly to be kind enough to go into this matter, so that we may be spared the comments which are regularly sent to us.

Thanking you for your very kind consideration, we remain,

Yours very sincerely,

(signed) OTTO MAYER
Chancellor.

Brussels, September 29th 1958.

Au Chanceler du COMITÉ INTERNA-
TIONAL OLYMPIQUE
Mon Repos - LAUSANNE

Dear Sir,

We have carefully considered your letter of the 8th August and beg you to believe that we are the first to regret the complaints which are regularly addressed to you concerning the award of cash prizes in equestrian competitions.

We are, on the other hand, very happy that the International Olympic Committee appreciates that the money awarded in equestrian competitions constitutes a refund of the expenses entailed in participation. We feel that it is up to the International Olympic Committee to give any explanations to the public because, according to Article 36 of the Olympic Rules, the International Olympic Committee recognizes as an amateur any person qualified as such under the Rules of the International Federation concerned.

It seems, therefore, useless to expect the public to recognize in the word *prize* the meaning *indemnify*, as this would not solve the problem the implications of which we fully appreciate. The uninitiated will certainly not appreciate the shades of meaning.

The uninitiated are aware that equestrian sport is one of the most costly to its participants. In effect two athletes (rider and

horse) are there. where most sports only consider the expense for one athlete – the *equestrian* expenses, entailing considerable extra expense, of which we would like to give you some examples by way of explanation.

A show jumper, capable of international competition, is worth 200,000.- 500,000 Belgian francs. His jumping life begins when he is 5 or 6 years old and may continue, under the best conditions, for 7 years. This gives an annual depreciation of 30,000 - 70,000 Belgian francs.

If we add to this figure a sum of 50,000 Belgian francs for feeding, shoeing, saddlery, grooms' wages, etc... it will be seen that the horse constitutes an annual outlay of 100,000 Belgian francs, even before he takes part in competitions.

For taking part in competitions, one must add to this sum the cost of transport and, in this connection, it is sufficient to say that; for Belgium, these expenses amount to 200,000 Belgian francs for the transport of 5 horses to ROME, LUCERNE, PARIS, AACHEN and ROTTERDAM these last three shows being near the country.

A fortiori, it must be the same for all high-class European teams, such as Germany, France, Italy and Great Britain, which take part in all European shows and even in American ones.

Chile intends holding a Championship this year, but, in order to cut out the enormous cost of transporting the horses, it has been decided to put native horses at the disposal of the foreign riders.

This year the U.S. equestrian team took part in European shows and stayed on the Continent of Europe for five months. The travel expenses of the whole team from New York to the Continent amounted to 500,000 Belgian F. Furthermore, the whole cost of the U.S. team during its stay in Europe amounted to 2,500,000 Belgian francs.

In view of these enormous expenses, you will understand that few American and European Federations take part in shows on the other continent.

We could give other examples, but we believe that these will suffice to convince

you, particularly when one remembers, that, in a competition, few are chosen and not all win cash prizes.

Thus it seems evident that the cash prizes awarded cannot cover the enormous expenses of international participation and that they really are in fact only a partial reimbursement of the expenses involved, both for the rider and for the horse.

One must also remember that a certain number of horses have a very short jumping life, that show jumpers are prematurely worn out, are a prey to all kinds of ailments and that their depreciation or death means replacing them without any return for the original capital invested.

We know many rich amateur riders who compete in international competitions, but we have never seen amateur riders become rich through competing. Can the same be said of other sports ?

To make a comparison with other Olympic sports, from the point of view of expense, would be futile, when one considers the value of the material put at the disposal of the athletes in these sports, such as boxing-gloves, tennis racquets, football boots. For the most part these are donated by the manufacturers. This is not the case in equestrian sport, for which the equipment and saddlery (boots, riding attire, etc...) are very expensive.

Other proposals are actually under consideration and will be submitted to the next General Assembly. We shall inform you of these in due course.

In conclusion we believe, with you, that neither the Federation Equestre Internationale nor the riders can be blamed and we suggest that the International Olympic Committee publish a clear explanation of our situation, unless you would prefer to publish this letter in one edition of your Official Bulletin.

We shall be very glad to hear from you and remain, etc...

Signed :

FÉDÉRATION ÉQUESTRE INTERNATIONALE:
Chevalier H. de Menten de Horne.