

# About the Cross-Country Race in Rome

We have read following article in the specialized British magazine *Light Horse* of November 1960, under Duncan Holden's signature, who states clearly the situation:

'The courses did what was required: tested the top and found a clear-cut decision in every case. Whether the same answers could be obtained if the courses were not so severe is debatable; the danger is that it would possibly lower the standard of the competition, which must not happen. At the same time, too many courageous horses are being overfaced, giving the anti-element plenty of ammunition for propaganda.

'The answer to this problem must surely lie with the International Equestrian Federation and through them with the National Federations, who should take a stronger attitude towards qualifications for the Games. The Bureau put out a circular letter to all Federations in 1957, I think it was urging them to test their prospective show jumping competitors over replicas of at least two previous Olympic Games courses and to send in a report on the test, and, further, to guarantee that their final entrants were capable of handling an Olympic Games course. I wonder how many did so? In any case, it was not sufficient. Several European teams, who should know the standard and have ample opportunity for gaining international experience, were definitely not up to that standard.

For the three-day event the problem is increased, because here it is not only the jumping ability but also the physical fitness of horse and rider that is tested to the utmost. It was noticeable that almost all the horses jumped well in the early stages while full of running, but too many blew up before they were half round the cross-country course - they simply were not even half-trained for such an event. The cross-country course was big, but only difficult because it required great judgment, as all the major problems were at the end of the course. It was the pace over the early, easy flat stretches that killed, rather than the difficult fences at the end. Those who had the judgment and really fit horses, survived the journey without difficulty'.

(Ed.) In our opinion, the International Equestrian Federation has done its duty; on numerous occasions, it has reminded its affiliated federations of the responsibility they assume when enrolling riders to compete in the Olympics. The responsibility incurred for the horses ridden to death at the cross-country events in Rome falls on the NATIONAL federations, some of which, as far as this matter is concerned, are evidently misgoverned. The F.E.I. (International Equestrian Federation) has done its best and cannot do more. Its task is certainly heavy, but its authority must be in keeping with its responsibilities.