



How the Fédération Equestre Internationale works*

by its President, HRH the Duke of Edinburgh

I suspect that the FEI is seen by most people as a remote and mysterious organisation—that is if they have heard of it at all.

The initials stand for Fédération Equestre Internationale or, in English, the International Equestrian Federation. (This reversal is not a French prejudice against equestrian sports, they do the same thing to other organisations. For instance, UNO becomes ONU in French and NATO becomes OTAN.)

The only reason we use the French initials is because it was the first official language of the new federation when it was formed in 1921, and, like the Common Market, Britain was not among the founder members.

Members of the FEI are the national governing bodies of equestrian sports. The British member used to be the British Horse Society until the British Equestrian Federation was formed by the BHS and the British Show Jumping Association.

The sole purpose of the FEI is to agree the rules for international competitions, but this inevitably has led to regulations governing the organisation and conduct of international and junior events, to veterinary regulations, to special rules for the Olympic Games, to an international fixture list and to the promotion of continental and world championships.

There are currently 63 member federations of the FEI, which, at a recent count, is slightly less than half the membership of the UN. This may look quite good consider-

ing there can be little or no riding in a great many countries, but in fact only 29 of the 63 members organised any international events in 1976.

Budget

The FEI is financed by annual subscriptions based on national populations, which is perhaps not the fairest way of doing it but, as the subscriptions are much too low anyway, it does not really matter. In addition, every international event pays an organisation due, plus a proportion of the prize money offered at the event.

It is this latter contribution which is by far the most significant. To illustrate this, the 29 national federations which organised international events in 1976 contributed £48,387 (205,646 Swiss francs), compared with £6,984 (29,682 Swiss francs) sent in by the remaining 39. Each national federation is allowed to send two delegates to the annual General Assembly, although each country only has one vote.

It is the General Assembly which elects the 13 members of the Executive Committee, or Bureau.

There is one further source of income, and that is a share of the money received by the IOC for the TV rights for the Olympic Games. It is a complicated formula, but we get 4 per cent of one-third of the total of \$6.7m. (16,683,000 Swiss francs), and it looks as if we shall get about \$90,000 (224,100 Swiss francs) from the Montreal Games.

Table 1 shows the number of competitors and the number of spectators at the Montreal Games. The figures indicate a remarkable level of popular interest in the equestrian sports.

* Reprinted by kind permission of the British weekly magazine « Horse and Hound ». Article published in the edition of 3rd December 1976.

Table 1

Competitors at the Montreal Olympic Games

Competition	Nations	Teams	Individuals	Competitions
Three-day event	13	12	1	49
Dressage	11	8	3	27
Individual jumping	20	—	—	48
Team jumping	14	14	—	56

Spectators at the Montreal Olympic Games
(According to the tickets sold)

Competition	Tickets sold	Percentage of tickets available
Three-day event— dressage (1st day)	10 645	82
dressage (2nd day)	10 470	81
endurance	30 000 to 35 000	
jumping	23 300	100
Individual jumping	22 000	95
Dressage 1st day	7 800	76
2nd day	9 800	78
3rd day	11 000	82
Team jumping	55 800	
	(morning session)	

Table 2 gives an indication of the scale of international competition and its current rate of growth.

Definitions

Like all organisations, the FEI has evolved a system of initials to save time. The letter *C* stands for *Concours* (English: Event) throughout, so that *C.N.*: *National Event*; *C.A.*: *Friendly* (*A* for *Amitié*—competitors from one foreign country only); *C.I.*: *International*; *C.I.O.*: *Official International*, which includes the Nations Cup (one each per country per year—the Royal International Horse Show at Hickstead and Wembley is the British CIO).

But the FEI controls four “disciplines”: *jumping*, French “*saut*” therefore letter *S*; *dressage*—French anyway—letter *D*; *three-day events*—French “*concours complet*”—letter *C*; *driving*—French “*attelage*”—letter *A*; and the same for *juniors* (under 18 except dressage under 20)—letter *J*.

The letter *E*—“*Equipe*”—is used to denote a *team* competition, while where more than one discipline is involved the letter is *H* for “*Hippique*”.

By putting these letters together it is possible to describe any international event by a series of initials.

For instance, the R.I.H.S. is only international for jumping, so it becomes a C.S. (for jumping) I. (international) O. (official). The international driving event at Windsor becomes a C.A. (attelage) I. (international). A C.S.A.J. is a junior friendly jumping event. Detailed control of the disciplines is delegated to four committees, consisting of four members each, two of whom are changed every two years, with a chairman who is a member of the Bureau. There is also a Juniors Committee and a Finance Committee composed on the same system.

Table 2

Scale of international competition and current rate of growth

Discipline	Number CAs		Number CIs		Number CIOs	
	1975	1976	1975	1976	1975	1976
Jumping	31 ¹	49 ²	82 ³	93 ⁴	14	19 ⁵
Dressage	12	18	15	25	2	8
Three-day event	2	2	9	7	—	—
Driving	2	3	—	3	—	—
	47	72	106	128	16	27

¹ Including 2 C.S.A.J.: ² Including 1 C.I.S.J.: ³ Including 4 C.S.I.J.: ⁴ Including 6 C.S.I.J.: ⁵ Including 1 C.S.I.O.J.



Calendar

Not shown in Table 2 are the European junior championships for dressage (27 competitors, in Holland, won by Holland) and three-day event (38 competitors, in Germany, won by Great Britain).

In addition, there were the world driving championships (33 competitors, in Holland, won by Hungary) and out of Europe there were the American jumping championships for juniors in Uruguay...

On top of all that were the Olympic Games and, as the Bureau appoints the judges, Appeal Committees, technical and veterinary delegates for all championships and Olympic Games, and pays their travel expenses, it was quite a busy and expensive year.

So far as championships are concerned, there are continental (i.e. European, South American, etc.), regional (Pan-American,

Mediterranean, Balkan, etc.) and world. The rotation is based on the four-year Olympic cycle, with the world championship year falling on the even year between the Olympics (1978 next), leaving the odd years for the continental championships.

The right to organise the next following championship goes to the country of the individual winner, but with the condition that no country can organise the same championship twice running.

Professionalism

In order to provide for professional jumpers, the rota of jumping championships is slightly different. The Olympic Games can be considered as the world amateur championships, so the following year is allocated to open continental championships, which gives the amateurs a chance to compete against the professionals.

The following (even) year is allocated to the world professional championships and then, to allow national federations to prepare for the Olympic Games, the next year is allocated to amateur continental championships.

In spite of this, the rules about professionals are a constant headache for the FEI. The need for these rules arises from the fact that three FEI disciplines are included in the Olympic Games and, if we want to keep them in, the IOC has to be satisfied with the rules laid down by the international federations.

The principle adopted by the FEI is to apply the minimum restrictions on genuine amateurs and virtually complete freedom on those riders who opt to become professionals. Of course, any restriction irks national federations because they always want their best competitors for the Olympic Games.

Furthermore, in many countries there are compelling tax reasons why more competitors do not become professionals. It will remain a vexed question so long as these extraneous factors exist.

Judging

The second problem is judges. All competitions depend on judges and the more important the competition the better the judges have to be.

It is a constant struggle to raise the standards and not least of the difficulties is that virtually all judges are inevitably unpaid volunteers. Their time is limited, both to travel abroad as foreign judges and also to attend courses and seminars.

In spite of that, quite a useful programme was achieved in 1976. The course for candidate judges in jumping in Brussels under Mr. Hoffman was particularly successful. Twenty-one delegates from 18 nations and three continents attended the dressage course at Elgg in Switzerland and a very useful meeting of driving judges was held at Avenches, also in Switzerland.

Doping

The third major difficulty is to do with veterinary issues. The problem of "for-

bidden substances," or, more bluntly, "doping," causes endless headaches. The more intense the competition the greater the temptation to use various medications and as soon as they are declared "forbidden" the scientists produce new ones.

It is fairly easy to classify most of them, but the drugs generally known as butazolidine or phenylbutazone are rather more difficult. Some maintain that they merely treat a condition and do not give an unfair advantage, while others insist that no drug treatment should be allowed in competition and that these drugs have undesirable side effects anyway.

The argument is hotting up and it will be interesting to see how it develops.

The other veterinary headache is infectious diseases and the consequent control on the international movement of horses. The difficulty is that every country reserves the right to apply whatever controls it thinks appropriate. This is all very well, but it leads to the most ludicrous anomalies and in many cases to quite idiotic regulations.

There is a means of consultation at the International Epizootic Organisation based in Paris, but it seems to be more concerned with farm animals although it has recently set up an Equine Committee. Even so, it only acts in an advisory capacity.

The activities of the FEI only directly affect those competitors who take part in international competitions, but most national federations realise that it is in the interest of their members to compete under rules which are reasonably close to FEI rules from the start so that they do not have the extra burden of learning a new set of rules when the time comes for them to compete in international events.

So, even if the FEI seems rather remote, its activities do have quite an influence on virtually every level of equestrian competition.

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