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GMO Travel Grant Article
December 31, 2010

Judges, trainers, competitors, and dressage enthusiasts alike descended on not-so warm and sunny Jacksonville, FL for the USDF national convention and symposium on December 1st through the 5th. They gathered for three days of organizational and educational meetings and lectures to discuss and learn how to better USDF as a functioning organization and how to better promote and support the sport of dressage. These meetings were then followed by a two day symposium with Lilo Fore and Gary Rockwell dedicated to demonstrating and discussing the new 2011 USEF dressage tests from a judge's, trainer's, and rider's perspective.

Most of the convention was filled with a buzz about the new USEF tests for 2011-2014. All levels from training to fourth level now have three new tests, rather than four, formatted by USEF. The introductory level also has three new tests, which are still arranged by USDF. These tests have been designed to challenge riders by increasing the degree of difficulty in each level, as a means of continuing to improve the art and sport of dressage. In the symposium, Lilo Fore and Gary Rockwell took on the trainer and judge roles as they coached and analyzed each test ridden for an audience. Gary Rockwell scored each test aloud and Lilo Fore gave the riders and auditors advice on how to tackle some of the new sequences of movements, as well as how to generally ride a correct and beautiful test.

A buzz of excitement and pride over the World Equestrian Games was also evident throughout the week. USEF president, David O'Conner, came to give an encouraging speech at the board of governors' meeting, where he also showed a video capturing some of the highlights and hard work put into the entire WEG event. Steffen Peters and Ravel were honored, and Ravel was named Adequan/ USDF Grand Prix Horse of the Year for 2011 during the gala and awards banquet Friday night. Another montage of photos of the US dressage team was also shown.

Though enthusiasm was present, business was taken care of through the three days of the convention. A new vice president was elected. Beth Jenkins of Region 8 campaigned with a platform of bringing USDF back to the grass roots by connecting better with the GMOs. A helmet rule has also been proposed that would require every rider under the age of 18 and all riders competing in fourth level and below to wear a helmet at all times when mounted at a show. If passed by USEF, this would be the first helmet rule governing dressage classes.

There was also much debate about whether to continue to allocate \$2 of the \$10 competitor's fee, originally intended for the national championship fund, to the operating budget. This raised many questions about whether it was necessary to save money for a national championship which has not yet been organized or instituted. It was voted by the BOG that the \$2 would continue to go toward the operating budget. And as USDF moves toward organizing all committees into three different governing councils, it was decided that the counsel chairs would be voted on by the board of governors, rather than the committees within the councils.

A rule change affecting competitors is the limit of year end awards granted each horse and rider combination. A rider and horse pair can no longer receive a year end

award for more than two levels and if a rider has shown the same horse in more than two levels, they will only be considered for awards for the two highest levels in which they showed that year. This was instituted in order to discourage people from over-showing their horses in an effort to receive awards.

In other news, Sherry Guess, from our own Region 9 was named the Volunteer of the Year, a very honorable award. The entire region is very proud of her and honored that she has done such wonderful work for them and USDF. It was a nice ending to a productive and smooth convention.