

2009 USDF Convention Report

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Each year, the USDF Convention brings together people from all walks of life who share a love of dressage. For 2009, I represented the Fort Worth Dressage Club and the Dallas Dressage Club as a GMO Delegate to the Board of Governors.

The week started for me on Wednesday, with a quick drive to Austin after some early morning work meetings. Of course: I take a short vacation and Hell freezes over! I arrived in Austin only to be greeted by the worst cold snap Austin set record lows for the weekend. Even Boston was warmer, as we were told (and told often) by the New Englanders in attendance. We were treated to a five-minute snow flurry on Friday truly blizzard conditions for Austin.

The Renaissance Hotel conference rooms were lovely, but the cold snap played havoc with the hotel's fire alarm system, and we had several false alarms. Horse-themed pajamas seem to be a trend with this group. I met several interesting people while waiting for the all-clear to return to our rooms, but I couldn't recognize them again without their fuzzy slippers and face cream, and so couldn't resume our acquaintance the next day.

The most notable alarm occurred at 2:17 am, when I heard a strange man's voice whispering from the intercom right next to my bed, There is no cause for alarm... Humans can levitate with sufficient motivation.

USDF booked a nearby Mexican restaurant for a Lone Star Welcome Party on Wednesday evening. Everyone had a quick bite and settled in for a Margarita Meet and Greet. Judging from the noise level, a good time was had by all. I can report that no furniture was broken, no tables were danced on, and everyone was able to walk the block or so back to the hotel under their own steam.

On Thursday, the meetings started in earnest, with everyone splitting off to their Regional meeting. Next was the fabulous Four-In-One Forum. This is a panel discussion/Q&A, with representatives from the Councils for Competition Management, Competitors, Judges, and Technical Delegate. Very informative, my favorite meeting of the Convention.

The Board of Governors meetings began Thursday afternoon and continued through Friday. The Board consists of delegates representing each GMO, plus at-large delegates who are elected each year by the USDF Participating Members. Council and Committee Reports were presented detailing the yearly progress and objectives for 2010. Elections occurred for USDF President (George Williams) and Treasurer (Steve Schubert). Melissa Creswick was appointed interim Vice-President to replace Mr. Williams. Committee Reports and Board Minutes can be found on USDF's website.

A new budget was adopted after much debate, which included an across-the-board increase in membership dues, and a new Education Membership.

The USEF Dressage Committee reported on the proposed test changes for 2011:

Only 3 tests per level for Training, First, and Second

Tests times shortened to approximately 6 minutes each.

First Level may be ridden sitting OR rising trot.

Fourth Level changes to occur on/about quarterline/centerline/quarterline, no more counting strides until PSG.

Saturday and Sunday were devoted to the USDF Symposium with Jan Brink. Saturday was devoted to theory, and Sunday began work in earnest with specific exercises for each training point. My favorite training tip from Jan Brink was that you can't build muscle on a 20m circle. Conditioning comes from free-jumping or jumping u/s, plus roadwork or a cross-country canter. Either finish a training ride with a conditioning hack, or schedule alternate days of dressage training and conditioning.

TOP TEN THINGS I HEARD AT THE CONVENTION:

10. Can we just quickly review last year's minutes?
9. I don't understand the math in this Budget Proposal. Can someone explain it to me?
8. I'd like to propose a friendly amendment...
7. Can we have a Roll Call Vote?
6. Can we suspend the rules?
5. Nice jammies...
4. Is that snow?
3. Can someone help me flip this coin?
2. I'm on drugs. Are you on drugs?
1. Can I have your attention please? CAN I HAVE YOUR ATTENTION, PLEASE. There is no cause for alarm....