



National Office News Sheet – October 2003

Doesn't time fly when you are having fun? Or when you are busy? And busy we have been. Insurance renewals - and some new takers - have been coming in at a steady rate. I have to be frank, however, and say that I would like them to come in more quickly. Reason: We would like to avoid the substantial premium funding charges that we had to incur last year. So if you are a club member, please ask your club secretary or treasurer whether they have received the renewal papers and have sent them in to the National Office. Sometimes our mail does not get to the right person, so if they have not received anything, they can download the "pack" form our web at <http://www.efanational.com/insurance/menu/index.htm>. They same reminder applies to our NCAS coaches, of course.

There appears to be a misapprehension about what the 30-day "hold covered" period means. It is not an extension of the old policy cover but cover on the expectation that you take out the new insurance. It gives you time to complete the paperwork and send in you request for cover. In other words: No new insurance, no cover.

Financial Results for 2002-2003

Looking at our financial performance for the year 2002/03, I am pleased to say that the accounts are waiting for the auditor's sign-off and the bottom line is good. We had a turn-around of about \$300,000 from the previous year. That's great news, of course. Whether we will be able to keep improving the finances at this rate is the \$64,000 question as our priority is to improve a number of services to members.

Financial results will be published on www.efanational.com once they are approved at the AGM late November.

Management Conference

Early this month, Branch Manager met with me at the magnificent WA State Equestrian Centre for a two-day conference that had a wide-ranging agenda. WA Manager Lorraine O'Neill-Cooper turned out to be the perfect host, ably assisted by Marketing & Events Coordinator Russell Joyce. Our thanks also go to Robynne McTaggart and Tony Trevisan who organised a free-jumping display and (more importantly for most) a delicious BBQ at her Noblewood Park Holsteiner Stud. WA Chairman Peter Hickson and WA Director Michael Dagostino also attended.

National Database

The National Database occupied the major portion of the conference and included agreement to make more and more processes and procedures standard across the country. Holly Wake from the SA Branch has produced a great user manual for the database, so we could approach the task quite systematically. WA is expected to "join" the National Database before the end of the year. We are proposing to make membership categories and definitions uniform for all Branches. There was agreement to upgrade the database software and to also introduce other improvements like the production of labels for members who can then use them on entry forms. This should make the like of entry secretaries and scorers a little easier and the results sheets more accurate.

On the subject of results, we now have a facility in the database that lets us upload results, although from Eventing competitions only at this stage. This will make the determinations of qualifications to compete at higher-level events much easier. The delay in the system's completion right now is due to the fact that not all event organisers are returning results in the desired format and that there have been some issues with the uploading of these results in the Branches. The designer of the

results and qualification system, Ken Taarnby from SA, is however providing a "fix" to get around this in the meantime. If you are an event organiser and would like further information, we can bring you into contact with Ken.

Insurance

Aon Account Executive Craig Horsell had come across from Adelaide to answer rather detailed technical questions on our new insurance package. Branch Managers were obviously pleased with the improved new arrangements. The matrix of charges for club insurance has been received well by Branches and clubs. We believe we can improve this model again with better data collection this year.

Equitana

The EFA will again have a stand at this year's Equitana in Melbourne. This is part of our strategy to promote and market our National Sporting Organisation to members and friends of the sport. Branch Managers (and Carl Wood from Victoria in particular) agreed to assist in the staffing of the stand and help with the display and other aspects. It will be our best representation at Equitana, so please come and visit the stand and put faces to names.

National Web

A couple of Branches are now prepared to move their web sites to the National server, which is actually resident in the National Office at Homebush. This is another step to present a consistent face to the "outside" world. As you know, a lot of work needs to be done in this area. To be effective, we must market ourselves as a national organisation, with a common logo and purpose, rather than as a disparate group of eight separate bodies. The EFA is a "federation" after all.

Grading and Grading Cards

A few Branches continue to experience problems in getting showjumping results returned, especially from agricultural shows. Branch Managers discussed strategies to improve this situation, to help ensure that riders compete on a reasonably level playing field. Most felt that the issue of grading cards and the various grading systems need to be reviewed by the Disciplines.

Affiliated Sports

This topic relating to FEI Disciplines that are not totally integrated into the EFA structure (like Endurance, Carriage Driving and Reining) created a lot of discussion. This was especially so for Driving as there are now "EFA Driving Groups" in three States: Queensland, New South Wales and South Australia. Not much progress has been made with the Driving situation, and all agreed that a policy needs to be developed that can be applied to all three of the Disciplines concerned. When it comes to change, however, and relinquishing positions of "power" in sport generally, the old adage that life was not meant to be easy, acquires true meaning. It is important that we do not allow personalities and entrenched positions to prevent all equestrian disciplines moving forward. This is one reason why the new structure proposed for the National Board rests on a "skills-based" Board with a maximum of two 3-year terms before being required to stand down for at least one year.

Memorandum of Understanding

Branch Managers agreed that regardless of the outcome of the current EFA Governance Review, there was a need to formalise functions and responsibilities of Branches and the National Office. The draft document included in the consultant's report and a paper written by yours truly some years ago will be the starting point for discussions.

Next Conference

Managers agreed to have the next conference in February in Tasmania to ensure that the Island State was represented at the meeting. Unfortunately, the newly appointed Tasmanian administrator Judi le Fevre could not attend the Perth meeting.

Governance Review

You may recall that our Chairman Russ Withers and I, accompanied by representatives of the Australian Sports Commission (ASC), visited all Branches in June to explain the proposed governance review. Branches have had time to consider their position and provide further feedback to this important exercise. This feedback was incorporated and in August, the National Board supported unanimously a slightly revised recommendation by the Governance Review Committee.

The Proposal

The final recommendation to the National Board was - in brief - to have a Board of five directors elected on a skills basis by the seven shareholders at a General Meeting from nominations open to the whole membership. The board could then appoint a further two directors if it deemed it necessary. Shareholder-elected Directors could serve a maximum of two three-year terms before needing to take a "break" of at least one year. The Chair would have a maximum of three two-year terms. The shareholders have the power to appoint and dismiss directors. The Board would be responsible to develop policies and a strategic plan based on the outcome of an annual National Forum. There would be a Shareholders' Agreement/memorandum of Understanding that defined the relationship between the National organisation and the Branches and outlined each other's roles and responsibilities. The Board would also meet with representatives of the Disciplines in regular rotation. The constitution of National Discipline Committees would remain unchanged, with a representative from each Branch and an athletes' representative.

You can download a copy of the final recommendations at

<http://www.efanational.com/content/attachments/news/30820GovReviewCmtteeRecommendationsFinal.pdf>.

The Current Situation

This recommendation has been put to the vote in all Branches except Tasmania who will do so at their next meeting. Most Branch Boards have agreed to support the proposal. One has voted narrowly against and another added a condition that would be working against the idea of having "independent" directors. A final vote on the restructure and the required constitutional amendments will take place at the AGM planned for 24 November 2003 in Melbourne. Six out of seven "shareholders" (Branches) will need to support the amendments or there will be no change.

I have been in regular contact with the Management Improvement Consultant of the ASC. He views the current situation with great concern. He informed me that he would need to report the situation to the ASC Board who will discuss it and may reconsider the ASC's relationship with the sport of Equestrian. Please bear in mind that the ASC is the largest funding institution that the EFA has. We receive more than \$1.3 million in high performance and sport development funding annually. This money has certainly helped to keep Eventing at the highest levels of success in the last decade and has provided Dressage and Jumping with the resources for their continued development towards international success. This is, however, public money and the ASC requires all sports to comply with the highest standards of corporate governance and accountability.

The other important thing to remember is that the EFA has attempted to reform itself on a number of occasions in the last decade. For some reason or another, proposals have not managed to get the required support from the seven Branch shareholders. On this occasion, we had the services of an experienced consultant in the field of corporate governance for not-for profit organisations, have gone through an extensive process of consultation, have had support, guidance and funding from the Australian Sports Commission, and had unanimous approval by the National Board (which at present includes all shareholder representatives).

Have no doubt about it, our government funding will be in jeopardy unless the Branches agree to implement reforms to the National organisation as proposed.

Equestrian Events

You may have noticed that we have put a new page on to our web to make you aware of **Equestrian** programs on TV (http://www.efanational.com/content/news/news_tv.htm). Unfortunately, broadcasts are few and far between on free-to-air television but have been occurring more regularly on cable or satellite TV. If you become aware of something, please let us know and we will add it to the list. Last weekend CNBC Australia broadcast a series of highlights on the European Championships in Dressage, Jumping and Eventing. These were well worth watching.

No TV coverage, but next weekend, we will have the **National Dressage Championships** at the Sydney International Equestrian Centre with some radio reports (http://www.dressagensw.com.au/NatDChamps/comp_major_events_ndc.htm). Early November, the next **Adelaide International Horse Trials** are on (<http://www.adelaidehorsetrials.com.au/>), followed by **Equitana** in Melbourne (<http://www.equitana.com.au/index3.html>). And early December, it's **Dressage and Jumping with the Stars** in Werribee (<http://www.efavic.com.au>). Please support your sport by attending these and other events.

Other Notices

Returns for next year's FEI Officials Listings will go to the FEI by the end of this month. Going by past experience it will be early next year before many of the promotions are confirmed.

A number of insurance forms have been amended since the mail-out in September. You can find the latest versions on our web (<http://www.efanational.com/insurance/menu/index.htm>).

Bill Levett finished 5th at the CCI*** at Boekelo in a field of 96 of the world's best. Congratulations, Bill. Full results at http://www.military-boekelo.nl/documents/results_individual_final.pdf.

Congratulations also to Clayton and Lucinda Fredericks on the birth of their baby daughter Ellie Olivia (7 lbs 8 oz - That's 3.4 kg I believe). You can see photos at http://www.teamfredericks.com/ellie_olivia_fredericks.htm.

In the high performance area the important task of compiling plans for 2005-09 is currently under way. Open forums have already been held in Showjumping. Despite a modest attendance they produced some interesting new ideas. The Dressage forum is due to be held on Thursday, 27th November during the National Championships.

The EFA has been set a deadline of 30th October by the Australian Sports Commission to have the full plan submitted in writing. Along with his other duties, Gareth McKeen is busily preparing to produce the written documentation based on the decisions made by the respective high performance panels in each discipline. This is a big project and unfortunately the time frame set by the ASC has made the task even more demanding.

There is still time for interested parties to submit any ideas they wish to put forward for consideration and these can be emailed to gmcke@bigpond.com. The EFA is scheduled to present its plans in a presentation to the ASC and representatives from the various State Institutes of Sport on Sunday, 16 November. Whilst I can think of better ways to spend my Sundays, this presentation is important for the EFA's chances of ongoing high performance funding.

One last thing: What do you think of the current EFA logo? Is it still "current" or does it need updating? Also, should the name "Equestrian Federation of Australia" change to something like Equestrian Australia? This appears to be the trend across other sports (or is it a fad?). Except in the USA where it has gone from the American Horse Shows Association to USA Equestrian to the US Equestrian Federation (or US Equestrian). Feel free to drop me an e-mail.

Best regards,

Franz Venhaus

16 October 2003