

Thoughts on Judging - Stephen Clarke – President IDOC

I'm sure that you will have a very interesting and productive meeting. I have added some personal 'thoughts' below that I had wanted to share with you all at our General Assembly.

"I'm sure we will have a very interesting and challenging year ahead as always! As each year passes we are all, Judges, Stewards and TDs alike, being scrutinised in more and more detail by the press and public due to the development of technology and access to social media.

This being an 'Olympic year' , with each score that the riders are given being of vital importance to them in their efforts to qualify, the pressure for us to all 'get it right' will be greater than ever before.

I think all we can do is to remain as clear and courageous as possible in our judging and stewarding in spite of all these external pressures, being prepared to give the high marks when we see good work, and give the low marks when we see poor quality or serious mistakes.

And to support one another when difficult decisions have to be made in cases of blood, lameness, abuse etc....

The press and public are becoming increasingly obsessed with the idea that judges should all give identical scores, but as long as we have human beings acting as judges we will never always see exactly the same picture, particularly when we are officiating from different positions around the arena.

However, I feel that we have a very good system that has been developed over decades by expert horsemen which take all of these variables into consideration in order to produce as fair a result as possible for every single competitor.

We must rely on this system, even though there will of course always be areas that can still be developed and improved in the future.

It is essential that we all continue to judge and steward consistently and from exactly the same criteria, following the FEI Rules and Guidelines of the FEI Handbook as closely and clearly as possible, which will minimise any unacceptable differences of scoring and decision making.

As I see it, even though our task remains extremely difficult, it is not complicated! If we judge every single movement of every test as clearly and fairly as possible and award the collective marks in a logical and balanced manner we will have done our job.

In particular, we must be absolutely sure that we judge exactly what we see on the day and always remain ready to be 'surprised' by both the well and lesser known combinations, and to react accordingly.

If we make the occasional mistake, we should be big enough to admit it, and to always remain open minded during our discussions with our colleagues after the class in order to reach objective conclusions.

Our main responsibility as Judges is simply to be fair to the riders by awarding them correct and justifiably points for each and every movement they perform.

If we follow these principals we will ensure that the reputation of our officials and the sport itself remain intact.

More we cannot do!"

Stephen Clarke
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