

International FEI Judges Seminar 2010 in Bern
By Anita Flamand, based on the report of Doris Knotter

The FEI Seminar for Vaulting Judges was again held in Bern this year from February 26th to 28th, together with a Promotion Course (part I) for national judges wishing to become International Candidates/Judges.



The subjects discussed at the FEI Seminar were:

1. Composition score in Individual Free Test
2. Scoring of Pas de Deux
3. Degree of Difficulty
4. Proposal for a new scoring system
5. Possible new technical exercises for 2011
6. Trotting strides during the compulsory test

1. Composition score in Individual Free Test

Presented by Sue Detol (USA) and Craig Coburn (USA)

The focus of this discussion was on the scoring of the different components of the composition score, as they are laid down in the FEI Guidelines for Vaulting Judges:

- Up to 4.0 points for (technical) Variety– split up into:
 - 2.0 points for Relation of static to dynamic exercises out of different structure groups (and variations between exercises with 1, 2 or 3 vaulters up in team),
 - 2.0 points for Variety in the position of the exercises in relation to the horse and in the direction of the movements.
- Up to 3.0 points for Artistic Value – split up into :
 - 1.5 for Harmony with and consideration to the horse (indicating, among others, if the freestyle is built and performed in a way that suits the horse),
 - 0.5 for Continuity and Transitions,
 - 1.0 for Originality and Highlights: originality being a concept that is linked to the constant development of vaulting. Judges were encouraged to keep themselves updated on new exercises and trends, in order to match up their perception of “originality” with the performances shown on the latest CVIs.
- Up to 3.0 points for Expression Value – split up into :
 - 1.0 for Music Interpretation: especially concerning the Music Interpretation, it was made clear that the personal taste of the judges should not impact this score. The requirement is that the body-language of the vaulter(s) shall match the music. (Personal hint from the writer of this article: check if 1. the Rhythm, 2. the Melody, 3. the Style and 4. the Story of the music are interpreted by the vaulter’s whole body),
 - 1.0 for Charisma of the vaulter(s): this refers to the expressiveness of the vaulter.

2. Scoring of Pas de Deux

Presented by Helma Schwarzmann (GER)

Following the European Championship in Pas de Deux in Malmö 2009, the judges stated that the current way of handling Pas de Deux like the Individual Free Test was not considered as fully appropriate, considering the specificities of this class.

Characteristics of Pas de Deux:

- Vaulters shall mainly vault "together", meaning in contact with each other
- Both vaulters shall vary positions and "responsibilities", meaning that both shall show the ability to support and be supported,
- Both vaulters shall show a maximum of different structure groups, variation between static and dynamic exercises, variety in the position of the exercises in relation to the horse and in the direction of the movements.
- The main goal is a maximum of Interaction between both vaulters, in harmony with the horse.

These characteristics should be translated into a specific description and could be applied as soon as they will have been added to the Guidelines for Vaulting Judges: for the time being the current version of the Guidelines remains valid.

According to the characteristics mentioned above, the following behaviours could generate deductions in Composition:

- Series of exercises executed on the same level (all supported by a vaulter in bench position, all on high bench, all on stand...),
- One vaulter only supporting, the other one only being supported,
- Long sequences of individual exercises in the beginning and/or end of the Free Test.

Concerning the Degree of Difficulty (DOD) the current practice in Pas de Deux is the following:

- 2 static exercises being shown simultaneously : the most difficult one is scored,
- 1 static and 1 dynamic exercise are performed simultaneously: both are scored,
- 2 dynamic exercises from different structure groups are performed (f.eg. one vaulter performs a roll, while the other one performs a ground-jump): both are scored,
- 2 dynamic exercises from the same structure group are performed (f.eg. two similar ground-jumps): the most difficult one is scored.

Regarding the scoring of falls in Performance, the current practice is the following:

- 2 vaulters fall off, time is stopped: 2 points off (counted as one fall),
- 1 vaulter falls off (with or without loss of contact with the horse), time is not stopped: up to 2 points off,
- the 3rd fall entails elimination.

The participants of the seminar expressed the wish to have the DOD revised to match the current level of international vaulting as soon as possible.

3. Degree of Difficulty (DOD)

Presented by Sue Detol and Craig Coburn (USA)

A detailed data analysis presented by Erich Breiter (AUT) showed that the DOD is one of the scores where the biggest discrepancies occur between the individual judges during CVIs.

One reason for this is that the catalogue of exercises, which is part of the current FEI Guidelines for Vaulting Judges, has not been revised for a long time and hasn't followed the development of the performances shown by the vaulters on CVIs.

Concerning **exercises which are not mentioned in the current catalogue**, judges take into account the common criteria of biomechanics in sports (requirements in matters of strength, flexibility, coordination, stability of equilibrium, number and size of support(s), rotation axis etc...) for scoring their DOD. But this analysis contradicts the DOD listed in this catalogue for certain

exercises. Also the understanding of the biomechanics of an exercise still varies from judge to judge.

A common agreement was reached that this issue needs to be addressed as quickly as possible. In the meanwhile the current catalogue is still valid.

Concerning exercises which are **not listed** in this catalogue, Sue Detol and Craig Coburn have worked out a proposal containing the most common ones among them. The participants of the seminar in Bern agreed to decide a provisional DOD for these exercises, until a new catalogue will be edited.

The difficulty of this task consisted in finding a compromise between the biomechanical analysis of those exercises (not yet listed) and the logic of the existing catalogue. F.eg. an exercise is listed in the catalogue as D (Difficult) although it would be designated as an M (Medium) if it was analysed today. A more difficult version of this exercise, which is not yet listed in the catalogue, would be evaluated as a D today, but considering that the easier version is already listed as a D, the more difficult version may need to be called an R. All this to explain that a long discussion was necessary to come up with a **list of recommendations for exercises not contained in the current catalogue**: congratulations to Craig and Sue whose commitment ensured this list could be agreed on and shared ([DOD - FEI Seminar Bern](#)).

Please note that these recommendations are only valid for 2010 and will probably be revised for 2011. No process or deadline has been announced so far for the revision of the existing catalogue. Some participants of the seminar expressed the wish for a commission to be put together by the FEI Vaulting Committee as soon as possible, to address this issue (f.eg. by describing the basic evaluation criteria and proposing a revised catalogue of the most common Free Test Exercises, which could be adapted annually to the evolution of the sport).

4. Proposal for new scoring system

Presented by Erich Breiter

Erich Breiter presented a detailed report, based on a statistic analysis of the difference between the scores given by all judges at the European Championship 2009 in Malmö.

Regarding compulsories, the report showed among others that the discrepancies were the lowest for exercises having been analysed at recent FEI seminars. The biggest differences in scoring appeared for exercises that hadn't been specifically addressed in the past few years, like basic seat and stand. As mentioned above, the biggest discrepancies in Free Test appeared for DOD.

Erich Breiter proposed different tools which could be taken into account by the FEI Vaulting Committee for defining a strategy to reduce the discrepancies to a statistically defined standard range within a certain deadline:

- Splitting up the scores between the judges (vaulting judges currently evaluate 140 criteria within one minute during an individual Free Test – the human brain can actually evaluate around 50 criteria per minute in the case of a well trained, experienced judge, and around 33 criteria in the case of a less-trained, inexperienced judge)
- Simplifying certain sets of criteria
- Readjusting the composition of the classes (number of tests, rounds, content of tests...)
- Modifying the calculation of DOD (f.eg. having a list of exercises laid down for each Free Test before the competition, only counting well executed exercises,
- Improving the Rules and Guidelines (by creating a Handbook with detailed descriptions of exercises and definitions for scoring)
- Adding an Advisory Panel at Championships
- Offering additional training possibilities to judges (shadow judging, video-practice with feedback, web-tools...)
- Etc...

The next Rule change being scheduled for 2012, a 3 year-plan could be set up to implement these proposals.

5. Proposal for new Technical Exercises

Presented by Emma Seely (USA)

Emma Drinker presented a list of exercises which could potentially be added to the list of Technical Exercises in 2011.

1. Roll from kneeling on the croup to sitting on the neck frontways (hands flat on pad)
2. Mount to shoulderstand frontways on the neck: this option was questioned by many participants, because the size of the vaulter and the horse has a big influence on the technique and feasibility of this exercise. The option of choosing mount to shoulderstand rearways on the back of the horse was considered as more appropriate.
3. Mount to seat rearways on the back of the horse, turning to the right. This option was accepted as a possibility, although it wasn't considered as a particularly attractive exercise and might make it difficult to perform interesting transitions to the next exercise.
4. Other options were discussed for the Coordination Exercise: f.eg. combinations of exercises, like jumping from push-up position on the croup to stand frontways and immediately add another jump.

The FEI Vaulting Committee will discuss this matter and publish its decision.

6. Trot during Compulsory Exercises

Discussion

The Rule concerning trotting strides during Compulsory Exercises is not interpreted in the same way by all judges: While in Europe the understanding was that even 1 trotting stride leads to a score of 0 for the exercises (unless it's repeated), in the U.S. the current interpretation is that the whole exercise must be shown in trot, to entail a score of 0.

The following changes have been decided by the FEI Vaulting Committee following this discussion, and published on 12th March 2010 (see all other changes: [Updates Guidelines for Vaulting Judges](#)):

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III. GENERAL PERFORMANCE FAULTS AND DEDUCTIONS FOR COMPULSORY EXERCISES

Specific faults with penalties and deductions

Deductions:

2 points:

- If the horse does not canter (e.g.falls into trot) during an exercise, any part or phase of a compulsory exercise, the vaulter may repeat the whole exercise for a score and will be penalised with a deduction of 2 points for repetition.
- If the horse does not canter (e.g.falls into trot) between two exercises 2 points will be deducted from the previous exercise.
- for a fall between two exercises (the deduction will be scored for the previous exercise)
- ~~If part of the exercise is not performed in canter.~~

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Second Part of Scissors

Deductions:

2 points:

- ~~if one part of the exercise is not performed in canter.~~

7. Flank

Second Part of the Flank

Deductions:

2 points:

- ~~if one part of the exercise is not performed in canter.~~

To sum up the situation: at the moment the vaulter still needs to repeat the exercise to be entitled to a score, if the horse trots during a compulsory exercise. This rule might be revised in the future.

Whatever the future rule might be, most of the participants of the seminar were in favour of a precise description of the possible scenarios linked to this new rule, to make it applicable without any need for interpretation.

List of International Judges participating in the FEI Seminar:

Knotter	Doris	AUT
Flamand	Anita	AUT
Breiter	Erich	AUT
Spadinger	Frank	AUT
Wilcox	Doranne	COL
Kristensen	Lasse	DEN
Wickholm	Karolina	FIN
Delaire	Davy	FRA
Fournaise	Martine	FRA
Rieder	Ulrike	GER
Schirmacher	Andrea	GER
Schönian	Ute	GER
Schwarzmann	Helma	GER
Héczey	Katalin	HUN
Callegari	Michaela	ITA
Benz	Gabi	ITA
Boelsma den	Heddy	NED
Hertog		
De Bruin	Rob	NED
Efimova	Alesandra	RUS
Zhelanova	Elena	RUS
Kull	Anna	SUI
Boehlen	Roland	SUI
Bosshard	Rosmarie	SUI
Ericsson	Monika	SWE
Coburn	Craig	USA
Detol	Sue	USA
Seely	Emma	USA