

12. Judging in South Africa

By Jutta Koivula, Finland

Judging eventing in South Africa? Not really the first thing you would expect yourself to do when you happen to live in Finland, North Europe. But this year I was given the opportunity to travel to the other side of the world and meet the eventing people of South Africa.

My first thought was that maybe the lions had eaten up all the former judges so they had to ask for someone new; but after all it turned out to be a really special trip to a nice and beautiful country – and although I didn't see any lions I saw lots of wildlife and also whales!

The competition was held at Oaksprings, Mooi River which is in the middle of Kwazulu-Natal, in other words between Johannesburg and Durban. The area reminds me very much of England with its soft hills and open landscape.

Peter Thomas, who also owns the Oaksprings ranch, and who also events himself, designed the courses. He had designed a beautiful CIC** class, the first ever of that level in Southern Africa. There have been several CIC* classes before and the national championships have had a level of two star plus but it has been run under the national rules.

In the CIC** there were plenty of questions but the course still rode beautifully. Also the CIC* class was well up to height but still very inviting. The course designer had used the environment beautifully and the horses coped well with the questions on the course.

A big sport

Eventing in South Africa is a much bigger sport than I ever thought. Even though the country does not have that many international competitors the national level is still surprisingly good. At this competition alone there were more than 220 starting on different levels beginning at 70 cm class. There were also two pony classes and each class was divided into several sections (juniors, adults etc.).

Most of the horses were pure Thoroughbreds. Racing is a very big sport in South Africa and the riders seem to have a good choice of horses in their home country. They also import a lot of Thoroughbreds both from Europe and New Zealand.

The national competition system is much like in Europe but currently not all the FEI rules apply directly there. At the moment, SANEF (The South African National Equestrian Federation) is working with its Eventing rules to bring them more in line with the FEI rules so that the riders can get the qualifications to CIC/CCI competitions more easily. On the Friday before the competition we had a small informal seminar about the FEI and SANEF rules and regulations and the responsibilities of the Officials.

The Technical Delegate of this competition was Patricia Clifton from the UK. She has been in South Africa many times and has made a big input in making the sport really international there.

My colleagues were South African judges Jackie Bridel and Gill Pater. The co-operation between us worked very well, which made the weekend really nice.

Quickly changing weather

When I arrived in Mooi River a couple of days before the competition started the weather and going were just perfect. The heat and sunshine however made the going quite hard before the cross-country. During the competition the weather was really hot, but just afterwards it got much colder and a heavy rain started – luckily though not until the Monday.

Big problems on the course were the porcupine and snake holes – not something you expect to find when you are from Northern Europe! There seemed to be at least two million of them in the field but the organizer did everything possible to fill them in and to mark both the holes and the track, which was a huge job.

The controlling system of the cross-country was also a bit different from the European system although it seemed to work quite well. There was also the problem about finding adult fence judges as in many European countries.

Mostly national riders

The participants came from all parts of South Africa and there was also one rider from Swaziland. The distances in the country are huge. The flight over the continent of Africa really made me understand the difficulties for South African riders to get on to the international circuit. And not just the distance - the African Horse Sickness is also a very big problem for equestrian sport in this region.

Eventing people seem to be nice and easy to talk to and very welcoming where ever you are. I didn't have a single lonely moment during my 10 days stay in South Africa. All the people I met were wonderfully positive and nice. It must have something to do with their lovely climate and beautiful nature; I just hope I could have brought some of it with me back home.

Memories from South Africa, photos by Charles du Sautoy:



Thokozane Nhlabatsi/The Ghost, Swaziland,
the CIC**
in the CIC*

Graham Winn and Zorba in



CIC** winner Cindy de Villiers/Dickens. Officials from the left: TD Patricia Clifton and GJ Jutta Koivula, Jackie Birdland and Gill Pater

13. 2007 FEI World Cup Eventing Rules

By Anne-Mette Binder, Denmark

Photos: Richard Payne, USA

The FEI Eventing Committee has after meetings with representatives from the OC's and riders prepared an improved version of the existing FEI World Cup Eventing Rules. Changes to the existing format are made in order to attract more of the world's best riders, for the new season. The first event is already held in Bonn-Rodderberg from 15-17 September 2006. This season will see 19 qualifying events, in 12 countries in the lead up to the FEI World Cup™ Final, to be held in the spring of 2008. The venue is still to be confirmed, but no doubt that this change of concept identical with other major sports series like Champions League and the UEFA Cup within football/soccer in Europe, where finals are held in the spring in order not to collide with European and World Championships, will be an important step in order to keep the World Cup as a format promoting the values of Eventing to the general public as well as sponsors.

Some of the other changes made for the 2007 FEI Eventing World Cup™ format are:

1. Only the riders who have obtained a qualifying result at a qualifier will be awarded points for the FEI World Cup™ Eventing Standings.
2. Qualifiers: Cross Country distance will be 3600 to 4400 metres. Providing a more flexible bracket.
3. Final: Cross Country distance will be 4000 to 4400 metres.
4. Strongly recommended: For all qualifiers, the event to be run on 2 days and to hold the Jumping test last. As this was generally the norm, this recommendation serves as a confirmation of the preferred format.
5. Prize money for the Final to be increased to € 100,000.

The complete 2007 FEI World Cup™ Eventing Rules can be downloaded from the FEI World Cup™ Website at <http://www.feeworldcup.org/PDFS/Annex1-2007UpdatedRules-Englishversion.pdf>

The 2007 Calendar is available on the FEI World Cup™ Website at:

<http://www.feeworldcup.org/PDFS/2007WCECALENDARforwebsite.pdf>

In the 2006 final in Malmö, Sweden, Nicolas Touzaint (FRA) made a spectacular comeback with his wonderful grey horse, Galan de Sauvagere, to take the FEI World Cup™ Eventing to France for the first time. As always in Malmö the "bunny jumping" was a popular sport to watch. Technical Delegate Guiseppe de la Chiesa was presented with a rather unusual transport around the track and in the city: A great and shiny motorcycle. Wonder if he drove it home to Italy?



14. Recommendation for the Judging of British Eventing Tests at Advanced Level

By Nick Burton, Great Britain

Jean Mitchell has asked me to report on the British Dressage Judges Committee's decision to recommend to British Eventing that judges on lists 1 to 3a (Grand Prix to Advanced Medium level) **only** should judge Advanced Eventing tests **that include flying changes**.

Previously list 3 judges (Medium) could judge all levels of Eventing tests, in the UK. This rule change brings BE in to line with the standards set by BD for the levels at which judges may officiate.

This rule change has raised some points for discussion within the IEOC;

All the FEI Judges I have spoken to agree that the standard of Dressage in Eventing has improved greatly over the past few years, therefore as Judges of the sport we must also be at a standard that ensures we can judge at each level with confidence and competence.

If, as National Dressage Judges we judge at lower levels only, is it correct and fair that as FEI Eventing Judges we assess, for example the degree of collection required at Advanced Medium level, including movements such as shoulder in, half pass and flying changes seen at 3 & 4* level?

We should also consider the fact that we do not allow horses and riders who are unqualified to run in 3DE's, is it time to ensure as FEI Officials we are also qualified to the level at which we judge at in CCI's and CIC's?

It should also be mentioned we have a number of FEI Eventing Officials who are FEI (I) judges for Dressage, and more so who are not, but judge up to the highest levels in their own countries.

The simple (perhaps idealistic) solution seems to be for those Judges who are not yet listed at UK's equivalent of Advanced Medium (includes flying changes) should upgrade if they wish to judge at 3 or 4* level as an FEI Eventing Judge.

As you can imagine I am delighted to have been given this 'hot potato!' to write, however the subject obviously needs open discussion.

This is **definitely not** pointed at any individual official/judge/person, it is written to prompt thought and consideration regarding Dressage judging in our sport and how we should proceed in the future.....so please don't shoot the messenger!!

15. IEOC "Innocents" Abroad

By Jean Mitchell, Secretary General of the IEOC

A group of IEOC members – starved of sunshine - descended [via Malaga] on the Costa del Sol early in early November 2006, for rest, relaxation and a little culture [with definitely no equestrian content] at the beautiful Spanish home of a 'well respected' judge.

As usual the pre-event visit was made by the TD, who was quite distressed to find the site disappearing under exceptionally low cloud, which then proceeded to dump some 2 ½ inches of rain – much to the delight of our hosts. They were thrilled to see the local river actually containing a flow of water, for the first time within their memory – which of course, as with judges – isn't very long! This resulted in the highly acclaimed "VIEW" being remarked upon by one of the senior judges as being remarkably similar to being at home – in Ireland!

The first opportunity for everyone to meet was for lunch in Cabopina, at Albert's wonderful restaurant, beside a marina full of very flashy yachts, where we all enjoyed a fantastic meal, taken at leisure, washed down with Sangria, and finished off with good old English puddings – and yes – you have guessed it we had discovered that English was the only language required in this region! Having over indulged, we elected to take a short wander to look into the water, and discovered that it was filled with many future 'fish dishes' just waiting to grace the plates in Albert's eatery!

This was followed by a quick drive through the traditional hillside villages, and back to base for a relaxing evening with delicious Andalusian salads, frequently interspersed with a copious volume of ad lib wine! However, this 'heavenly' mirage was soon to be disturbed by the first flashes of Spanish lightning, followed by some really aggressive thunder, which plunged the locality into total darkness, and eventually sent everyone off to bed – some looking like "Wee Willie Winkie" with their candles!

The following day the rain had completely cleared, and we had the great pleasure of being able to see the fantastic views that we had been promised in the original Mijas 'brochure', although not quite the high temperature that some of us were [rather hopefully] expecting! So we set off on quite a long journey by road, to Granada – driven by our TD [Tour Director, of course] who was really enjoying being at the wheel of a fast Subaru, and giving a first class representation as Michael Schumacher, especially on the twisty hill climbs and descents – but getting into his own on the motorway, to the west.

We had really come to see the Alhambra – although none of us had much of an idea what to expect, as we parked the car and started to stroll down to the entrance! Well, we were in for a wonderful surprise! La Alhambra – as it's called – stands on top of Granada's Sabika Hill, against the background of the often snow covered massif of the Sierra Nevada, and is one of the greatest surviving expressions of Moorish culture in Spain, and one of the world's most spectacular heritage sites. The walled complex is nearly 700m long and about 200m wide and there are 4 distinct groups of buildings within the Alhambra, all dating from the 13th to the 16th centuries, and remarkably well preserved. There were also many fabulous gardens with tinkling fountains and mirrored pools, where one could relax and breathe in the delicious scents, from the specially planted flowers!

Exploring this Islamic 'treasure' took hours and hours, helped by the audio radios, giving all the information – in English of course – and we just found time to stop for a late lunch [and to rest the tiring legs] in the fantastic Parador hotel! Here the GB judge auditioned for the part of the "Bag Lady of Trafalgar Square" by feeding the exceedingly tame, resident birds.

The whole site is well worth a visit and, surprisingly, was not spoiled by trashy souvenir shops, creating litter – great value for €10.

On our return we decided to try the local cuisine at Mijas, but finding ourselves approximately 15 minutes early [they don't open until 8.00pm – and not a minute before] we decided to retire to a local [very] bar for a quick refresher of Fino Sherry, Vino Blanco and Rosa, and a 'viewing' of the resident celebrities, who made us very welcome!

After this we all thoroughly enjoyed another fantastic gourmet experience in the "Merlo Blanco" at Mijas, with the fish soup being voted 'the best ever' and the finale of an enormous soufflé being both breathtaking to look – at and a delight to eat. What a joy to have fresh, locally produced, beautifully cooked food, served in a restaurant with an amazing ambience – whatever about the company!

Could it get any better? Well it certainly did! While scanning a local free newspaper [produced in English of course] we discovered that there were trips to AFRICA – and needless to say that is a continent that we just had to visit – to fill the 'log book'! So bookings were duly made, and a 5.30 am start saw us boarding a bus at a convenient roundabout for a very comfortable journey along the coast [and past Gibraltar – venue for a later trip] with a fantastic tour guide, to catch a ferry at Tarifa. We then had a 2-hour crossing to Tangiers, where we arrived in glorious sunshine and spent a few hours touring around the area, learning about the history and the population, driving past the magnificent King's Palace, looking at some fantastic views, along with the inevitable 'sitting on a camel' photo opportunity, which we declined – having seen all to many of these in 20 x 60 arenas, in our time!

This was followed by a visit, on foot, to the Kasbah which is the fortified portion of the city, and the highest point in the medina, where we saw the home that had once been occupied by Barbara Hutton – and other amazing houses which were exceptionally deceiving, with their short frontage hiding apparently sumptuous interiors. Then it was a visit to the 'Snake Charmer' with more photo opportunities, made more interesting for the GB judge, who was quite convinced that he was a close relative of Peter Storr!

By then we were all ready for lunch, which was in a very ornate restaurant, surrounded by Moroccan folklore, belly dancers and Andalusian musicians. There

were 4 courses, which included a very tasty Moroccan soup, as many Shish Kebabs as we could eat, then Chicken Couscous and finished off with mint tea and Moroccan cake. This turned out to be very 'tasty' meal, although no sightings of sheep's eyes, etc. Then off to the bazaar for the serious shopping, haggling over prices, etc. where we had the opportunity to watch [in full public view] one normally 'crease free' judge being encouraged [or actually ordered] to model some Jilbabs [Moroccan frocks]. It was certainly the 1st time that we had seen this judge looking somewhat less than her usual glamorous self, and needless to say she declined to make a purchase!

Next we were shown some magnificent 'hand made' designer carpets and rugs, in every colour of the rainbow, and with traditional Arabic and Berber designs along with explanations as to how they are made. At this point we had to rescue one of our Belgian friends who was being well 'trapped' into buying a carpet at €11,000 – apparently very cheap, as it included the cost of shipping to his home – and we gathered him up and made a quick getaway!

The last visit was to a traditional Moroccan Herbalist, who gave a fascinating and amusing insight into the natural preparations that are used in the continent of Africa, for medicinal, culinary and of course in beauty, preparations! Needless to say the ladies amongst us were completely SOLD on the promises that were made in this charming gentleman's repertoire, for many of the 'beauty' products, and also some variations on the theme of "Arnica" – so watch out for some interesting effects on the judges – and the horses – all completely legal, of course!

It was then time to return to the ferry, which actually crosses that part of the sea where the Mediterranean and Atlantic oceans meet, and is apparently quite well known for it's ability to become 'angry' – to say the least, and so we had a rather 'choppy' sailing back! At this point some of our fellow travellers were really sorry that they had partaken of such a good lunch, and there were a few 'green' faces. However, not so for our intrepid IEOC members, who continued to enjoy the trip, and on returning to Casa Jacaranda, were ready for a fireside supper – and an early night!

The following day started with a very leisurely breakfast, reading the newspapers [English of course] and an interesting, and indeed at times ferocious, game of RUMMYCUB – all out on the sunny veranda, before the Belgian contingent had to depart for the ½ hour drive to the airport!

As soon as they left, the remaining judges took to the amazing outdoor swimming pool, that had been welcoming us for days, but we had not found time to use. Heated to a balmy 25 degrees, and with lots of 'blow up' beds etc., our hostess [who had gone to walk her 2 dogs] returned to the sound of some really loud and raucous laughter, and the sight of some recumbent, white whales – wallowing in the pool. She nearly fell in herself when she observed that one of us was floating 'incorrectly' on a lilo bed at least 3 feet off course – i.e., crunched up into a "V" shape, rather than lying completely flat – so holding on for grim death, instead of having a normal, relaxing posture!

That evening we drove down to Fuengirola where a table had been booked for dinner at another smart restaurant! However, the management must have heard that we were on our way, and decided to turn off the electricity [or at least that's how it appeared] so it was all in the dark, and no joy there! After a few more 'attempts' to find a restaurant that could cope with us [in fairness it was a Saturday night] we kept driving eastwards, right along the coast and were delighted to find "Salvadore los Lotterie" – a wonderfully authentic fish restaurant – right on the beach! So [although

we were somewhat over-dressed, and it didn't matter at all] we had the great joy of sampling 2 courses of many kinds of fish, cooked in different ways – finishing off with super desserts – while we watched the 'white horses' breaking the dusky darkness of the sea, just yards away – a truly idyllic experience!

Our return to Casa Jacaranda heralded the beginning of the 'repatriation' process, as our host had very kindly agreed to 'record' both the X Factor and Strictly Come Dancing programmes, of that evening! Some of us were 'glued' to the TV, while others [who had perhaps over-indulged earlier in the pool] felt the need to retire so that they would be able to cope with yet another busy day on the Costa del Sol, on Sunday!

Indeed we were blessed with another glorious day for our trip to COIN, to visit the farmer's market, held weekly in the local indoor car park. One of the judges really went to town and parted with quite a few euros in exchange for some exciting [and different] Christmas presents, while another one decided that she would wait and make a return visit [before Christmas] with an empty suitcase! The shopping was followed by a spectacular drive through the mountains to Marbella, and yet another fantastic and memorable lunch – this time in the ultra chic "Los Sardines" – beside the beach! So temptation was right there, and after lunch we had the 'mandatory' paddle in the sea, with trousers rolled up, shoes in hand – but no knotted handkerchiefs!

On the journey back through the mountains, plans were being made for further visits, dates bandied about, and serious thoughts given as to whether it would be user friendly to expand the 'elite' group that had travelled on this first occasion!

After an early supper by the fireside, it was time for the last but one of us to catch a late night flight home, leaving just one judge and our hosts, to mull over the visit, accompanied by some excellent local wine!

The final day dawned as brightly as ever, and there was a visit to the local saddler's shop [really the only 'horse' part of the whole holiday] where the remaining judge perused through the mainly German equipment, and was delighted to see some Spanish interpretations, with beautiful leatherwork, before transferring to the airport.

And so, at last [after many attempts to get it organised and the dates co-ordinated] the first IEOC visit to Jane & David Tolley, at their beautiful Casa Jacaranda, near Mijas in Spain has taken place. We would all like to say a massive and sincere "Thank You" to both of them for their wonderful hospitality, and hope that they will be happy to host the 2nd visit in 2007!

16. Changing "Winters" in Ontario, Canada

By Nancy Tapley, Lake of Bays, Muskoka, Ontario, Canada

We are having a very strange winter: we had lots of snow, and the bay frozen over by early December, with everything ready to go for the winter sports.....then it began to rain....and we lost all the snow, and the lake opened up again. This is so rare that none of us can remember a "Green Christmas", when it was so mild that the lake isn't frozen, although we can recall Christmas with very little snow, but cold, and you could skate out around the island. This is just weird – I was on the cross-country course with one of the horses on Christmas Eve, with no frost in the ground at all.

Now, on 2nd January, the bay is about half frozen over, and we have a dusting of snow on very frozen ground – the horses are not at all pleased!

I have been taking our guests for nature hikes – since we can't send them skiing, and on new Year's Day we had a wonderful 2 hours 'in the bush' where we found otter, fox and wolf tracks, and sighted squirrels, rabbits and even a chipmunk, along with pileated woodpecker trees [and a woodpecker hard at it]. Also, puffballs, oyster fungus, chickadees, kinglets, nuthatches and a brown thrasher, with deer tracks and 3 deer 'beds' freshly vacated, bear claw marks from both cubs and BIG bears, an old apple tree with a bear nest at the top, leftover bits from a recent wolf kill of a deer, a lightning struck tree, several 'tipped over' hemlock from the big storm with really interesting roots. In fact the only thing that we didn't find was an owl tree – but we're still looking!!

My big Christmas present this year was for the barn – it's called an “**Anivac Lynx Bathing System**”[you can GOOGLE it on the Internet]. Basically this is a steam cleaner, like you would use for a carpet, with an “upholstery attachment” specially designed for **horses and dogs**! It's pretty darn slick, sending a jet of water into the horse's coat, and immediately vacuums it back out, leaving the horse very clean – but not dripping wet. It's really quick to use, nothing spills on the floor [except for me figuring out how to fill it without spilling the water], the horses all seem to just love it and of course the big advantage is that it can be used in cold weather, and because it's so quick, they aren't getting a chill - and it's especially 'magical' for grey horses!